

THE CRIME SCENE OF THE MIND: PROHIBITION,  
ENJOYMENT, AND THE CRIMINAL PROFILER  
IN FILM AND TELEVISION

By

JASON ROBERT LANDRUM

Bachelor of Arts  
Texas A&M University  
College Station, Texas  
1994

Master of Arts  
Texas Tech University  
Lubbock, Texas  
1999

Submitted to the Faculty of the Graduate College of  
Oklahoma State University for partial fulfillment  
of the requirements for the degree of  
DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY  
May, 2007

THE CRIME SCENE OF THE MIND: PROHIBITION,  
ENJOYMENT, AND THE CRIMINAL PROFILER  
IN FILM AND TELEVISION

Dissertation Approved:

Robert Mayer

---

Dissertation Adviser

Hugh Manon

Martin Wallen

L. G. Moses

A. Gordon Emslie

---

Dean of the Graduate College

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

No one writes without help from many sources, and this dissertation could not have been completed without the generous collaboration of many people willing to contribute their time and energy to the success of this project. Dr. Robert Mayer has been a kind mentor and patient reader of my work during my time at Oklahoma State University. As the chair of my dissertation committee, Dr. Mayer has provided me with the necessary professional guidance for navigating my academic career and has enthusiastically supported me for a number of fellowships and departmental awards crucial to my advancement toward my degree. More importantly, he has closely read (multiple times) every word of this dissertation, helping me think more clearly about how I express my arguments and pointing out the bad habits that seep into my writing. While these things have been important to the completion of my degree, I would also like to say that I have been tremendously blessed to have an adviser like Dr. Mayer. Sadly, few graduate students will ever be able to have a mentor and friend with the wisdom of Robert Mayer. Similarly, Dr. Hugh Manon has been enormously important to the completion of this project, and much of the shape of its argument is indebted to him. In 2003, I took a graduate seminar with Dr. Manon—my last as a doctoral student and his first as a graduate instructor—and from this class I arrived at a dissertation topic. Moreover, Dr. Manon introduced and refined my understanding of psychoanalytic film theory, in which I had some interest in the past but could not have mastered without his guidance in the many conversations we have had since his arrival at OSU. I do not think that I am being hyperbolic when I say that Dr. Manon has helped me, in ways too numerous to explain here, completely transform my thinking about film, film theory, and

film scholarship, and I cannot thank him enough for doing so. I would also like to thank Dr. Martin Wallen and Dr. L.G. Moses for their acuity and consideration in reading this dissertation. They provided much-needed insight into the shape of my argument and enabled me to think more clearly about its implications. While the guidance and support of my committee has been crucial to the completion of this dissertation, I could not have finished without the help and friendship of many. There are far too many friends with valuable insights to catalogue here, but I would like to single out one. My conversations over the past few years with Scott Krzych have allowed me to work through some of more difficult theoretical points of my dissertation, and his willingness to listen to me during the exasperating low points and the clarifying high points has been much appreciated. Finally and most importantly, it is to my wife Lacy that I am most indebted. As I sit here amongst a mess of books, photocopies, and DVDs writing this, I am most thankful for her patience, support, and love during this long process. Without her, I could not have completed this project.

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

Chapter	Page
INTRODUCTION	1
A Brief History of Criminal Profiling	4
The Criminal Profiler in Hollywood	11
From Desire to Enjoyment	20
I. FROM G-MEN TO CRIMINAL PROFILERS: A LACANIAN THEORY OF THE EVOLUTION OF THE CINEMATIC FBI AGENT	26
Desire, Enjoyment, and the Hollow Nickel	31
Theorizing the G-Men	47
Conclusion: The Emergence of the Criminal Profiler	67
II. TO SEE OR NOT TO SEE: <i>MANHUNTER</i> , <i>THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS</i> , AND THE PROFILER MODEL OF FBI FILM	71
<i>Manhunter</i> : The Satisfaction of Seeing it All	76
Did You Want Them to See You?	81
Cultivating Excessive Visual Pleasure	87
Desire Satisfied?	95
<i>The Silence of the Lambs</i> : The Desire to See it Not-All	98
Where is Your Danger Area?	105
Don't Your Eyes Seek Out the Things You Want?	110
Seeing Eye to Eye	116
Conclusion	120

III.	BETWEEN TWO VOICES: PROHIBITION AND ENJOYMENT IN THE CRIMINAL PROFILER FILM, 1995-2000	123
	Between Two Voices	129
	The Rules vs. the “Right Results”	136
	Show me the Anxiety!	146
	The Fantasy of Dissatisfaction	156
	Conclusion	175
IV.	NOTHING CAN BE LOST: <i>MILLENNIUM</i> , <i>PROFILER</i> AND THE POST-HIGH-TECH DETECTIVE	179
	Technology and the FBI	184
	Images of Crime	185
	<i>Millennium</i>	194
	<i>Profiler</i>	210
	Conclusion	220
	CONCLUSION: Legitimizing the Mindhunter	222
	WORKS CITED	232

## INTRODUCTION

The FBI always gets its man; this popular legend about the nation's foremost crime fighting agency has come to be a permanent part of American culture. The infallibility of the Federal Bureau of Investigation has been at the heart of its public relations campaigns throughout its history, and whether the well-being of the nation is under siege from organized crime, international Communism, or serial killers, the FBI has consistently promoted this single slogan. Through comic books, newsreels, Hollywood films, and television shows, the FBI has cooperated, to varying degrees, with the artists and industries responsible for popularizing its image. Providing case files, on-location filming, and access to consultants, the FBI has sought, from the time of J. Edgar Hoover to today, to firmly cement in the minds of American citizens the idea that no crime can evade its superior crime detection techniques. From the famous arrests of John Dillinger to Wayne Williams, the Bureau has been at the forefront of crime fighting innovations and has continued to make scientific advances in forensic techniques. Ranging from its famed fingerprint collection to newly developed techniques like brain mapping, the FBI has disseminated, via popular culture, many of their crime fighting methods, perpetuating the belief in the Bureau's perceived infallibility. These innovations have helped the Bureau maintain its leading edge in the various "wars on crime" fought throughout the twentieth century and helped underpin the national belief that few can evade the FBI's scrutiny. As David Gilbert, a member of the radical activist

group, the Weathermen, explains, the FBI has always been perceived as unbeatable, and as he and the other members of his group prepared to go underground to avoid arrest in the early 1970s, the cumulative effect of the FBI's promotion of its prowess had become an unquestioned aspect of American culture:

When Weather first went underground in 1970, the conventional wisdom was that we would be rounded up within a year. You don't remember the fifties. I grew up in the fifties. Every TV program, the police or the FBI always got their man. In fact, I think there was a movie code that said you couldn't show people getting away with crime. So there was a psych in the population that it was impossible to defy the FBI. Everyone knew, more or less, that this [going underground] was only going to last a few more months.<sup>1</sup>

Gilbert's description of how he felt about evading the FBI effectively captures how successfully the Bureau crafted its image through popular culture. While he and the other members of the Weather Underground felt at the time that they would be rounded up quickly, the Bureau was unable to put a stop to the Weather Underground's radical activity, and had the majority of the group not turned themselves in during the early 1980s, the group might have gone undetected for several more years.

The example captured by Gilbert's description of the FBI and Weather's successful avoidance of capture points up a contradiction between the popular image of the Bureau and the reality of how often it "gets its man." Moreover, the distance between

---

<sup>1</sup> Gilbert's description of the cultural awareness of the FBI comes from the documentary *The Weather Underground* (Sam Green and Bill Siegel, 2003). While I could have used any number of quotes to make the same point about the perception of the FBI during the middle part of twentieth century, I feel that Gilbert's is especially crucial given the irony that the Weather Underground did successfully manage to evade the FBI for many years.



the carefully crafted image and lived reality raises questions about the public's willingness to continue investing belief in the one when the other proves to come up frustratingly short. Richard Gid Powers has argued that the distance between the FBI's popular image and its reality has actually ruined the Bureau's relations with the public, going so far as to identify the decade of the 1970s as the crucial moment at which FBI's image unravels. Powers, moreover, specifically cites the overzealous approach to the antiwar movement, the Black Panthers, and the wiretapping of Martin Luther King as the point at which the heroic and patriotic image of the mid-century G-Man faded from prominence. Accordingly, Powers explains that the Bureau's and J. Edgar Hoover's popularity depended upon the public's confidence in the action detective formula as a way of making sense out of current events. In the sixties Hoover began to encounter a new type of enemy who had rebelled against the law out of conscience—Daniel Berrigan, Martin Luther King, civil rights workers, anti-war activists, and, sometimes it seemed, the whole student generation. These new “fugitives” that populated the FBI's Most Wanted List could not easily be passed off as formula villains. Hoover's implausible attempts to explain the unrest of the sixties in formula terms made the whole G-Man concept seem irrelevant. (*G-Men* xix)

This dissertation begins with Power's description of Hoover's dependence upon popular culture to transmit his vision of the FBI and the eventual backlash against the failure of the G-Man image, and, ultimately, this dissertation proceeds into the aftermath of the post-Hoover years in order to articulate a theory of how the Bureau restored its image as

the country's pre-eminent law enforcement agency. Having undergone a transformation from hero to villain, the FBI agent returns again in the 1980s as a new kind of hero that reflects a decidedly different world from that of the G-Man. This dissertation describes how the criminal profiler replaces the heroic G-Man of Hoover's fantasy and explains why the criminal profiler continues to preside as the dominant reflection of the Bureau's methods and values into the twenty-first century.

### **A Brief History of Criminal Profiling**

Conceived in the mid-1970s as a crime prevention technique focusing on the psychological motivations and patterns that underpin violent crime, criminal profiling continues to be a controversial crime fighting strategy into the twenty-first century. The early successes<sup>2</sup> of criminal profiling, its more recent embarrassments,<sup>3</sup> and its shift into a new phase of racial profiling in the wake of terrorist attacks in the United States have led to continual speculation over the merits of profiling in identifying criminals before they are able to perpetrate crimes. A feeling emerged in the late 1960s that America was suffering from an explosion of violent crime. The assassinations of presidential candidate Robert F. Kennedy and civil rights leader Martin Luther King coupled with a spate of cases involving "stranger violence" led many to believe that the culture had lost its way. High profile murders such as those perpetrated by the Manson family, the

---

<sup>2</sup> The FBI's criminal profile of serial killer Wayne Williams was one of its earliest successes and vaulted the Bureau's newly formed Behavioral Sciences Unit into the national spotlight.

<sup>3</sup> Over a period of a few weeks in early 2002, two snipers randomly fired shots into crowds of people going about their daily business in the Washington DC area. The case went unsolved for some time and was subject to endless speculation by former FBI profilers on news talk shows. These profilers argued that the killers were probably cut from the mold of Timothy McVeigh (the Oklahoma City bomber): a 25-40 year old white man who was formerly in the military and a hunting enthusiast, who harbored anti-government attitudes. Eventually caught after a truck driver's tip, John Muhammad and Lee Boyd Malvo, both African-American, failed to fit this description.

Boston Strangler, the Zodiac killer in San Francisco, forced law enforcement officials to re-evaluate their crime fighting techniques with a new emphasis on criminological insight, understanding, and control (Cettl 22). Murder, and specifically serial murder, became a national problem by the 1970s, making figures like Ted Bundy, Ed Kemper, David Berkowitz, and Charles Starkweather into minor celebrities and the focus of major motion pictures.<sup>4</sup> The perception of increased violent crime across the nation encouraged the FBI to study more closely the root causes of criminal behavior and create the Behavioral Sciences Unit (BSU) to specialize in these types of serial offenders.<sup>5</sup> Through thousands of interviews with serial offenders, the BSU was able to create specific profiles of criminal behavior; these efforts, ultimately, led to the creation of the Violent Criminal Apprehension Program (VICAP), a national database that collects information on unsolved homicides. The result of the BSU's work during the 1970s came to the nation's attention in 1981 when FBI criminal profiler John Douglas helped the Atlanta police department identify, apprehend, and convict Wayne Williams—a would-be music producer who lived with his parents and was responsible for the deaths of as many as twenty-four young African-American, mostly male, children.<sup>6</sup> Douglas's profile of the Atlanta child murderer contrasted sharply with that of the local and state police. Georgia's history with racial violence led the police to believe that the murders were racially motivated and perpetrated by a white killer, possibly someone from the Ku Klux Klan. Douglas countered this by arguing that the killer was more likely to be African-

---

<sup>4</sup> Films like *Badlands* (1973) explicitly focused on the spree killing of Charles Starkweather, and *Psycho* (1960), *The Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1974), and *Deranged* (1974) indirectly refer to Ed Gein. Moreover, these films are examples of Hollywood's portrayal of serial killing before profiling.

<sup>5</sup> The BSU deals with serial offenders of all kinds (rapists, arsonists, murderers), but Hollywood has primarily associated it with serial killers.

<sup>6</sup> Williams was only convicted for two murders of the possible twenty-four and was sentenced to two life terms. As of the date of this writing, Williams is still pursuing a new trial and insists that he is innocent.

American because of the way the children were abducted. Essentially, he made the case that the children obviously felt comfortable with the killer, which led the criminal profiler to believe that the killer would blend easily with the African-American community and not stick out like a Klansman would. Douglas's work immediately shifted the focus of the case, and Williams was soon after captured, tried, and convicted.

Criminal profiling is defined as any process of inferring distinctive personality characteristics of individuals responsible for committing criminal acts from physical and behavioral evidence left behind at the crime scene, with the goal of producing a court-worthy document that assists in the prosecution of criminal offenders (Turvey 681). Working from evidence left behind by the perpetrator, profilers seek to create a composite sketch of the type of personality that might have committed each particular type of crime. In fact, Douglas has argued convincingly that a criminal's personality is the sum total of his/her behavior at the crime scene:

In my unit at Quantico, we were often called in to analyze and assist in solving "motiveless crimes." While we were eager to help, we tried to make clear our belief that there is, in fact, no such thing. Every crime has a motive. It's our job to learn enough about what goes on inside the heads of the men who commit these types of crimes so that the *Why?* is clear enough to lead us to the *Who?* (*Anatomy* 45-6)

Philip Simpson, moreover, explains that the

profiling strategy proceeds on the optimistic, rationalist assumption that there is a one-to-one, fixed or true correspondence between sign and signified, and that close enough reading by a skilled enough "critic" will

strip away ambiguity and coax forth the secrets of the signified [...] In fact, profiling is an attempt to appropriate the text's language in order to identify the author. (*Psycho Paths* 80)

Simpson's description appropriately captures the positivist tone of criminal profiling's aims and goals. Much of this tone is due to its status as a pseudo-scientific approach to crime fighting, and, as well as focusing on behavior, profilers employ forensic-based evidence in order to determine the identity of the perpetrator through scientific means such as DNA and fingerprint analysis. However, forensic science is often respected more than criminal profiling. Forensic evidence has more credibility for prosecuting criminal offenders because of its grounding in science, with the evolution of DNA testing proving to be the most significant advancement. Psychological explanations of criminal behavior, however, continue to be met with healthy skepticism, and criminal profiling's dependence on psychological explanations of the perpetrator hurts its reputation in those law enforcement communities that would, for the sake of prosecution, prefer to focus exclusively on scientifically gathered and processed evidence.<sup>7</sup> The popular image of profiling, therefore, has often chosen to avoid scientific explanations of crime in order to focus primarily on the criminal profiler's alleged clairvoyant gifts.

The greatest successes of profiling are, quite often, the result of the failings of science to produce a suspect. In other words, criminal profiling emerges precisely at the limit of the ability of scientific crime scene analysis to cover everything in an investigation. In most of the prominent cases in the history of criminal profiling, a

---

<sup>7</sup> For more on the relationship between forensic science and criminal profiling see Turvey (93-136). Turvey consistently argues that the credibility of psychological explanations of crime offered by profilers depends primarily on unimpeachable scientific crime scene data. In order to avoid skepticism, a profiler must also have a background in the science of evidence collection.

profiler was asked to assist in the investigation as a last resort and after all other police procedures had failed to produce a suspect. The Atlanta police, for example, had recovered a significant amount of forensic evidence from the multiple child murders—the same carpet fibers were found on many of the victims—but failed to identify its suspect using this evidence. The conviction of Williams rested heavily on forensic connections made between his home and the victims, but the conviction was ensured by Douglas’s profile, which argued, among other things, that the unidentified perpetrator would be black, would be a police buff, would insinuate himself into the investigation at some point, would be sexually attracted to young boys, and would show evidence of being a con man who lured boys with promises of fame (*Mindhunter* 204). Douglas’s psychological sketch had been dismissed by many in the local law enforcement community, but his expertise eventually led him to conclude that the killer followed media coverage and changed his tactics as the evidence progressed. Once information about the carpet fibers reached the media, the killer began dumping bodies in rivers to wash away the evidence, thus leading to police stakeouts at bridges in the area and, eventually, the arrest of Williams. Douglas declares that this moment in FBI history proved to be “a major triumph for the art of profiling” and that the Williams conviction “was a decisive turning point for our unit,” which rewarded the Bureau’s newly created Behavioral Sciences Unit with “instant credibility throughout the law enforcement community worldwide” (*Mindhunter* 215, 224). Moreover, the enormous amount of media coverage of its success helped restore the FBI’s image and regain some national prestige in the post-Hoover years (Porter 46).

Criminal profiling emerged over the 1980s and 1990s not only as a credible criminal investigation technique but also as a form of mass entertainment. From his success at the FBI, John Douglas has gone on to detail his exploits in true crime bestsellers such as *Mindhunter* (1996), *Journey into Darkness* (1998), and *The Anatomy of Motive* (2000), all of which recount the evolution of the art of profiling and his involvement in high level cases. Robert Ressler, who is often cited as the inventor of the term “serial killer,” has authored *Whoever Fights Monsters* (1993) and *I Have Lived Inside the Monster* (1998), which do much the same thing as Douglas’s books. Moreover, Douglas and Ressler, along with former FBI profilers Roy Hazelwood, Clint Van Zandt, and Candice DeLong, are often featured as experts on news shows and in crime documentaries.<sup>8</sup> The role of the criminal profiler has become essential to our growing understanding of criminal motivation and, consequently, the entertainment value of crime—with the psychological language of criminal profiling becoming, over the past twenty-five years, the language of fictional criminal investigation. While forensic crime scene analysis ostensibly leads to most convictions, criminal profiling leads to a potential suspect responsible for the crime and attempts to explain why the crime was committed. These explanations of the motives behind criminal behavior make up the bulk of crime entertainment. Crime entertainment exploits the fantasy that the secret meaning of all criminal behavior exists just beyond our grasp, making the criminal experts who decode the seamy world of criminal behavior irresistibly desirable figures. Indeed, depictions of criminal profiling, I contend, often succeed because they allow audiences complete

---

<sup>8</sup> See, for example, the PBS documentary, *Nova: Mind of a Serial Killer* and the A&E documentary, *Serial Killers: Profiling the Criminal Mind*.

access to the desires of transgressive criminals, making the time spent “living inside the monster” well-worth the effort while unconsciously reinforcing the necessity of the FBI.

In order to fully explain how access to criminal desire reinforces the Bureau’s authority, this dissertation begins from the premise that criminal profiling is based upon a fantasy that its practitioners have an extra-sensory gift for empathizing the killer’s and the victim’s perspective. Douglas explains the profiler’s gift for empathy:

To be a good profiler, you have to be able to evaluate a wide range of evidence and data. But you also have to be able to walk in the shoes of both the offender and the victim. You have to recreate the crime scene in your head. You need to know as much as you can about the victim so that you can imagine how she might have reacted. You have to be able to put yourself in her place as the attacker threatens her with a gun or a knife, a rock, his fists, or whatever [...] You have to understand what it’s like to scream in terror and agony, realizing that it won’t help, that it won’t get him to stop. (*Mindhunter* 171)

Douglas’s description identifies the primary criminal profiling fantasy that has drawn writers and filmmakers to it for the past twenty-five years. Most notably, Douglas explains that profilers must willingly dissolve their subjectivity into that of the killer and/or the victim in order to successfully determine who perpetrated the crime and why. Thomas Harris was the first novelist to see the potential for the profiler’s empathetic self-destruction, and after receiving unprecedented access to BSU classes and case files, he wrote the first novels to feature a criminal profiler, *Red Dragon* (1981) and *The Silence of the Lambs* (1986). Profiling expert Brent Turvey contends that Harris’s work is a “fairly



competent” construction of the profiling process because it accurately reflects the use of “both physical evidence and investigative intuition to ‘get inside the mind’ of serial murderers” and the “self-destructive empathy” that goes with this investigative process (21). These two key components to profiling identified by Turvey are essential to understanding how the criminal profiler differs as a protagonist from other detective models. Criminal profilers lack the action-detective’s two-fisted approach to crime fighting but share its clear sense of purpose. Profilers share the puzzle-solving skills of the detached, classical detective but clearly involve themselves to an unhealthy degree in their cases. Fictional depictions of criminal profilers combine the puzzle-solving skills of classical detection with the insatiable desire of the G-Man to understand the secret meaning of crime from the criminal’s perspective. The profiler fantasy of seeing crime from the point-of-view of the criminal, however, raises some intriguing notions about the potential for fantasy in popular entertainment, and to gain a better understanding of this potential, this dissertation employs psychoanalytic concepts of Jacques Lacan, Slavoj Žižek, and Todd McGowan, which will help explain why the profiler cycle of entertainment begun in the 1980s continues to endure today.

## **The Criminal Profiler in Hollywood**

Hollywood has traditionally separated audience desire from criminal desire, going so far as to continually reinforce the belief that crime does not pay.<sup>9</sup> The emergence and endurance of Hollywood’s depiction of the criminal profiler, however, depends on a

---

<sup>9</sup> The separation of criminal and audience desire is best expressed in the censorship battles surrounding the gangster film *Scarface, Shame of a Nation* (1932). The Hays Office demanded that the filmmakers reshoot violent scenes, add a prologue that denounced organized crime, and append “shame of a nation” to the title (Clarens 89). The demands of the Hays Office would serve as the model for Hollywood’s depiction of criminal behavior until the ratings system replaced the production code in the late 1960s.

conflation of the criminal desire and audience desire.<sup>10</sup> Films featuring criminal profilers, for a variety of reasons detailed throughout this dissertation, shift desire away from traditional institutions of the law and towards the interior realm of the criminal. Whereas detective desire is typically portrayed, on the one hand, as a series of physical obstacles to overcome or, on the other hand, as a puzzle that requires answers, the profiler as detective does not typically engage in either crime solving skill. Rather than obstacles and puzzles, I contend that the profiler typically understands immediately how a crime is committed and chooses instead to focus on the psychological reasons that underpin the crime. Typically considered weird and eccentric by other “everyday” police, the specialist in serial murder ideally operates as a void—with an empty subjectivity that is filled out by the desire of the killer. The profiler’s self-destructive empathy is not an obstacle that must be avoided; it is, I argue, precisely what these films seek to exploit. Fictional representations of the FBI’s criminal profiling method are not particularly interested in the “success” of apprehending criminals. Instead, interest in these films depends on the process the profiler undergoes in ceding his/her desire to the killer. The profiler, in effect, allows audiences to fantasize about committing crime without having to commit one or recognize their complicity with criminal desire. Ironically, the effect of such a formula—a formula which I explain throughout this dissertation—reinforces the FBI’s authority rather than proving to be its undoing.

Past FBI films offered audiences one way of solving the problem of crime: through the G-Man’s physically challenging quest and his hard-won apprehension of the bad guy. The profiler cycle, however, replaces the G-Man method with the option of

---

<sup>10</sup> Desire, in this sense, should be understood as desire defined by Jacques Lacan. Lacan argues that desire is always the desire for something else, is continually deferred, and is from the point of the view of the Other (Evans 38).

*becoming* the criminal, which changes the way audiences think about criminality. The shift from the satisfied G-Man desire to the profiler's unsatisfying trip through the subjectivity of the serial killer fundamentally risks breaking down the barrier that separates the functions of the Symbolic order<sup>11</sup> and the supplemental relationship it has with its shadowy underside.<sup>12</sup> In other words, the profiler cycle's depiction of criminal detection as a process of *becoming* the criminal further reinforces the nonessential nature of the Symbolic order. In order to develop the undertheorized connections between criminal profiling and the changing nature of the Symbolic, this dissertation focuses on four broad components of the profiler cycle of films: 1) Popularizing the FBI: a rather consistent set of generic signifiers initiated by William Keighley's *G-Men* (1935) that runs uninterrupted through Mervyn LeRoy's *The FBI Story* (1959), establishing the genre's crucial fantasy of satisfaction-driven law enforcement; 2) The Desire to See: the profiler cycle's revision of the FBI formula established by Michael Mann's *Manhunter* and Jonathan Demme's *The Silence of the Lambs*, both of which reorient desire away from the FBI and towards the serial killer, especially through the manipulation of point-of-view shots; 3) Structures of Authority: the erosion of official strategies of law enforcement and the ascendance of the extra-legal brands of justice endorsed by late-millennial profiler films; and 4) The Post-High-Tech Detective: the cycle's emergence as a

---

<sup>11</sup> The Symbolic order is one of the three orders of experience (along with the Imaginary and the Real) that Lacan believes to govern subjectivity. The Symbolic is the order of language that the subject ascends to through the mirror-stage. Moreover, the Symbolic is the realm of culture and the Law, and most importantly, it is the realm of lack, absence, and the Other (Evans 202). I employ the Lacanian Symbolic in order to show the investment of the subject in the fantasy of a totalizing Symbolic order and the impossibility of such a fantasy.

<sup>12</sup> Slavoj Žižek argues that the lack that characterizes the Symbolic endorses transgressive behavior, which fills in where a Symbolic institution like the public Law might fail. For example, the Ku Klux Klan, Žižek argues, carried out its brand of justice because the Law failed in the Klan's eyes (*Metastases* 53). The Klan's lynching operated as a shadowy double of officially recognized law enforcement, serving as an unspoken code of honor by which the community organizes itself (*Metastases* 53).

popular form of primetime television entertainment and its impact on the FBI's argument for its own technological superiority. Each of these chapters forms a picture of how the FBI's image has changed—from superior to subversive—over the twentieth century and identifies the significance of the criminal profiler to this change. The following chapters, furthermore, offer both an aesthetic analysis of the profiler cycle and a cultural explanation for its emergence.

Chapter One of this dissertation traces the emergence of the cinematic FBI agent and introduces the Lacanian notion of fantasy in order to explain the traditional ways in which Hollywood films satisfy viewers with stories of law enforcement. Understood as an example of Classical Hollywood narrative, the FBI film sutures together audience identification with the protagonist agent, who serves as an extension of the official desire of the FBI. Films such as *G-Men* (William Keighley, 1935), *The House on 92<sup>nd</sup> Street* (Henry Hathaway, 1945), *The Street With No Name* (William Keighley, 1948), and *The FBI Story* (Mervyn LeRoy, 1959) create an on-screen FBI tradition and initiate the integral relationship the Bureau has with Hollywood. Namely, the FBI imprints its authority upon each of these films, using its official seal to open each and explaining that each features stories drawn directly from FBI case files. The Bureau's authority, moreover, extends to cameos by longtime director J. Edgar Hoover and employs location shots from its training facilities in Quantico and employs examples of its massive fingerprint and ballistics labs in Washington DC. Ultimately, the message of an FBI film boils down to a reinforcement of the public's belief in the Bureau as a superior crime fighting institution that continues to be an absolute necessity to stopping the domestic threat of organized crime and the international threats of Nazism and Communism. The

FBI's strategy, I contend, depends primarily on our unconscious identification with the Law. Through an explanation of the Lacanian concepts of desire and fantasy, I argue that the success of this strategy is actually built upon the failures of the FBI film to fully achieve its promise to protect our "way of life" from those who threaten it. In other words, the FBI film allows audiences to have the pleasure of punishing those who threaten us in exchange for our refusal to notice the failures of the Law to fully protect us and the transgressive tactics used by agents to fill in the gaps of those failures. The result of such an argument establishes an explanation of why the Hollywood image of the FBI fails in the 1960 and 70s and how the Bureau deteriorates into being the villain of so many films of the period, as seen in films such as *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975) and *The Private Files of J. Edgar Hoover* (1977). This deterioration, however, does not bring about an end to the FBI film. Instead, the failure of the FBI's image creates an opening for the criminal profiler to emerge as a new, albeit entirely different, kind of cinematic hero.

In Chapter Two, I document the emergence of the criminal profiler. The traditional FBI film of the first half of the twentieth century often focuses on a young recruit or agent who gains an opportunity for advancement by going undercover in order to infiltrate a gang or spy ring. The stories are constructed around the protagonist's sacrifice of personal pleasures in favor of public duty. The criminal profiler, however, is decidedly different from the traditional G-Man, and the difference between the two forms the crux of Chapter Two, which focuses on the emergence of the criminal profiler in the films *Manhunter* and *The Silence of the Lambs*. The criminal profiler reconciles the legacy of the FBI agent's fallen Hollywood status by fusing together the heroic status of

the G-Man with the Bureau's corrupted image of the 1960s and 70s. The success of the profiler cycle of films, I contend, depends on two key structural components: first, an effacement of the Bureau's authority, and, second, an investment in Lacanian desire as being from the Other's perspective, a perspective represented in profiler films by serial killers. Whereas pre-profiler FBI films keep audiences at a safe distance from criminal deviance, the profiler cycle thrusts audiences directly into the criminal's world-view. To achieve such a shift, both directors, Mann and Demme, manipulate point-of-view shots in order to conflate the vision of the audience with that of the profiler and serial killer. The manipulation of these sight lines underscores the profiler film's interest in exploiting our desire to see all, or in other words, to see all there is to see of the serial killer's murderous enjoyment. *Manhunter* and *The Silence of the Lambs* install the all-seeing, male gaze—concepts established by film scholars Christian Metz<sup>13</sup> and Laura Mulvey<sup>14</sup>—as a fantasy, which posits the pleasure of seeing as its end goal. However, these films actually deconstruct the fantasy of “seeing it all” in order to show how such a procedure must always end in failure. By promising the audience a vision of murder through the vehicle of the profiler, these two films demonstrate how “seeing it all” undoes the fundamental lack, which according to Lacan,<sup>15</sup> is necessary to subjectivity. The desire to see it all is crucial to the unfolding of the profiler cycle of films, and *Manhunter* and *The Silence of*

---

<sup>13</sup> See Metz's *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and Cinema*. Metz argues that the “spectator is absent from the screen as perceived, but also (the two things inevitably go together) present there and even ‘all-present’ as perceiver. At every moment I am in the film by my look's caress” (54).

<sup>14</sup> For more on Mulvey's conception of the male gaze, see *Visual and Other Pleasures* (14-26). Mulvey argues that “[i]dentification with the male protagonist—like identification with the camera—provides a complete sense of mastery. Spectators accept and even pursue identification with this cinematic and male gaze because they are looking for mastery” (McGowan, “Looking for the Gaze” 30).

<sup>15</sup> Lacan argues that lack forms the core of the subjective experience. More specifically, lack comes to designate the lack of an object that the subject desires but cannot attain (Evans 96).

*the Lambs* install it as motif, which all subsequent profiler films continue to work through.

In Chapter Three, I shift away from the central role sight plays in the profiler film and focus on the roles of authority and enjoyment. Using Todd McGowan's formulation of the "emerging society of enjoyment"<sup>16</sup> across the twentieth century, I link the rise of the criminal profiler with a shift in societal attitudes toward the notions of public sacrifice and private enjoyment. More specifically, I argue that the profiler cycle of films reflects society's diminished view of the public order and its increasing retreat into a private world where sacrifice is replaced by enjoyment. Such a shift has a corrosive effect upon the ways in which Symbolic authority has been traditionally depicted,<sup>17</sup> and using the films *Copycat* (Jon Amiel, 1995), *Kiss the Girls* (Gary Fleder, 1997), *The Bone Collector* (Philip Noyce, 1998), and *The Watcher* (Joe Charbanic, 2000), I demonstrate how the criminal profiler film reflects the diminished ability of the Symbolic order to regulate desire and explain the ascendance of the Superego<sup>18</sup>—the Symbolic's supplemental underside—as the primary vehicle through which justice is delivered. In each of these films, the criminal profiler is caught between these two voices of authority, and in a example of how far the FBI film has traveled since mid-century, the protagonists in these

---

<sup>16</sup> In *The End of Dissatisfaction: Jacques Lacan and the Emerging Society of Enjoyment*, Todd McGowan argues that the emergence of consumer culture within global capitalism marks the turn toward the command to enjoy (33). Moreover, he asserts that the epoch of global capitalism corresponds with a rise in pathological narcissism, a mode of subjectivity that resists the duty of social sacrifice in favor of the duty to enjoy without regard for the public good (34).

<sup>17</sup> McGowan contends that the weakening of Symbolic authority can be seen in the decline of the traditional paternal authority, whose presence bars enjoyment and commands accepted dissatisfaction (*The End* 42). While the disintegration of the patriarchal authority should be a sign of less anxiety for the subject, the failure of the father in the society of enjoyment, according to McGowan, creates more anxiety instead of less (*The End* 56-7).

<sup>18</sup> Freud defines the Superego as a division of the psyche that judges and censures the subject, and Lacan revises the Freudian Superego into a voice that commands the subject to enjoy (Evans 201). Lacan contends that the "superego is at one and the same time the law and its destruction [...] The superego arises from the misunderstanding of the law, from the gaps in the symbolic chain, and fills out those gaps with an imaginary substitute that distorts the law" (qtd. In Evans 200-1).

films solve the problems of serial killing through the extra-legal abuses of the public law endorsed by the Superego. In other words, the argument I am advancing in this chapter is similar to suggesting that the citizens of the United States would rather endorse an organization like the Ku Klux Klan to handle civil rights instead of the FBI. Indeed, the evolution of the profiler film depends on such an endorsement and continues to suggest that Symbolic authority has failed to protect us while “real justice” can only occur if fighting crime is achieved by thinking and acting like criminals. Much of this explanation is designed to show the similarities between vigilante films like *Dirty Harry* (1971) and *Death Wish* (1974), but the crucial difference between vigilantism and criminal profiling is that the latter enjoys being both extra-legal and endorsed by official law enforcement. While this shift to Superego authority promises to satisfy the failures of the Law, the fundamental nature of lack cannot be changed, and the criminal profiler film of the late twentieth century points up lack’s immobility. Whereas lack is often that which gets solved through a realization of fantasy at the end of a Hollywood film, I argue that the profiler film, because of the ascendance of the Superego, posits lack as something desirable in and of itself. In other words, the evolving portrait of the criminal profiler suggests that when it comes to lack, more is better than less.

Chapter Four tracks the rise of criminal profiler narratives as popular forms of primetime television entertainment.<sup>19</sup> In 1996, two shows, *Millennium* (1996-99) and *Profiler* (1996-2000), debuted on Fox and NBC respectively, each featuring narratives about the quasi-psychic abilities of criminal profilers and their quests to stop a new

---

<sup>19</sup> While the profiler cycle makes its debut on television in the late 1990s, the shift to television does not significantly affect the depiction of criminal profiling established by feature films. My intention is to demonstrate that the cycle has coalesced around few consistent narrative, visual, and theoretical motifs by the end of the twentieth century.



criminal each week. Each show stands in stark contrast to the FBI legacy of overwhelming technological superiority through its dependence upon the main characters' psychic visions to solve crimes. Historically, the FBI has employed technology to argue that its ability to stop crime supersedes that of state and local police. From fingerprint files to DNA technology, the FBI's technological advances continue to promise that crime can eventually be eradicated through continuing evolution. Moreover, technological advances follow a similar trajectory as that of the FBI; new gadgets, year-in-and-year-out, promise to alleviate the dissatisfactions of daily life. Consider, as an example, the ubiquity of camera technologies, from surveillance to mobile phones. The overwhelming presence of these video technologies promises that no event can occur without showing up "on film" somewhere—from police beatings, to teenagers hitting homeless people with baseball bats in the middle of the night, to Saddam Hussein's untelevised execution. These new video technologies elevate the idea that nothing can happen without being recorded by some kind of technology. In other words, the advancement of technology continually promises that "nothing can be lost." The two criminal profiler television shows discussed in this chapter employ technology in a way consistent with this description. However, each show also foregrounds the profiler's unexplainable gift to solve crimes after technology fails to identify a suspect. Using Todd McGowan's conception of "total presence"—which argues that the subject in the society of enjoyment believes it can successfully trade the absences that characterize public engagement for the safety of a totalizing, private enjoyment (*The End* 59-73)—I argue that the criminal profiler operates as a homology of the failures of private enjoyment to fully insulate the subject. Functioning as a type of post-high-tech detective,

television's criminal profiler highlights the fantasy that is technology's promise of securing a world where "nothing can be lost."

Each of these chapters develops two main ideas: first, the evolving portrait of how the criminal profiler is portrayed in popular entertainment, and second, the growing tendency of the profiler cycle to negate the significance of the Symbolic order. While the specific narrative and visual components of the cycle help us understand the evolving portrait, Lacanian psychoanalytic theory can help elucidate the cycle's contribution to the erosion of authority. Some key terms, however, need to be explained in order to justify this approach. Without key definitions of Lacanian concepts, one might begin to see this study of the profiler cycle as plea for a nostalgic return to a time when authority was more clearly respected and obeyed, and through an understanding of the growing importance of the Lacanian conception of enjoyment, such a return should be understood as neither possible nor desirable.

### **From Desire to Enjoyment**

Using Lacanian psychoanalysis is crucial to unpacking the ways in which the profiler films and television shows depend on structures of the unconscious, especially because the profiler cycle leans heavily upon psychoanalysis at the level of content, using it to explain the motivations for serial killing. While it would be easy to dismiss the cycle's reliance upon the language of psychoanalysis as being of the "dime-store" or "armchair" variety, I would like, instead, to suggest that the profiler cycle's repetitive use of psychoanalytic language makes it paramount that an examination of these films and television shows engage a rigorously psychoanalytic perspective. To achieve such an

analysis, I employ three Lacanian concepts throughout the dissertation, each of which are indispensable to profiler screen narratives: 1) the *objet a*, or the object-cause of desire, which sets in motion the subject's desire while simultaneously disrupting the subject's progress toward attainment, thus symbolizing the "central lack of desire" (Lacan, *Four* 105); 2) fantasy, or the idea of the subject's willingness to suspend its desire for the *objet a* in favor of a fantasmatic solution to its deadlock—what Lacan refers to as the "means by which the subject maintains himself at the level of his vanishing desire, vanishing inasmuch as the very satisfaction of demand deprives him of his object" (*Écrits* 260); and 3) the concept of enjoyment (*jouissance*), which serves as the desired end of transgressing prohibition, with the qualification that Lacan argues that enjoyment is actually the command to "enjoy as little as impossible" and conceives of it as a barrier that guarantees that subjects will not be satisfied with their attainments (Evans 91). These concepts will be explored throughout the dissertation in order to better understand how the profiler cycle sustains its fantasmatic hold on audiences through appeals to prohibition and enjoyment. The Lacanian framework of this dissertation, moreover, depends upon three post-Lacanian theorists, Slavoj Žižek, Renata Salecl, and Todd McGowan, and their contributions to the concepts of fantasy and enjoyment.

The practice of bringing together Lacanian psychoanalytic concepts with Hollywood cinema enjoys a long history and has established some of the most important scholarship in film theory. During the 1960s and 1970s, poststructuralist film critics fused Lacanian concepts—the mirror-stage, the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Gaze—with the apparatus of cinema to develop a much-needed theory of how audiences interact with the movie screen. As I explained earlier, cinema theorists such as Metz and Mulvey

have demonstrated that spectator identification is linked to the gaze of the camera, which has the effect of controlling the spectator in various ways. McGowan refers to these critics and others like them as “traditional Lacanians.” McGowan, moreover, argues,

According to [traditional] Lacanian film theorists, film, like the mirror stage, is an imaginary deception, a lure blinding us to an underlying symbolic structure. The gaze is a function of the imaginary, the key to the imaginary deception that takes place in the cinema. Hence, the task of the film theorist becomes one of combating illusory mastery of the gaze with the elucidation of the underlying symbolic network that this gaze elides. The problem with this theoretical program is not its unquestioning allegiance to the precepts of Lacan, but, on the contrary, its failure to integrate fully the different elements of Lacan’s thought. (“Looking for the Gaze” 28)

McGowan’s description of the “traditional Lacanian” style of criticism is crucial to understanding how film theorists can continue to theorize Lacanian ideas, thus revising them and innovating beyond the foundational tenets established by Metz and Mulvey. To achieve such an innovation, McGowan contends,

because traditional Lacanian film theory conceives of the gaze solely as a subjective, mastering gaze, it focuses almost exclusively on spectators’ identification with this gaze. What this leaves out is the spectators’ relationship to the gaze as object—a relationship not of *identification* but of *desire*. By eliding the role of desire to emphasize identification,

traditional Lacanian film theory fails to see the cinema's radical potential.

(“Looking for the Gaze” 30, emphasis added)

This dissertation aggressively addresses McGowan's concerns by theorizing the profiler cycle as a group of films that can help us understand that spectatorship in cinema and television is a relationship of desire and not solely of subjective identification. Moreover, I contend that the figure of the profiler and the depiction of his/her procedures help bring the problems of desire into high relief. Rather than arguing that spectators identify with the profiler as the protagonist of the film, I argue that the profiler cycle, more properly, instructs spectators on how to desire. Lacan argues that “desire is the desire of the Other” (*Four* 38), and the Hollywood criminal profiler works from the base understanding that solving crime is achieved by determining what the criminal wants, not in an abstract way, but in a way that suggests that profilers can see and think precisely like the murderers they pursue. My point here is not to make the connection between these two things facile but to interrogate this simple connection for its radical potential. To do so, I examine the relationship of desire to enjoyment and argue that the key to understanding the cultural fascination of criminal profiling is the manner in which profiler entertainment takes the often occluded enjoyment of the Other and makes it central.

Generally speaking, this dissertation contends that one need only look at the criminal profiler cycle of mass entertainment to understand the allure of enjoyment and its shocking dissatisfaction. Lacan explains the relationship between desire and enjoyment: “[t]he subject will realize that his desire is merely a vain detour with the aim of catching the *jouissance* of the other—in so far as the other intervenes, he will realize that there is *jouissance* beyond the pleasure principle” (*Four* 184). In other words, desire

typically posits a world of enjoyment for which the subject strives, believing the whole time that the Other prohibits its progress toward its desired goal. The homeostatic stability of the deadlock of desire keeps the subject from the painful shock of enjoyment that lies beyond the pleasure principle, thus keeping the subject locked within the pleasurable circuit of repetition. McGowan argues in *The End of Dissatisfaction?* that in cultures organized around prohibition, Lacan's conception of desire is the normal state of affairs. However, McGowan, Žižek,<sup>20</sup> and Salecl<sup>21</sup> all contend that prohibition as an organizing principle of society is being replaced by private enjoyment, which has the effect of changing the coordinates of the subject's desire without lessening the shock of enjoyment's painful dissatisfactions. McGowan describes the society of prohibition as requiring

its members to sacrifice their individual, private ways of obtaining enjoyment for the sake of the social order. That is to say, one receives an identity from society in exchange for one's immediate access to enjoyment, which one must give up. This is, traditionally, the way in which society as such functions. (*The End* 3)

The shift to what McGowan calls the society of commanded enjoyment rejects sacrifice for the social order in favor of private enjoyment: "private enjoyment becomes of

---

<sup>20</sup> Žižek argues, to a varying degree in most of his books, that enjoyment has an expanding influence on social and political organization. For examples, see Žižek's *Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Woman and Causality* (54-85) and *For They Know Not What They Do: Enjoyment as a Political Factor* (7-11). Žižek consistently argues that enjoyment comes in the form of a surplus, or a remainder, that permeates all of our symbolic institutions as their obscene underside (Kay 163). At the same time as being unknown to us, enjoyment is compulsory; Žižek explains, "enjoyment itself, which we experience as 'transgression,' is in its innermost status something imposed, ordered—when we enjoy, we never do it 'spontaneously,' we always follow a certain injunction" (Kay 163).

<sup>21</sup> See *On Anxiety* (49-71). Salecl argues that the era of enjoyment is an era characterized by the "Just Do It!" ideology, which relies "on the idea that the subject is 'free' in the sense of being a non-believer in authority and a person capable of changing his or her identity at will" (50).

paramount importance—and the importance of the social order recedes as a whole,” which changes dissatisfaction into “something that one need not experience, in contrast to the society of prohibition, where dissatisfaction inheres the very fabric of social existence itself” (*The End* 3). Whereas desire operates as a brace that locks the subject into a stable reality, relinquishing it threatens to derail the subject at every turn. The criminal profiler cycle installs the post-prohibition fantasy of ever present enjoyment at every level of its form. Through the cycle’s consistent reliance upon the desire to see more, the revised conception of how authority structures society, and the inability of technology to fully prevent crime, profiler entertainment convincingly suggests that the proliferation of violent crimes requires thinking and seeing like a criminal, that traditional police work fails to fully contain their menace, and that the sophistication of serial murderers demands investigators with special visual gifts for psychic insights. A complete study of profiler entertainment reveals contemporary anxieties about desire for and fears of the FBI and illustrates the complex ways in which we respond to threat of violent crime.

## CHAPTER ONE

### From G-Men to Criminal Profilers: A Lacanian Theory of the Evolution of the Cinematic FBI Agent

In April of 1983, Bruce Porter lauds the emergence of the “mind hunters” working for the FBI’s psychological profiling team in an article for *Psychology Today* (44). He explains to his audience that America’s newest and most frightening criminal threat, the serial murderer, has a formidable foe: the criminal profiler (44). Porter’s flattering portrait of the criminal profilers from the FBI’s Behavioral Sciences Unit depicts these new super detectives as real life examples of Edgar Allan Poe’s C. Auguste Dupin or Arthur Conan Doyle’s Sherlock Holmes, describing them as cerebral crime fighters who rely upon psychological concepts in predicting criminality. The emergence of this new force within the Bureau, according to Porter, portends a bright future: “the day does not seem far off when the police will be able to identify a criminal by the psychic loops and whorls he left at the scene, just as quickly as if he had covered the wall with fingerprints” (52). The criminal profiler’s introduction as the new and improved G-Man of the late twentieth century evokes the criminal crusades of the past, a past nearly forgotten by 1980, and suggests that criminal profiling represents the best of all answers to the complicated forms of criminal deviancy plaguing the culture. While profilers spend the majority of their time identifying the characteristics common to serial offenders, I contend that their method represents an opportunity to create a pre-emptive



form of crime fighting that allows agents of the law to identify and stop criminals before they strike. Profiling fills in the blanks left behind by criminals by explaining the psychological make-up of the unknown subject's identity. Over the last twenty-five years, the FBI has attempted to capitalize on this "mystical" process of solving crimes by promoting the myth that profilers are uniquely qualified to protect the public from what has often appeared to be an explosion of serial killer activity.<sup>1</sup> The Boston Strangler, Charles Manson, the Son of Sam, Ted Bundy, Wayne Williams, Jeffery Dahmer, to name but a few, have all perpetrated crimes of horrific violence, which have had long lives in the American imagination, but more than the grisly nature of their crimes, what makes the serial killer truly frightening is that their deviant behavior often appears to be motiveless, thus making any person a potential target. The "mind hunter," as a consequence of the perception of an increasing randomness of violent crime at the end of the twentieth century, has been portrayed by the FBI as the most innovative weapon against the growing problem of serial killing (Jenkins 78).

The portrayal, by the FBI, the mainstream media, and popular culture, of profilers as "mind hunters" with a specialized knowledge of criminal behavior received a boost in its credibility after the FBI's role in the apprehension of Atlanta child murderer Wayne Williams (Douglas, *Mindhunter* 224). The resulting apprehension and prosecution of Williams serves as the focus of Porter's article, but the flattering portrait of the Bureau's innovative weapon includes a caveat, which is often found in almost every description of

---

<sup>1</sup> For more on the FBI's manipulation of this myth, see Philip Jenkins's *Using Murder: The Social Construction of Homicide*. As Jenkins explains, actual FBI profilers have had almost no impact on the apprehension of criminals, but the media creation of the mind hunter has continued to validate the work of the BSU (73). Mark Seltzer similarly argues that real profilers have been genuinely ineffectual tracking down real serial killers, but this fact has not affected Hollywood's interest in stories of profiling (*Serial Killers* 13-17).

criminal profiling's potential for success. After highlighting the best examples of profiling's contribution to crime prevention, Porter reminds his readers that

[t]he agency warns local policeman not to take any profile too literally—not to limit their investigation to people who exhibit the characteristics in the sketch. A profile is supposed to describe a general type of person, not point to a certain individual. And there is always the possibility that an FBI profile could be dead wrong. (50)

While Porter promotes the future potential of the profiling unit, he suddenly warns his audience about the risk of making a literal investment in a hocus-pocus form of detection, acknowledging that profilers can often be “dead wrong.” In fact, criminal profiling has plenty of examples of failure: the Green River killer (Seattle area killer who evaded detection for thirty years), the Zodiac killer (San Francisco area killer who was never apprehended), the Tylenol poisonings of the mid-1980s, the 1996 Atlanta Olympic bombing, the 2002 Washington D.C. snipers, and the anthrax letters sent to Congress in 2002—has led critics of profiling to wonder aloud about its contribution to closing cases. Philip Jenkins has argued that the “mind hunter” image has served well in popular culture but has had little practical contribution to police procedure (71). Given the conflict in portrayals of its impact on solving crimes, criminal profiling, I will argue in this chapter, is a detective technique best understood as an example of failed desire. In other words, I would like to suggest that profiling's ascent to the top of the law enforcement ladder as the most innovative technique used in crime fighting is not a result of a series of stunning successes. Instead, I contend that profiling succeeds only because it does not fail all of the time. While promoting the FBI's “mind hunter's” uncanny ability for *occasionally*

identifying criminals, Porter's *Psychology Today* article crucially undercuts its own promotion of the FBI "mind hunters" by demonstrating that criminal profilers are only successful because they are not wrong all of the time. The failure to always get the profile right proves to be the most crucial element underpinning the success of the criminal profiler as the representation of the FBI agent evolves at the end of the twentieth century and into the twenty-first. Unlike many studies of profiling as an actual practice and its representation in film and television,<sup>2</sup> this dissertation focuses on the flaws, rather than its successes, in criminal profiling as the reason for its successful proliferation. This exploration into the profiler's enduring popular presence will show that these flaws in the method of "mind hunters" are not inherently a problem that needs redressing, but, indeed, the very reason the profiler, more than any other "new" detective, most effectively represents the anxieties of the new century plagued by media portrayals of exploding violent crime.<sup>3</sup>

The purpose of this chapter is not to position the criminal profiler as a radical exception to the ways in which FBI agents have been portrayed in the past. In fact this chapter argues precisely the opposite. By demonstrating that the profiler extends a long tradition of flawed FBI agents that fail to get what they want through the methods they

---

<sup>2</sup> For examples of true crime accounts of the successes of criminal profiling, see Douglas's *Mindhunter: Inside the FBI's Elite Serial Crime Unit* and *The Anatomy of Motive*, Robert Ressler's *I Have Lived Inside the Monster*, and Douglas's and Hazelwood's *Sexual Homicide: Patterns and Motives*. For more on the popular representation of criminal profiling see the aforementioned Jenkins and Seltzer and see Richard Tithecott's *Of Men and Monsters: Jeffrey Dahmer and the Construction of the Serial Killer*. All of these authors agree that profiler mythology has been effectively transmitted to the culture via Hollywood and the national media.

<sup>3</sup> I link the profiler with the belief that violent crime has risen to an intolerable level at the end of the millennium because of profiling's desire to eradicate all criminals before they strike. Moreover, I will explain in chapter three that the rise in violent crime is a direct reflection of what Todd McGowan calls the society of enjoyment. McGowan suggests that in "a society that commands enjoyment, every relationship with the other produces a fear of potential theft of one's enjoyment [...] The prevailing command to enjoy creates a life and death struggle to enjoy" (*The End* 187). An explosion of violent crime, I contend, is a direct reflection of the constant threat of enjoyment theft.

articulate, I plan to demonstrate that these flaws are not a miscalculation by Hollywood in attempting to realistically portray the work of the FBI, but rather the crucial structure that fuels the entire genre. During J. Edgar Hoover's tenure as head of the FBI, the concepts of perfection and realism dominated Hollywood's portrayal of the special agent. Indeed, Hoover's control of the on-screen mystification of the Bureau and the criminals it chased from 1930s to the 1960s primarily depended on the concept that the federal police had better law enforcement procedures than local/state police, thus making it the pre-eminent crime fighting institution in the country. Hoover worked diligently through these years to justify the Bureau's existence by exposing American audiences to the tools of its power, which, I argue, ultimately led to a demonstration of the FBI's limitations. In other words, audiences continue to enjoy films about the FBI because of an unconscious identification with its power to control aberrant criminal behavior, but this identification ultimately fails because there never seems to be an end to the criminal's ability to befuddle the law. Using tactics such as the "Ten Most Wanted" list, comic books, radio, television shows, and film, the FBI, throughout its history, has employed a clearly defined Other—organized crime, the Nazi or Communist spy, the Black Panthers, the anti-war movement, the serial killer, the terrorist—in order to validate its existence, arguing that it offers the best possible strategies for containing these unique threats. Through popular culture, the FBI's strategy depends primarily upon a shared view that we all take part in a "way of life" that we all enjoy while excoriating the Other for threatening to steal that enjoyment.<sup>4</sup>

---

<sup>4</sup> Lacan employs the term *jouissance* throughout his work to describe the enjoyment of the Other. I prefer, for the sake of the clarity of my argument, to simply use enjoyment instead. While enjoyment is not a perfect translation of *jouissance*'s orgasmic connotation, it works effectively when discussing the ways in which a culture develops and protects certain images of itself and excludes others. More specifically, Americans commonly claim "enjoying life" is a desired goal, and FBI popular culture constantly exploits this goal. In other words, the FBI capitalizes on the public's willingness to accept an increased police presence as long as it protects the people's freedom to enjoy.

However, these popular representations, like the *Psychology Today* article, are replete with examples of near misses, misidentifications, abuses of power, complete failures, and unrealistic techniques of detection.

This chapter is devoted to explaining the psychoanalytical processes that underpin our unconscious identification with the Law and also to demonstrating how the Bureau has historically exploited our national enjoyment in order to build its prestige and consolidate its power. To achieve this, I will first explain how the FBI constructs and employs the ideology of our shared “way of life.” Then, I will explain how unconscious identification works, using Lacan’s concepts of desire, enjoyment, and fantasy in order to show the desirable nature of failure. The FBI’s failure to apply seamlessly its ideological mission will be explained through a short history of cinematic representations of the G-Man, which will show why failure is central to satisfying audience’s desire for punishing criminal behavior. Finally, I will introduce the criminal profiler to the short history of the G-Man and establish a theoretical framework for understanding why the profiler is the only logical inheritor of what turns out to be the complete failure of the FBI to maintain its place in the popular culture imagination. Theorizing the failure of the FBI’s image provides the basis for understanding how the FBI resurrects its image through the criminal profiler, which, as we shall see, depends upon a significant reversal in the ways in which audiences enjoy stories of crime and punishment.

### **Desire, Enjoyment, and the Hollow Nickel**

To better understand how the FBI creates narratives that persuade audiences of its necessity, I want to turn to the psychoanalytic theories of Jacques Lacan. More

specifically, I want to employ his concepts of desire and enjoyment in order to demonstrate how the Bureau exploits our desire for satisfying stories of the containment of criminal excess and the continuing success of the American “way of life.” To achieve this goal, however, the FBI’s image, traditionally, has often dissatisfied audiences with its appeals to excess rather than satisfied them through stories of complete success. Because the Law always fails to satisfy the subject’s desire for complete autonomy,<sup>5</sup> the FBI’s legitimacy depends primarily, not on its successes, but upon representations of its failures in order to keep intact the public’s desire for its necessity. In this section, I will explain this key reversal and illustrate the ways in which failing to fully achieve the stated goal underpins the public’s continued support of the Law—the crucial structure by which the FBI maintains its image.

The notion of failure that I am employing in this argument is antithetical to traditional humanist conceptions of the term. The humanist conception of failure depicts the subject as a self-starting individual who sets out to succeed at a specific goal, and if the subject fails, the source of the failure is from some outside force that temporarily derails the subject’s forward progress. The outside force or unforeseen event can be overcome through the subject’s will and the goal ultimately obtained. Lacan, however, conceives of failure in completely different terms. Instead of successfully completing the intended task, Lacan argues that failing to do so is the actual target of the subject’s desire (Žižek, *Looking Awry* 5). Failure, then, is the goal instead of being some thing to be

---

<sup>5</sup> McGowan explains that the Law is embodied in the Name-of-the-Father, which bars anyone entering into the Symbolic order from enjoyment. Moreover, he contends that subjects must look to the Law for recognition because of this evacuation of enjoyment. Lastly, he depicts the Law as creating the guise of a neutral public space where subjects must rid themselves of their enjoyment in order to get along with others. The Law’s elimination of enjoyment and creation of a neutral public space, ultimately, clarifies the Law’s dissatisfying nature (*The End* 28-9).

avoided. For films and television shows featuring FBI agents, failure is a key component to the FBI's successfully claims of constant protection of the American "way of life." The FBI, I argues and will demonstrate in later, appeals to our shared desire for freedom and independence, but, according to the FBI, these cherished ideals require police-state protection (Miers 6). Representations of FBI agents understand, on some level, that we take satisfaction in ideas like freedom and independence by not directly satisfying our appetite for either, which describes perfectly the relationship between the real FBI and its Hollywood representation. In other words, the real FBI agent depends on Hollywood never fully achieving its goal of depicting the "reality" of the FBI agent on screen, a pattern of failure that I will specifically trace later in this chapter. The real FBI requires these Hollywood failures for its image to continue working; the popular image operates as a stumbling block in the portrayal of the FBI that, ultimately, *needs to be there*. In order for the FBI's "official story" to work, it must function improperly in order to function at all, and Lacan assigns the structure of desire to this notion of something succeeding based upon its properly, improper functioning (Žižek, *Looking Awry* 5).

Todd McGowan has argued that traditional conceptions of desire have consisted mostly of a Nietzschean schema, which conflates desire with a "will to power," suggesting that it operates primarily as a mastering of the chaotic and unknowable ("Looking for the Gaze" 30). According to McGowan, Lacan reverses these traditional Nietzschean notions of desire as an attempt to successfully gain complete control:

[r]ather than seeking power or mastery (the phallus), our desire is drawn to the opposite—the point at which power is entirely lacking, the point of total jouissance [...] This appeal that jouissance has for us explains why

power fails to provide satisfaction. No matter how much power one acquires, one always feels oneself missing something—and this “something” is the *objet petit a*. Even those who are bent on world conquest feel the allure of the hidden jouissance of the Other, and they locate this jouissance at the point where power seems most absent.

(“Looking for the Gaze” 32)

McGowan’s description of Lacan’s schema for desire and power revises traditional thinking about of failure as an obstacle to success and makes it possible to see failure as the best possible success. Total success without an option for failure ceases to stimulate the subject’s desire, and to better understand this crucial point, it is necessary to clarify the role the *objet petit a* (*objet a* for short) plays in regard to desire. Lacan refers to the *objet a* as a mysterious object that sets desire in motion and serves as the focus of the subject’s quest—a quest that always fails to satisfy the subject (Evans 124-6). The *objet a* is an impossible object that the subject envisions belonging to the Other, which ultimately places the subject within the service of that object and demonstrates Lacan’s belief that the subject is always determined by the signifier (Evans 124-6). McGowan explains,

[d]esire is motivated by the mysterious object that the subject posits in the Other [...] but the subject relates to this object in a way that sustains the object’s mystery. Hence, the *objet petit a* is an impossible object: to exist, it would have to be simultaneously part of the subject and completely alien. This is why Lacan says that “desire is merely a vain detour with the aim of catching the *jouissance* of the other” [...] The jouissance embodied



in this object exists only insofar as it is out of reach. (“Looking for the Gaze” 32)

The *objet a*, in essence, represents the enjoyment that the subject thinks it needs, but, ultimately, this enjoyment does not grant power or control but operates as something that must be avoided at all costs. While this enjoyment is the motor that drives desire forward, finding it is not the aim. Rather, the subject seeks to reproduce desire. In *Looking Awry*, Slavoj Žižek relates Lacanian desire to one of Zeno’s paradoxes, Achilles and the tortoise, known also through Aesop as the fable of the hare and the tortoise. Žižek argues that the phenomenon of each text is instructive on how desire works, suggesting that the stories are similar to the way subjects pursue objects in dreams (*Looking Awry* 4). According to each story, no matter how much faster the subject than the object, the subject never attains what it chases. The crucial point of the example proves that desire is not about attaining object-causes of desire but about the chase: “The object-cause is always missed; all we can do is encircle it. In short, the topology of his paradox of Zeno is the paradoxical topology of the object of desire that eludes our grasp no matter what we do to attain it” (*Looking Awry* 4). The *objet a* plays the role of a lure with no positive quality that guarantees that desire will be reproduced, and the subject’s original lack, therefore, will never be satisfied. According to Žižek, the subject prefers missing the enjoyment represented as the goal of its chase in preference to sustaining a consistent Symbolic existence (*Looking Awry* 5).

The theoretical benefit of locating the *objet a* within certain texts is that it allows for better articulations of Lacan’s concept of the Real—the often overlooked third register in the Lacanian orders of experience—which helps explain how representations

of enjoyment supply fuel for desire while simultaneously hindering desire's intended progress. The Real along with the Imaginary and the Symbolic combine to form the subject's psychoanalytical experience. While the Imaginary and the Symbolic combine to make up the subject's formation of reality, the Real is beyond reality: an extra, unsymbolizable, and unspeakable supplement to the already symbolized daily reality of the subject. The *objet a* serves as a reminder of the gap the Real represents in reality. While the *objet a* demonstrates how the subject is determined by the signifier, one might ask how it is that desire is characterized by failing to miss the object-cause of desire? If, according to Lacan, the *objet a* so perfectly lures subjects into believing in its importance, how is it that it is always missed and never a positive presence? As Lacan argues, the role of the Real in the process of desire is to disrupt the smoothly functioning Symbolic order: "the [R]eal is 'the impossible' because it is impossible to imagine, impossible to integrate into the [S]ymbolic order, and impossible to attain in any way. It is this character of impossibility and of resistance to symbolization which lends the [R]eal its essentially traumatic quality" (Evans 160). Because the *objet a* is shot through with the Real, it presents itself in the Symbolic as something attainable that, if approached too closely, emits shocks of the Real, which force the subject to divert its desiring energies toward something more benign, hence Lacan's dictum that desire is always the desire for something else. For example, McGowan offers Orson Welles's *Citizen Kane* and Steven Spielberg's *Duel* as films that sustain desire throughout and make spectators aware of the effects of the Real (33-6). *Citizen Kane* employs Rosebud as the journalist's *objet a* that promises to unlock the secret enjoyment of Charles Foster Kane. Each time he interviews a different acquaintance of Kane, he gets closer to the mystery only to be

denied access to Kane's ultimate enjoyment, which remains an absence throughout the film. Likewise, in *Duel*, David Mann sets out to drive from Los Angeles to Northern California and encounters a mysterious truck, which torments him for the duration of the drive, nearly killing him by the end of the film. The truck driver remains unseen (to the driver and audience) throughout the film—a blank of which the driver of the car asks, “what does he want from me?” This is the fundamental question of desire. David Mann never discovers the secret of truck driver's enjoyment, experiencing it only as a negative presence. Both *Kane* and *Duel* sustain desire throughout the film, according to McGowan, thus making us aware of the Real, the gap in the Symbolic, through its absence, demonstrating how the Real expresses itself as a void around which desire turns (“Looking for the Gaze” 36).

While *Citizen Kane* and *Duel* demonstrate the radical potential of sustaining desire in mainstream Hollywood cinema, the majority of Hollywood's output avoids such “close encounters” with the Real, preferring to turn to the friendlier caress of fantasy. Fantasy, according to McGowan, suggests that there is a positive quality to the enjoyment of the Other, which can be located and assimilated (“Looking for the Gaze” 36). In other words, the turn to fantasy would have provided the identity of the truck driver in *Duel*, thus solving the mystery and satisfying audience's with the notion that Other's enjoyment can be represented. Fantasy, however, is not a simple fix for the dissatisfaction of desire; it is, more precisely, the avenue on which desire travels. Fantasy both transmits the Real of desire and shields the subject from its trauma, and through the repression of trauma, fantasy broadcasts the fundamental lack that the subject seeks to avoid. Sarah Kay explains, “[f]antasy is located in the *objet a*. The fundamental stuff of fantasy is not

transgression of the law but its installation, since it is fantasy that ‘plugs’ the trauma of our initial subjection, and supports the appeasing overlay of Oedipus” (135). Instead of an impasse, the fantasmatic *objet a* presents itself without contradiction and satisfies questions of the Other’s enjoyment. For example, the first portion of *Night of the Living Dead* opens up a void in the desire of the zombies. The people trapped in the house are unable to understand what the zombies want from them, but when the radio and television are discovered, they are able to satisfactorily answer this question—the zombies want to eat them. Horrifying as the answer is, the “profile” provided by the media renders the zombies into a somewhat crude, obscene version of the people inside the house, which allows them to symbolize the zombies into their own experience. The fantasy provided by the media allows the people trapped in the house the possibility of believing in a plan of escape and putting it into action. The fantasy suggests that if the Other wants to eat us, we will drive as far away from them as we can. Not knowing what the Other wants leaves us caught in a deadlock, unable to respond to its demands. Knowing allows us to respond. However, as is often the case, fantasy emerges as a forced choice—the people in the house really have no choice but to try to escape the zombies if they want to live. This forced choice, then, demonstrates the fundamental repression that fantasy conceals: no matter what they do, they are going to die. *Night of the Living Dead* is significant for its relationship to fantasy because it does not easily resolve the question of desire. Instead, after all the main characters are killed (in most cases through their own selfishness and by the hand of other humans), Romero’s film exposes the hollow nature of fantasy, identifying the ideological use of the Other’s enjoyment and screening the crucial repression each character wishes to avoid, namely

that they are their own worst enemy. By plugging the void of the zombies' desire with a notion of what they want, "fantasy threatens to expose the limitations of the ideological edifice that employs it" (McGowan 40). *Night of the Living Dead* exposes the hollowness of the government's and media's promise to protect citizens and their "way of life." Indeed, it suggests that when "film employs fantasy but at the same time reveals the limit that fantasy comes up against, it takes us into an encounter with the Real" (McGowan 40). My use of this example is a way of suggesting that representations of the FBI agent, especially the profiler, reveal the failure of fantasy to fully satisfy audiences with answers to the Other's enjoyment, a point that will be clarified later, but before I fully explain the connection, I want to explain the significance of fantasy in more detail.

Instead of critiquing fantasy as a false mask on the real effects of ideology, Lacanian psychoanalysis can demonstrate how one, fantasy, supplements the other, ideology. The two do not work hand-in-hand with each other to the point where ideology perfectly misleads subjects into misrecognizing its real conditions of existence. If we consider how fantasy operates as an *objet a* for ideology, in other words as an incomplete lure, we can begin to see that fantasy does not benignly deliver ideology to the subject but, rather, exposes the limits to which ideology works. Because of fantasy's strong attachment to the Real, ideology cannot always-already determine subjects. Rather, fantasy shows how gaps emerge within ideology, or as McGowan and Sheila Kunkle explain,

[t]hat is to say, ideology's very dependence on its imaginary supplement—the fact that ideology needs help, that there are films at all,

even if their sole purpose lies in buttressing ideology—indicates the presence of a Real gap within ideology. *That* a film exists is thus even more important than *what* a film does. (xvii)

Furthermore, Žižek expands on McGowan and Kunkle’s point about film’s failure to fully transmit ideology. For Žižek, it is no longer sufficient for theory to continue unmasking the allegedly *secret* ideologies that exist *behind* its supposed fantasmatic mask, arguing that

[i]deology is not a dreamlike illusion that we build to escape insupportable reality; in its basic dimension it is a fantasy-construction which serves as a support for our ‘reality’ itself: an ‘illusion’ which structures our effective, real social relations thereby masks some insupportable, real, impossible kernel [...]. The function of ideology is not to offer us a point of escape from our reality but to offer us the social reality itself as an escape from some traumatic, real kernel. (*Sublime* 45)

Žižek, moreover, demands that theory needs to focus more closely on the true secret of form, which is “not the secret *behind* the form but *the secret of this form itself*” (*Sublime* 15). One of the goals of a project such as this study is to isolate the form of the FBI film and television show and explain how the gaps in its form both endorse and undermine its official ideology. By forging past this “secret that really is no secret,” we can begin to recognize how representations of the FBI agent are supported by more failures than successes. This project proposes that fantasy does not blind audiences to the workings of ideology, and instead, it more precisely suggests that fantasy provides moments where subjects can encounter the Real as a surplus: fantasy acting as both that which enables the

subject to sustain his/her desire and avoid the Real (Evans 60). The FBI's reliance upon popular culture as a way to underpin its ideological mission exposes the gaps in that mission—a truth of which it is always-already aware, which it also fundamentally avoids. A recognition of the “truth” of the FBI would have to begin with an admission of what makes up the secret of its enjoyment, which, as Lacan reminds us, must always be avoided:

Even in our times, a witness is asked to tell the truth, nothing but the truth, and what's more, the whole truth—but how, alas, could he? We demand of him the whole about what he knows. But, in fact, what is sought—especially in legal testimony—is that on the basis of which one can judge his jouissance. The goal is that jouissance be avowed, precisely insofar as it may be unavowable. The truth sought is the one that is unavowable with respect to the law that regulates jouissance. (*On Feminine* 92)

For the FBI to tell the whole truth and nothing but the truth about itself would be to avow the things from which it derives its enjoyment, which is a fundamental impossibility. However, this disavowal, or failure, does not sweep the truth under the rug but, rather, demonstrates, that its repressed truth is “out there” in popular culture where its seamy underside, its enjoyment, can be displayed at a safe distance from its “official” function.<sup>6</sup>

Hollywood structures the traditional FBI fantasy through narratives of satisfaction that position the enjoyment of the criminal Other as an outside force that threatens to

---

<sup>6</sup> Žižek often employs the *X Files* motto, “the truth is out there,” to explain that the unconscious “is outside, [and] not hidden in any unfathomable depths” (*Plague* 3). To support his assertion that the unconscious is out there for all to see, Žižek suggests that we look towards the revelations of pop star Michael Jackson's alleged immoral behavior with minors. Žižek argues that we should not be surprised by these revelations because the so-called dark side of Michael Jackson was “always there for all of us to see, in the video spots that accompanied his musical releases, which were saturated with ritualized violence and obscene sexualized gestures” (*Plague* 3). My accommodation of Žižek's approach is to show that the FBI film has always shown its dark side in the same way.

infect an unknowing public. The credibility of the FBI fantasy depends primarily upon a convincing narrative of necessity, and to earn the public's trust, the law enforcement agency typically legitimizes itself through a narrative that explains how it contributes to the protection of the community's "way of life" and, thus, creates a public desire for its continuing presence. Because of America's long-cherished belief in each individual state's ability to govern and police itself, the FBI worked hard to convince the people of its necessity. To do so, the FBI engaged, especially during the Hoover years, in a significant amount of public relations campaigns. Examples of their public relations efforts can be found in many places, ranging from popular films to promotional booklets, both of which have often been created primarily for young people.<sup>7</sup> In order to explain how the FBI manages its image and creates a desire for its necessity, I want to focus on one specific story that is told and re-told in a variety of the Bureau's public relations venues and then theorize this story in order to explain how the FBI effectively exploits our "way of life" in order to legitimize itself.

A story about Communist spies passing microfilm to each other using hollow coins appears in numerous publications praising the law enforcement techniques of the FBI and is instructive in the ways in which the FBI makes itself desirable. Featured prominently in Mervyn LeRoy's *The FBI Story* (1959), the story of the hollow coin also opens a promotional booklet entitled *Answers About the FBI* (1965). Entitled "The Hollow Nickel," this story is used as a framing device through which the booklet can

---

<sup>7</sup> See Richard Gid Powers's *G-Men: The FBI in American Popular Culture*. Powers asserts that the "FBI probably had even more impact on American kids during the depression and World War II than it did on their G-Man-infatuated parents [...] And when the depression generation of kids entered post-war American business, government, and culture, the intensity of their childhood identification with the G-Men made it impossible to for them to look at Hoover with eyes undazzled by hero-worship and nostalgia for lost youth" (188).



triumphantly emphasize the FBI's superior methods of detection. The story allows readers to fantasize about the omnipresence of the FBI and fascinates its young audience with the idea that the simplest things, like a nickel, can corrupt the American social structure. The story focuses on Jimmy, a newspaper delivery boy, and the rounds he makes through his neighborhood. After making his rounds and collecting a series of payments, Jimmy notices that one of his coins feels lighter than the others. When he drops the coin on the floor, it falls apart, and Jimmy finds a tiny filmstrip inside the two sides of the worthless nickel. The story of Jimmy's unusual discovery eventually is repeated enough times that a policeman hears about the hollow nickel and reports the story to the local office of the FBI. The FBI secures the coin, sends it to Washington D.C., and discovers secret codes listed on the filmstrip. Further analysis reveals that the two halves of the coin come from different nickels: one half a 1948 Jefferson nickel and the back from a coin prior to World War II. Moreover, the coin has a tiny hole drilled into the "r" in the word "trust," which helps in prying the two sides open. The discovery of the nickel leads to an investigation, uncovering many other hollow coins from across the country and revealing, according to the booklet, "a plot to undermine national security" (Miers 6).

The story of the hollow nickel demonstrates how the FBI uses metaphors of satisfied desire to support its ideological mission of legitimizing its role as chief protector of the American "way of life." First, the story employs a patriotic symbol; second, it shows how easily this unifying symbol can be contaminated by a foreign object; and, third, the story suggests that if the symbol is left unprotected, it runs the chance of being stolen from us and having its meaning corrupted. The FBI's fantasy of satisfied desire,

however, does not allow this to happen. The heroic agents of the Bureau reacquire the coin, remove its insidious contents, and replace it with new ideological content, endorsing the FBI's necessity and underscoring the threat represented by outsiders who might steal our "way of life." These FBI public relations narratives, which justify the necessity of a centralized agency of the Law, often follow the pattern of the hollow nickel story and depict the necessity of the Bureau's presence in the struggle to protect America from "plot[s] to undermine national security":

[c]ombating espionage certainly must rank foremost among the functions of the FBI in its day-and-night war against all the criminal elements that threaten to weaken and even destroy our social structure. Within certain prescribed limits, the FBI has only one duty: to protect the rights and freedom of every American citizen, no matter what risk is involved or whose feelings may be ruffled. (Miers 6)

The hollow nickel story suggests that we should recognize how the FBI attempts to plug the contaminated hole in the nickel with a narrative of triumphant counter-espionage, but fails to completely contain the appeals to excessive enjoyment necessary to protecting our shared social structure. This is precisely how fantasy operates: in order for fantasy to properly work it must appeal both on the surface level of the Law while acknowledging the Law's failure to contain all, allowing, then, the Law's seamy underside to fill out the gap of that failure. More specifically, in the hollow nickel story the FBI argues that it employs "prescribed limits" to protect freedom "no matter what risk is involved or whose feelings may get ruffled." If "feelings" and "risks" do not matter, how can the FBI operate within the prescribed limits of the Law? Does not this point suggest that the FBI

promises to transgress all “risks” and “feelings” in its vigilant protection of U.S. citizens? Is it possible, then, to suggest that this inspires more fear than admiration? In other words, no nickel goes unseen by the FBI—not even a nickel in the pocket of a young boy who delivers newspapers in the country’s largest city can escape the all-seeing power of the nation’s leading law enforcement agency. The hollow nickel story from the promotional pamphlet effectively operates as an effective example of how Ideology works: subjects unconsciously desire the FBI to go beyond “prescribed limits” and traverse “risks” and “feelings” in order to give meaning to mysteries like the “hollow nickel” in order to make credible its role “to keep America strong and free, youthful in spirit and alert to the danger of moral decay” (Miers 48). By plugging the hole in the nickel with ideological content, the FBI, on a conscious level, promises vigorous activity in the protection of its citizens who have specific rights that cannot be violated. However, this all depends on its citizens’ knowledge, at an unconscious level, that the FBI cannot protect its citizens fully without using repressive measures and violating civil rights.

To achieve the Ideological effect, the FBI clearly identifies an Other, who threatens our “way of life,” in order to conceal FBI’s excesses, and, in return, the Bureau promises Americans unlimited enjoyment of concepts like freedom, strength, youthful vigor, and vigilance against moral decay. The reality of the American “way of life” is built upon a paradox: freedom and individual rights are traded for protection by a law enforcement agency like the FBI that cannot fully guarantee these ideals and often acts in ways contrary to its promise. The hollow nickel story allows subjects to unconsciously enjoy the idea of American symbols and authorizes the FBI to punish any Other that

threatens to infect this enjoyment. While the FBI's public relations mission is to make this enjoyment available to all subjects, close scrutiny of its narrative strategies reveals an awareness of the FBI as being "non all." "Non all" is a term used by Žižek to explain how negation works in the Symbolic: "When language is said to be 'non all,' this is because it is at once 'all' (that there is) and 'not all' (in the sense of not consistent, not convincing, not satisfying)" (Kay 165). The hollow nickel story reveals the FBI's status as a "non all" because the story demonstrates how the Bureau attempts to satisfy audiences by showing that it can be everywhere all the time but disrupts that satisfaction by its appeals to excess. In other words, the FBI cannot secure everything without taking away the civil liberties of its citizens, and this story employs perfectly the psychoanalytic structures of fantasy and enjoyment. Hollywood films about the FBI typically solve the deadlock of desire by turning to fantasy, which endorses the belief that desire can be satisfied. As we shall see, all pre-profiler FBI films made during the Hoover years (roughly 1935-70) are hollow nickels infected by an outside influence that threaten the fabric of society unless the FBI is allowed to do what is necessary to stop the spread of the criminal infection. In order to convincingly portray itself as the country's most prominent law enforcement agency, the Bureau relies upon this fantasmatic solution to its status as a "non-all," and a theoretical reading of the evolution of the G-Man will reveal how the notion that the FBI "always gets its man" became so firmly entrenched within the American imagination

## Theorizing the G-Man

Thus far, I have established the fantasy structure that underpins the FBI's triumphant "official story," demonstrating that the FBI off-loads excessive techniques used to protect the country from its ideological Other and promises unlimited enjoyment of such concepts as freedom, strength, and moral certainty. The FBI fantasy rests upon a crucial exchange; for the pleasure of punishing the Other, the public must refuse to consciously recognize the limitations of the public Law and the transgressive behavior necessary to filling in those points of failure. Ultimately, though, these weaknesses and potentials for failure remain, residing on an unconscious level, and become evident through an explication of Lacanian concepts such as desire and fantasy. Typically, fantasy is thought to work in the service of ideology by screening scenarios which blind audiences into misrecognizing the state of things. However, I have suggested that if fantasy and ideology's hand-in-hand relationship operated smoothly, the FBI would not need to support its image through popular culture. On the contrary, I have suggested that the FBI fantasy goes only so far, and, as a result, popular culture presents an entirely incomplete and compromised picture of this fantasy. The failure of fantasy to completely cover all the Real gaps in ideology, though, is necessary for ideology to continue replicating itself and demanding obedience. Historically, films featuring FBI agents have retreated into fantasy in order to validate the Bureau's necessity and hide any gaps of uncertainty that may undermine its argument for itself. The limits of this fantasy only work, though, through an unconscious awareness of the FBI's transgressive potential. Rather than highlighting how the FBI fantasy hides this potential, an analysis of a few key pre-profiler FBI films will reveal a dependence upon agents who *cross the line*

between the law and criminal behavior, either through infiltration of criminal enterprises or a natural affinity with criminality. More specifically, such films reveal that the FBI fantasy depends on repeatedly featuring agents who threaten to lose their way in the ambiguous and corrupt criminal world. The limits of the FBI fantasy as portrayed by Hollywood films allow audiences an encounter with the enjoyment of the criminal Other that would otherwise be obscured in our experience of social reality. The key component to the replication of the fantasmatic supports rests upon the agent's support for, and submission to, the authority of the Law represented by the FBI. The following analysis of the pre-profiler FBI film will demonstrate that the FBI agent's desire is always clearly aligned with the official desire of the Bureau, an alignment that radically changes during the profiler cycle of FBI entertainment.

Beginning with the G-Man of the comics, pulps, radio, and cinema of the 1930s and continuing through its technical advisory role in films of the 1990s, the FBI has carefully managed and manipulated its image as the country's leading institution in its various "wars on crime" since the Great Depression. Under the long tenure of J. Edgar Hoover and its subsequent lesser-known directors, the FBI's image in popular culture has undergone a series of transformations, beginning as moral crusaders fighting organized crime in the 1930s, to organization men tracking down spies and other enemies of the state in the 1940s and 1950s, to discredited enemies of civil rights and the anti-war movement of the 1960s. By the 1970s, much of the country viewed the FBI agent as the "phone tapper, the bedroom bugger, the blackmailer; the scandal monger, the racist, the character assassin; the poisoner of the well of intellectual and political freedom" (Powers, *G-Men* 255). The carefully crafted image of the G-Man was forever wounded, leaving

the American audience unsympathetic to the FBI's crusade against crime (Powers, *G-Men* 255). By the mid-1980s, the heroic G-Man, the one that had caught John Dillinger and busted up Nazi spy rings, had all but disappeared from the American pop culture landscape.

The year 1924 represented a low point for the Bureau of Investigation, then a part of the Department of Justice. The scandalous sale of the government's Teapot Dome oil reserve touched all corners of the federal government and exposed its dependence upon corruption, graft, cronyism, and illegal uses of surveillance by the Bureau (Potter 10). The corrupt Republican patronage party networks and the widespread abuse of Prohibition laws threatened to undermine the legitimacy of the federal government (Potter 10). In the wake of the government's scandalous collapse, a little-known, lifelong civil servant, John Edgar Hoover, was named to run the Bureau of Investigation. Hoover was appointed, without concern to his political loyalties, to reform the Bureau into an effective and efficient law enforcement agency of the federal government. Hoover, by most accounts, is responsible for cementing the idea of federal law enforcement as a necessary component of our democracy. As Claire Bond Potter explains the "Bureau of Investigation came to represent a positive, masculinized 'federal' approach to crime: special agents, as they negotiated urban squad rooms, popular magazines, newspapers, and interstate investigations, articulated the state as modern; nationalizing practices as beneficial; and federal authority as legitimate and just" (33). Hoover carefully managed the public's perception of the Bureau and firmly connected the idea that some crimes were more important than other crimes, which required the expertise of his Bureau and its

special agents. To reinforce this image, Hoover took an active role in contributing to popular culture's insatiable appetite for stories of crime and punishment.

The FBI's collaboration with Hollywood began with the production of William Keighly's *G-Men* (1935), starring James Cagney as FBI agent Brick Davis. While not explicitly involved with the production, Hoover lent a few technical advisors to the film's production and passed approval on the leading man (Clarens 124). More importantly, though, Hoover allowed Warner Brothers to use the Department of Justice seal at the beginning of the film, thus lending the film credibility in its depiction of the FBI (Clarens 124). Moreover, Hoover further approved a 1949 re-issue of the film to celebrate the twenty-fifth anniversary of the FBI, and *G-Men* is correctly thought of as the "grand-daddy of all G-Men pictures" primarily because of its sanctioning by the Bureau (Clarens 124). Cashing in on the popularity of the gangster films of the early 1930s and the overwhelming coverage of the capture of John Dillinger, Warner Brothers created a film that clearly demonstrates the value of an institution like the FBI. Powers, moreover, explains, "*G-Men* was the first important piece of popular entertainment based on the history of the FBI (there had been several radio programs during 1934). It was the first wave in a flood of G-Man glorification that would radically alter the balance of the power of the Justice Department" (*G-Men* 52).

The success of Keighly's *G-Men* rests upon two crucial points. First, the film resembles the popular gangster pictures, which had all but disappeared after the Hays Office instituted the Production Code. Indeed, the story of *G-Men* is simply the gangster story told from the perspective of law and order, the rise of a kid from the streets to be a cop instead of a leader of a gang—both the gangster and G-Man are men of action and



are unafraid to use violence as a means of getting what they want. Second, Powers argues *G-Men* draws upon the tradition of the action detective hero, a figure the FBI scholar locates in America's long obsession with crime stories stretching back to Edgar Allan Poe's publication of the "The Murders in the Rue Morgue." However, he separates crime stories into two categories: the mystery story and the action detective story. Poe's stories are mystery stories, which focus on a detective of significant intelligence who solves the puzzle of the criminal act, and the action detective story forgoes puzzles in favor of capturing the criminal. Powers argues,

[t]he mystery story focuses on the process of solving the crime while the action detective story centers on the capture of the criminal [...] Mysteries tolerate ambiguities and eccentricities in their heroes [...] In the action story the hero is a pure projection of the audience's fantasies of power [...] In the mystery story the criminal's motive is one of puzzles [...] In the action story, however, the villain's black heart is motive enough; the only justification the hero needs for pursuing him is the eternal hostility of good for evil [...] The action detective story is, in short, an entirely different genre from the mystery, even though they both have detective heroes. (*G-Men* 77)

The story of *G-Men* quite clearly fits Powers's definition of the action detective story, but the film is not necessarily devoid of ambiguity. Instead of turning to crime, Brick Davis graduates from the streets of Depression America to go to law school and the FBI Academy. *G-Men* draws much of its credibility from sequences of Davis's training at the Academy because of its location shooting and semi-documentary style. The story

unfolds as a kind of coronation of Davis as a G-Man that ends successfully after he fully severs his ties with the underworld by killing his former benefactor and rescuing a kidnap victim at the end of the film. Kidnapping, more significantly, was at the time a crime that was easily identified as the jurisdiction of the FBI. At this point, Hoover was trying to expand the power of federal law enforcement, and *G-Men* helped show audiences just how much of an impact the FBI can have on tracking down criminals that cross state lines. Moreover, film historian Carlos Clarens asserts that *G-Men* helped the Bureau and Hoover by “instilling in audiences a feeling that society was threatened and that only his [Hoover’s] small but growing force of elite crusaders stood between the safety of American women and children and all the assorted mobsters, mad dog killers, and other public enemies” (127). The resulting image of the G-Man as performed by Cagney is the action detective hero who combined a rebellious anti-conformity with a rigorous anti-intellectual world-view. Similar to the gangster, Davis follows a policy of “hit-someone-in-the-mouth and ask questions later” (Powers, *G-Men* 94). This image of the G-Man was replicated in other FBI films of the 1930s. Films such as *Public Enemy’s Wife*, *Public Hero Number One*, *Let ’ Em Have It*, *Fugitive*, and *Show Them No Mercy* all sought to reproduce the G-Man image, none of which gained quite the popularity of *G-Men* (Powers, *G-Men* 82). Ultimately, *G-Men* served the Bureau well, creating an impression of the FBI agent as the most capable detective for the “war on crime” and contributing to the FBI’s legitimacy as a police organization (Powers, *G-Men* 63).

While the action detective proved to be a popular interpretation of the G-Man’s attitude toward law enforcement, Hoover was unhappy with this image and sought to reshape it. The change in image began with a collaboration between the FBI and MGM

on the *Crime Does Not Pay* series, a collection of shorts that regularly preceded feature films. These short films, based on stories from FBI files, were ideal for the new image Hoover wanted. The *Crime Does Not Pay* series was often aimed at young audiences and focused on presenting the scientific detective work of the FBI—ballistic tests, fingerprints, microscopic analysis—and limited the outbursts of violence typical of the fictional G-Man films (Clarens 131). Through these films Hoover hoped to revise the action detective image of the FBI agent and turn the G-Man into a

symbol of security, order, and domesticity—family man, scientist, and bureaucrat as much as square-jawed, two-fisted crime fighter. His ambition was to get the public to accept the official and orthodox image of the bureau—which might be called “the FBI formula”—instead of the pop culture G-Man. (Powers, *G-Men* 94-5)

In conjunction with the *Crime Does Not Pay* series, Hoover affected this shift in image through a series of articles in popular magazines, stories and books written by Courtney Ryley Cooper, and films, to which Hoover paid closer attention and for which he demanded approval of certain scenarios and actors. Hoover’s obsessive attention to remolding the image of the FBI would prove, according to Powers, to be the fatal flaw that contributed to the demise of the image in the 1960s (*G-Men* xix).

Powers argues that by World War II the FBI’s public relations machine exerted complete control over its image, but Hoover was unable to ever completely bridge the gap between Hollywood’s G-Man formula and his own FBI formula. Indeed, the image of the FBI agent after World War II, I contend, depended heavily on a delicate balance between the two. The G-Man formula projected the image of a “free agent who settled

his own scores and saved the nation in the process,” serving as a fantasy of “absolute freedom, irresistible power, [and] total self-reliance” (Powers, *G-Men* 112). The FBI formula, however, was the antithesis of the action hero, a faceless and anonymous bureaucrat who fought crime with science instead of his fists (Powers, *G-Men* 112). Hoover depended on the G-Man formula to legitimize the role of the FBI in the public’s eyes and employed the FBI formula to reshape the apparatus of all agencies of law enforcement along the lines of Hoover’s bureau. As Powers suggests, this conflict would occupy Hoover until the 1970s (*G-Men* 112).

Rather than simplifying the image of the FBI agent, Hollywood’s depiction becomes remarkably more ambiguous in two FBI films from the 1940s—*The House on 92<sup>nd</sup> Street* (Henry Hathaway, 1945) and *The Street With No Name* (William Keighly, 1948), both of which were closely monitored by Hoover. Each featured an undercover agent infiltrating a criminal enterprise, thus exposing its activities to the public and hyping its threat. *The House on 92<sup>nd</sup> Street* focuses on the menace of a Nazi spy ring during World War II and reveals the paraphernalia of counterespionage: two-way mirrors, hidden cameras and microphones, and microphotography. Hoover’s coveted FBI formula of scientific detection is evident through the film’s detailed depiction of the overwhelming significance of the Bureau’s fingerprint collection and analysis program. Moreover, the film features factual information from the FBI files culled together from “half a dozen other cases to spin a semifictional web of espionage around the ultra-secret Project 97, which the picture offered as a euphemism for the real, and ultra-ultra-secret, Manhattan Project” (Clarens 187). *The House on 92<sup>nd</sup> Street* opens with an authoritative

voice-over<sup>8</sup> that extols the prowess of the FBI, explaining to the audience that this film was made with complete cooperation with the FBI and was adapted from the FBI files of Nazi espionage. The voice-over, combined with a semi-documentary approach, suggests for the audience the scientific expertise of the Bureau by employing actual surveillance films of the German embassy, which Hoover was convinced was actively engaged in recruiting spies for the Nazi cause. Moreover, the agent protagonist, Bill Dietrich (William Eythe), goes undercover posing as a Nazi spy, a common technique of FBI films that often points up the similarities between cop and criminal more than their differences. However, Dietrich is an action detective who conceives of Nazism as a disease threatening to poison his country. He ultimately exposes the leader of the spy ring, brings about her death, contains the threat posed to his country, and protects the secret of the atomic bomb. *The House on 92<sup>nd</sup> Street* does not rectify the conflict between Hollywood's G-Man formula and Hoover's FBI formula. To shift the image of the FBI closer to being emblematic of scientific rationalism, the film uses the semi-documentary perspective to expose the public to many of the techniques used by agents to solve crimes and protect the public. As the narrator demands, the FBI is "the implacable foe of all the enemies of the USA," but as the film demonstrates, this is hardly an unambiguous statement.

*The Street With No Name* follows much of the same formula as *The House on 92<sup>nd</sup> Street* and attempts to further establish Hoover's goal of replacing the G-Man formula with the FBI formula. The gangster returns in this film as the G-Man's nemesis, and Keighly, a Hoover approved director based upon his success with *G-Men*, opens the

---

<sup>8</sup> The authoritative voice-over was a popular technique during *film-noir's* semi-documentary phase. As well as being used to lend credibility to the FBI procedurals, the voice-over can be found in Anthony Mann's *T-Men* (1947) and *He Walked by Night* (1949) and Henry Hathaway's *Call Northside 777* (1948).

film with the official seal of the FBI, a teletype from the director, and an authoritative voice-over to underscore the collaboration between the Bureau and the filmmakers. To further lend the film credibility, we are told that story is based upon real cases from the FBI files, and scenes from the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia, are used to give the film its semi-documentary look. This FBI procedural features an agent trained specifically to go undercover to infiltrate a gang of young hoodlums who rob a bank and a night club in the opening of the film. Moreover, the ballistics lab at the FBI is generously featured when two bullets from different crime scenes are matched, thus connecting separate crimes and emphasizing the scientific infallibility of the Bureau's crime lab. The film announces the emerging threat of a new age of criminals and tells us that they are "more intelligent, more dangerous than the old-time gangsters." Ultimately, the film builds a parallel between the scientific approaches of the criminals and cops, creating a parallel between the procedures of crime and crime detection (Clarens 218). To highlight the difference between the world of the undercover agent George Manly (Mark Stevens) and the gangster Alec Stiles (Richard Widmark), Keighly employs oppositional *mise-en-scène*: a semi-documentary approach to the opening FBI sequences and an expressionistic *film noir* approach to the gangster world. Keighly's approach to the *mise-en-scène* of *The Street With No Name* expands upon the *Crime Does Not Pay* series and uses the opposing styles to show that this anti-crime semi-documentary could hold its own against the encroaching darkness of *film noir* (Clarens 219). The undercover agent story in combination with the consistent use of ballistics evidence from the FBI crime lab bring together Hollywood's G-Man formula and Hoover's FBI formula, the two forms working together effectively to dramatize crime while focusing on the

advancement of crime fighting techniques. The balance of the two is brought out in the opposing *mise-en-scènes* and depiction of their interaction. However, the end of the film brings together agent Manly and the gangster Stiles in a gun fight that highlights the near-equivalence of the criminal and cop. The message emerging from the final battle is that Manly's scientific training and rationality learned at the FBI are the things helping him defeat the gang leader. In other words, the FBI is the only thing standing between the public and the menace of criminals like Stiles.

Understanding the emergence of the criminal profiler depends on seeing the formal conventions of *film noir* and semi-documentary not as opposing stylistic choices, but as approaches to *mise-en-scène* that support each other. *The Street With No Name* and *The House on 92<sup>nd</sup> Street* represent Hoover's reshaping of the image of the Bureau into an efficient bureaucracy that employs nearly infallible scientific approaches to crime. The agents in these films conform to the action-detective model; they are rather straightforward, patriotic crusaders with few, if any, complications. The merging of the semi-documentary tendencies of the G-Man film with the world of *film noir* helped clarify the shifting representation of the FBI agent from the action-detective to the rational, sober family man of *The FBI Story*. *Film noir* scholar Foster Hirsch has claimed that the semi-documentary phase of *film noir* did little to help advance the stylistic and thematic concerns of the genre. In fact, he seems to view it as an unwelcome diversion from *noir*'s true calling. Hirsch explains that the influences of Italian neo-realism on *film noir*'s semi-documentary phase "was no help to noir":

In its most provocative and absorbing form *noir* inhabits a twilight zone shakily suspended between reality and nightmare; it thrives on and indeed

requires spatial as well as psychological dislocations, whereas the tendency of Neo-Realism is toward simplicity, directness, reportorial accuracy [...] In opening the labyrinthine underground of urban crime and of the criminal mentality to the fully waking, daily world, in moving crime into real city streets at high noon, the semi-documentary thriller lacked impact and originality, the special charged atmosphere, of *noir*'s shadowy closed world. (67)

In other words, Hirsch believes the semi-documentary phase of *film noir* to be diversion from true *noir*. I, however, want to suggest that the semi-documentary phase of *noir*, as expressed in the FBI film, demonstrates the way in which these two *mise-en-scènes* can supplement each other. Bringing together the expressionistic claustrophobia of *film noir* with the location shooting and social realism of documentary continues the problem Hollywood has always had in portraying crime. Emphasizing social realism cannot completely remove ambiguity from the portrayal of law enforcement. For example, the excess of Josef von Sternberg's gangster epic *Underworld* (1928) gives way to the gritty social realism of the gangster films of the early 1930s; the closed world and ambiguities of the early 1940s *film noir* shifts into postwar, neo-realist location films. The two visual styles, I suggest, supplement each other at the limit where one style cannot fully articulate what it is trying to represent. For example, the relationship established between these shifts is, on the one hand, a subjective, private experience of crime, and on the other hand, an objective, public handling of crime. *Film noir* deals primarily in private spaces where the public is constantly deceived by the main character's deceptions, and the semi-documentary film must demonstrate through public exposé that crime cannot hide and go



undetected. The private deceptions of *noir* usually mask the private traumas of its characters, showing how easily the public face can hide a deception, which constantly disrupts the audience's satisfaction for answers and reasons for crime. The semi-documentary approach demonstrates that the deceptions of private individuals can be brought out into the harsh daylight, thus suggesting that nothing private can go completely undetected and provides satisfying answers to why crime happens. The combination of the expressionistic visual style of *film noir* with the semi-documentary approach in 1940's FBI films, I believe, effectively represents the fantasy that a seamy underside exists just below the surface reality.

The FBI fantasy as portrayed by Hollywood, in order to sustain itself, depends upon the possibility that its agents might fail to stop crime, and *The House on 92<sup>nd</sup> Street* and *The Street With No Name* rely upon the undercover agent story to show how easy it is for agents to be seduced by the enjoyment of the criminal Other. To continue validating itself, the FBI must contain its potential for failure in order to properly portray itself through Hoover's FBI formula of perfect crime fighters and detection techniques. For example, *The House on 92<sup>nd</sup> Street* and *The Street With No Name* both advance Hoover's FBI formula by providing documentary access to the Bureau's crime detection resources and training, but neither of these films fully account for the success of the agent. Instead, each film employs the undercover agent conceit, placing its agent within the Nazi spy ring and the other into a criminal gang, a conceit that "became standard formula for most films produced under the aegis of various federal and state agencies" (Clarens 218). The agent, though, in each film fails to maintain his cover, and this failure, not the success of scientific rationalism, is the necessary component to the criminal exposé. Each film

purports to demonstrate through its factual files that FBI agents can infiltrate the most well-concealed criminal enterprises, but each film also demonstrates that Nazi spies can hide in plain sight and that cops can crossover into the criminal world in order to advance their cause. In *House*, a Nazi spy infiltrates the atomic bomb program, and in *Street*, a dirty cop works for Stiles and exposes the undercover agent's identity. While each film purports to be a testament to the power of the FBI through its use of semi-documentary, I want to argue that the ambiguities of *film noir* undercut these positivist claims of supremacy, effectively blurring the line between G-Man and master criminal. The power of the FBI is undercut by its dependence upon criminals who are as sinister as the agents of the FBI are squeaky clean, but this flaw, or lack, within Hoover's claim to power over crime helps reinforce audiences' belief in the FBI as a necessary component of its day-to-day protection. The imperfections in crime-fighting exhibited in these films, I contend, create the possibility for another film and another film about the FBI, and the *mise-en-scènes* of *film noir* and semi-documentary mutually support this possibility of failure. The ambiguity found in the 1940s successfully endorses FBI claims about its superior methods, but, as Hoover perfects his FBI formula for scientific crime fighting in *The FBI Story*, audience desire is effectively cut off through a demystification of crime detection, which is achieved through an elimination of the ambiguity found in *House* and *Street*.

The problem with the image of the FBI agent in *The FBI Story* is that it is too perfect. The image of the FBI as presented in Mervyn LeRoy's adaptation of Don Whitehead's history of the Bureau manages to successfully transform the agent from the G-Man formula into Hoover's cherished FBI formula. LeRoy's representation of the FBI agent is perfected to a point that the Bureau appears indomitable and its agents appear

separate and above the crime they investigate. The film forgoes the stylistic blending of the semi-documentary and *film noir* found in the 1940s. In fact, the film employs a sterile, Technicolor *mise-en-scène* that eliminates even the slightest notion of ambiguity. Starring James Stewart as ideal agent Chip Hardesty, the film is a compendium of pivotal events in American history and demonstrates how the FBI is indispensable to the unfolding of the twentieth century. Hardesty explains this to the audience through a lecture that he gives at the FBI Academy. Not only does he recount the Bureau's greatest moments, he blends these public moments of FBI success with the private history of the Hardesty family, effectively suturing together Hoover's desire to bring together the image of crime fighting with that of traditional American family values. Hoover's point is made so explicitly that at one point a young recruit tells Hardesty that "from his cases and his family, he has led a pretty interesting life." Powers explains further how the combination of family and the Bureau operated in the 1950s as its public image and its undoing:

In its publicity during and after the war, however, the bureau began to promote itself as a symbol of security, as a reason for the public to stop worrying about the threat of crime and sabotage [...] By casting itself as a symbol of unity and national values, the bureau made itself vulnerable in unexpected ways when significant numbers of Americans began to attack national unity as a mask for oppression, or when the bureau itself failed to live up to the moral values it claimed to represent. (*G-Men* 228)

*The FBI Story* turns the agent into a patriotic, domestic, and religious symbol that brings together the dominant cultural attitudes of American Protestantism. Hoover had shifted the emphasis away from the FBI as a symbol of public wrath into a Christian soldier, a

vision he espouses in an anti-communist screed, entitled *Masters of Deceit*, in which he argues that Americans need to rely upon faith to defeat Communist infiltration: “I thrill to think of the even greater wonders America could fashion from its rich, glorious, and deep tradition. All we need is faith, *real faith* [...] Free man can learn here too: the truly revolutionary force of history is not material power but the spirit of religion” (336-37). The long time FBI boss carried this belief to the making of *The FBI Story*, exerting an almost paranoid vigilance over its production, often demanding re-shoots of scenes that ran afoul of his ideas about politics and sex (Clarens 184).

The film divides its time between semi-documentary sequences that focus on the FBI’s scientific approach to crime and that show glimpses of Hardesty’s family life. It covers the years roughly from 1924-1960 and explores the Bureau’s rise to prominence as the country’s leading law enforcement agency. Each vignette follows a similar pattern: a threat is identified and the overwhelming efficiency of the Bureau contains the threat through sober, rational means. The threats of the Ku Klux Klan, Midwestern gangsters like John Dillinger and Pretty Boy Floyd, Nazi sympathizers, and Communist spies are each contained and expelled through the course of the film. Hardesty has a part in almost all of the FBI’s most famous cases and exhibits a detached, objective perspective to crime fighting, barely breaking a sweat and rarely engaging in violence. Hardesty is decidedly not an action-detective and appears completely square in comparison to his cinematic predecessors, presenting an image of the FBI agent as an uncomplicated, straight arrow who only wants to advance the greatness of his country. The FBI according to Hardesty is “too much and too many” for today’s criminal, and to support this, LeRoy deploys multitudes of agents for every crime. For example, the

film's opening crime involves a young man who has planted a bomb in his mother's suitcase as she boards an airplane. The airplane explodes in the sky, and instead of employing the G-Man as an agent of public wrath, the real heroes of the opening section of *The FBI Story* are the crime scene analysts who reconstruct the airplane and the chemists who discover the bomb making materials. To further underscore this rational approach to detection, Hardesty emphasizes to the audience that assumptions of the criminal's guilt should be avoided until all the evidence has been collected. In other words, the FBI does not violate America's long cherished belief that people are innocent until proven guilty.

To deter any ambiguity in the portrayal of criminality, the bomber is depicted as a rather unthreatening young man. In fact, all the criminals in this official version of the history of the FBI are disappointing and easy to apprehend: Dillinger, Ma Barker, and Pretty Boy Floyd are all captured rather easily, and the Communist spy vignette that ends the film concludes with a snap of some handcuffs onto the wrists of a lackluster spy named Whitey. The combination of the "too much and too many" rational bureaucrats who represent the FBI by 1960 with the entirely unthreatening portrayal of the country's most notorious criminals leaves one with the feeling that something is missing from this portrait. The film, furthermore, is so airbrushed that, by avoiding the excessive violence of the brash G-Man and the larger-than-life criminals, it effectively counters its stated goal of promoting the FBI as a necessary and unifying agency of security. The FBI misunderstands the nature of its audience's desire to see its crime fighting exploits. In other words, the FBI's image benefits more, I contend, from its failures and imperfections than from its omnipotence and expertise. *The FBI Story* presents a picture of Hoover's

Bureau as a totalizing machine that ultimately inspires fear rather than admiration. The FBI's detection methods depicted as "too much and too many" undermines its "official story" primarily because it refuses to off-load its excess onto the threatening and ambiguous Other, which cuts off our identification and alienates us from the Bureau's and our enjoyment.

As explained earlier, the image of the FBI agent begins to erode in the years after *The FBI Story*. While Hoover felt that transforming the action detective hero image of the FBI agent into the scientific, rational family man was essential to buttoning up any holes in the ideological mission of the FBI, replacing the G-Man formula with the FBI formula eventually proves key in the undermining of the FBI agent as a viable popular culture figure (Powers, *G-Men* 207). In effect, Powers argues that the FBI formula as portrayed in *The FBI Story* fails precisely because it succeeds too well in depicting exactly what Hoover wanted (*G-Men* 254). Hoover's desire to promote the FBI agent's domesticated righteousness short circuits the fantasy of the agent caught in morally compromising positions, battling his weaknesses and overcoming them by bringing justice to the villain. By removing the action from the detective, Hoover takes the fantasy and the potential for a confrontation with the traumatic Real out of the representation of the FBI agent. Powers, similarly, suggests,

[b]y turning the G-Man into a symbol of morality Hoover made the bureau vulnerable to precisely the kind of allegations that began to surface during the 1960s. The old G-Man had never claimed to be a saint; if he were caught taking a short cut around the Bill of Rights he could always redeem himself by catching another crook or smashing another spy ring. This sort

of rebuttal was not available to the new G-Man. The domesticated G-Man based his claim to popular respect on his righteousness, and so, according to the unforgiving logic of popular culture, with the first stain on his cloak of moral perfection he forfeited that claim. (*G-Men* 254)

Keeping the stain just out of reach, clothing it in fantasmatic stories of smashing spy rings and criminal enterprises, and emphasizing the agent's potential for failing to live up to ideals like the Bill of Rights combine to point up both the fantasy and the reality of the FBI agent in action. Whereas failures are to be expected in the G-Man formula (and to some extent forgiven), Hoover's FBI formula emerges as a banal obscenity because access to it has been completely foreclosed by the formula. As Žižek might argue, the problems that emerge for the FBI image in the 1970s—primarily civil rights violations—were always there to see in the FBI's cinematic representation.

By the 1970s, Hoover's campaign against the anti-war and civil rights movements and the erosion of trust represented by the events of Watergate undermined the G-Man's popular culture image, which devolved from action hero to enemy of the social order. Indeed, the decade can best be understood as an era coming to grips with the banal, obscenity of the underside of one of its most cherished institutions—the culture being forced to recognize its unconscious awareness of these things in the harsh daylight. The distance between the reality of the FBI agent and its popular culture image had grown so far apart that the two no longer had much to do with each other by the 1980s: “government agencies were unpopular and no longer protected by mystique; as such, they

were fair game and a safe scapegoat for the cop film” (Clarens 315).<sup>9</sup> The action detective G-Man had been fully replaced by the rogue cops in *Dirty Harry* and *The French Connection* and the vigilante in the *Death Wish* series, both featuring seriously compromised characters who step outside of the inefficient bureaucracy of official law enforcement in order to avenge the wrongdoings perpetrated against them. Both character types operate at a safe distance from authoritative institutions in order to enact their “unofficial” brand of justice. Consequently, the G-Man becomes a regularly featured villain in films and television shows and often represents an impediment to audience enjoyment. The action-detective, featured in *G-Men*, *The House on 92<sup>nd</sup> Street*, and *The Street With No Name*, operated primarily as a conduit for audience enjoyment by screening encounters with the Real and satisfying those encounters through fantasy. The satisfaction of this fantasy does not come through *The FBI Story*’s official methods of law enforcement but through the unofficial ones screened by the G-Men who, by their compromised natures, cultivated the audience’s antiauthoritarian attitudes. If the real FBI is “too much and too many” for today’s criminal, as Chip Hardesty claims, then the cinematic FBI is “too little and too late” in its representation, its point of inherent failure represented in Brick Davis’s proto-gangsterism and the undercover agents’, Dietrich and Manly, inability to maintain their cover.

Stories about the FBI begin falling out of favor with the public because its cinematic, seamy underside—the truth we unconsciously enjoy at the cinema—became the reality of the FBI, fantasy and reality coming so close together we are forced to

---

<sup>9</sup> More evidence of this trend toward films featuring the government as the enemy can be found in the paranoid thriller cycle of films. For example, *The Parallax View* (1974), *Three Days of the Condor* (1975), *The Killer Elite* (1975), *Taxi Driver* (1975), and *All the President’s Men* (1976) all prominently feature the government in some capacity as the film’s primary antagonist.



choose between it being an institution that is either “non” or “all.”<sup>10</sup> The emergence in the 1980s of the criminal profiler as the primary representation of the FBI agent returns the Bureau to its status as a “non-all,” by reconstituting the FBI fantasy of the threatening Other and undermining it by exposing the audience’s investment in the enjoyment of expelling and punishing the gangster or spy. The profiler film, though, exposes this enjoyment in a far more radical way. Through a careful rendering of the Other’s desire—the serial killer’s desire—profiler films expose audience’s affinity for deviant criminality, positioning it farther away from the official desire of FBI promoted in the G-Man films and toward a positive identification with those who might fall prey to its investigative eye.

### **Conclusion: The Emergence of the Profiler**

By the 1980s, much of American culture had changed. Ronald Reagan was swept into the office of the presidency, representing the hopes of many that the violence of the 1960s and the malaise of the 1970s would be quickly forgotten. With Reagan came a push to restore law and order to a culture perceived by many to have lost its way in the prior two decades. For the FBI, the specter of Hoover was starting to diminish and much work was put into distancing itself from the legacy of the man who spent 50 years building the institution in his image—an image more fully understood after revelations of Hoover’s much more ambiguous private life—which the Bureau has yet to fully reconcile

---

<sup>10</sup> The revelations of FBI abuses of power and the death of Hoover led to a revision of the FBI image. Powers argues that in the 1970s the “Bureau’s reputation completely collapsed, constituting one of the great upheavals in the history of American popular culture” (“The FBI in American Popular Culture” 289). Hollywood shifted its portrayal of the FBI agent, as Powers suggests, to the scapegoat, depicting the agent as deeply flawed in *The Private Files of J. Edgar Hoover* (1977) and as a mindless automaton in *Dog Day Afternoon* (1975).

(Powers, “The FBI in American Popular Culture” 301). Hoover’s reputation declined after his death because of his perceived inability to understand the changes in the America of the 1960s. By the end of the decade, he had effectively positioned himself as the enemy of the civil rights and antiwar movements. Years and years of skillfully massaging the public’s appetite for crime and punishment had finally abandoned Hoover, and along with his demise, the Bureau reached its low point in reputation. The carefully crafted transition of the FBI as public savior to the FBI as a representative of America’s values—defined narrowly by Hoover as being those values prescribed by Christian fundamentalism<sup>11</sup>—ultimately, was a colossal public relations failure (Powers, “The FBI in American Popular Culture” 284, 289). It is into this context that the concept of criminal profiling is legitimized at the Bureau and brought to the movie screen for the first time in Michael Mann’s *Manhunter* (1986), an adaptation of Thomas Harris’s *Red Dragon* (1981).

There are few examples of public institutions so intimately involved in its fictional representation than the FBI. Indeed, there are fewer examples where the real, public institution and the fictional representation blur so effectively. Much like the blending of real location sequences in fictional G-Man films, the *Psychology Today* article employs real details of profiling methods in combination with a series of quotations from famous fictional detectives such as Sherlock Holmes, C. Auguste Dupin, and Philip Marlowe. This tendency to conflate fact and fiction permeates the entire genre, and, ultimately, this conflation is significant because the G-Man introduced in this chapter and the profiler discussed in the following chapters is best understood not only in

---

<sup>11</sup> See Hoover’s *Masters of Deceit* for a long argument on how Christian fundamentalism is the best weapon America can deploy against Soviet communism.

relation to the detective genre in general, but, more importantly, the genre is best understood in relation to the “official story” the FBI has told about itself as a public institution and the fingerprints it has left on the fictional representations of that “official story.” Foundational to the FBI brand of crime film is the consistent conflation of the ideological goals of this very powerful agency of the government with the fantasmatic allure of the moving image. I have, however, suggested that unpacking the genre’s reliance upon the collusion between ideology and fantasy is not sufficient for understanding how representations of the FBI agent have evolved through the twentieth century. Instead, I have argued through this chapter that representations of the FBI agent and the fundamental fantasy that delivers these representations have evolved primarily at the points where the fantasy exposes gaps in the real FBI’s governing ideology. The contradictions and paradoxes at the edges of the FBI public savior fantasy have done more to advance the cause of the real FBI than those that seek to efface any and all representational problems. That being the case, the criminal profiler, with its ambiguities and outsider status, stands as figure capable of handling both the heroic G-Man legacy of the 1930s and its fallen, corrupt nature evident in the 1970s.

The emergence of the profiler cycle of FBI films depends, I suggest, on two key components: one, an isolation of the Bureau’s authority as something unnecessary to our everyday life—a clear separation that the pre-profiler films attempt to efface—and, two, a clear investment in the Other’s desire, which exposes how audiences desire criminal enjoyment and resist that of the authorities. This is no small revision of older G-Man films. Primarily represented in mainstream films and television shows, profiler stories feature significant moments of radical Otherness and expose Real gaps in the FBI

fantasy. Rather than fusing the desire of the G-Man and the audience together with the desire of the FBI, popular representations of the criminal profiler replace the “official” desire of the FBI with the illicit desire of the serial killer. Or, to put it more clearly, when escaped serial killer Hannibal Lecter discloses his goal of “having an old friend [Dr. Chilton] for dinner” to profiler Clarice Starling at the end of *The Silence of the Lambs*, his cannibalistic desire is often met with cheers from the audience.<sup>12</sup> The coincidence of enjoyment shared by Lecter, Starling, and the audience allows us to recognize our investment in the desire for the FBI to fail get it right or to get its man. Whereas the pre-profiler FBI films keep audiences at a safe distance from the criminality they see on the screen, the profiler films of the late twentieth century reconstitute the FBI fantasy through a reduction of that distance, thus confronting audiences with their own taste for deviance.

---

<sup>12</sup> McGowan notices a similar coincidence of desire in his reading of the film (“Looking for the Gaze” 29).

## CHAPTER TWO

### To See or Not to See: *Manhunter*, *The Silence of the Lambs*, and the Profiler Model of FBI Film

In the first chapter I argued that pre-profiler FBI films exploit a clearly defined Other—the gangster, the Nazi spy, the Communist spy—who threatens our “way of life,” and the flawed abilities of the G-Man, for the pleasure of the audience. The G-Man films bring audiences into the criminal world, expose the inner workings of organized crime and espionage, but, ultimately keep them at a safe distance, where the pleasure of punishing these threatening Others could be enjoyed from the perspective of the Law. This pleasure, though, is built upon a fundamental failure, the failure of the FBI to fully contain the excess of its ideological mission. The success of the G-Man films, however, does not depend only on the cathartic enjoyment of putting bad guys in jail. Rather, the success of pre-profiler FBI films also depends upon an unconscious identification with the criminals and their counterparts, the agents. This unconscious identification is built upon the careful deployment of desire that allows audiences an awareness of the threatening menace of crime, all the while justifying enjoyment from the criminal perspective. The G-Man films become less effective through the twentieth century as the cinematic G-Man evolves into an “organization man,” who is fully identified with Hoover’s wish to see his agents as patriotic and religious symbols, which, in effect, effaces the contradictions and paradoxes audiences unconsciously desire to see in agents

of the Law. The growing gulf between Hoover's version of the FBI agent and the reality of the post-Watergate FBI effectively brings the FBI genre to a crucial breaking point. For the FBI to restore its credibility with audiences, it redefines its fantasmatic portrayal through a return to its action-detective roots. The action-detective that emerges in the 1980s, though, is no Brick Davis. The fictional representation of the late twentieth century FBI agent—a transformation from the G-Man to the criminal profiler—brings together elements of the action detective hero, the disgraced post-Watergate figure, elements of classical detection, and magical methods for solving crimes.

Prior to criminal profiling, cinematic FBI agents were typically portrayed as national heroes. Agents crusaded against criminal threats and protected the public from their menace. Hollywood first exploited the nation's curiosity with the FBI during the 1930's War on Crime campaign and followed up with crusades against foreign espionage. *G-Men*, *The House on 92<sup>nd</sup> Street*, and *The Street With No Name* were prototypical of the FBI genre, using famous cases from the FBI files, showing with semi-documentary accuracy the reality of FBI investigative techniques, and demonstrating the delicate line that exists between criminality and the law. These films portrayed a fairly complex picture of criminal detection and depicted an intoxicating fantasy whereby agents are fallible, criminals are romantic, and audience identification is dispersed. The FBI film gradually begins to undermine itself, not through a more sympathetic view of the criminal, but through an unrealistic portrait of the FBI's scientific infallibility. The Bureau, in effect, became too good at its job in *The FBI Story*, which foreclosed audience identification and, thus, bred more alienation than admiration. While these cinematic depictions are essential to our collective imagination of the FBI's role in American life,

imagining the Bureau with any clarity is dubious at best; audiences rarely know whether they are dealing with the “real” or “legendary” FBI, which complicates our emotions of pride, fear, and fascination (Powers, “The FBI in American Popular Culture” 262). I have argued that the real FBI’s triumphant “official story” often fails to tell the whole story at the movies and that the legendary “truth” depicted by the cinematic FBI depends on this failure. The real FBI’s necessity depends on Hollywood failing to clearly efface the contradictions and paradoxes that the real FBI attempts to hide. The cracks in the “official story,” in other words, generate more fascination and, therefore, help reinscribe the legendary status of the FBI agent.

By the 1990s, films and television shows depict the FBI agent in a less than consistent manner: sometimes at war with its citizenry, sometimes continuing the war against the underworld, sometimes at war with the Bureau itself, and sometimes a combination of all three (Powers, “The FBI” 262). The one consistent factor in the complicated late-millennial representation of the special agent is a separation of audience desire from the official desire of the FBI. Whereas older representations depended upon audiences desiring the same outcome as the Bureau, contemporary representations dispersed this desire across many different character types, thus offering critical stances against the FBI’s well-crafted ideological mission. The distance this critique allows—the sense that we understand FBI ideology and can resist it—only serves to further reinforce the Bureau’s ideological grip. The critical stances towards the FBI that emerged during the 1970s and into the 1990s are typically portrayed, on the one hand, through a negative depiction of the FBI agent, and on the other, through an agent who has cultivated an outsider status. For example, negative depictions followed the death of J. Edgar Hoover

and focused mostly on his disgraced status, and many films depicted agents as being just the opposite of their G-Man ancestors. Hoover's rumored closeted homosexuality served as the focus of *The Private Files of J. Edgar Hoover* (1977). *Dog Day Afternoon* (1977) and *Die Hard* (1988) expose the sometimes Kafka-esque, grotesque bureaucracy of the Bureau, and in *To Live and Die in L.A.* (1985), *JFK* (1991), and *Thunderheart* (1992), FBI agents are simply criminals who steal and murder. Outsiders—agents who work for the FBI but do not completely identify with Bureau—tended to be the most popular depiction; *Raw Deal* (1986), *Shoot to Kill* (1988), *Little Nikita* (1988), *Mississippi Burning* (1988), *Point Break* (1991), and *X-Files* (1993-2002), while different in many instances, typify the notion that successful agents work outside the constrictions of the FBI mission—sometimes taking matters into their own hands and/or sometimes taking on the FBI as an institution. These non-profiler representations of the FBI agent, however, do not separate them from other films concerned with law and order. Outsider agents are basically cops who, if you put the agents into a New York City police precinct, would not be distinctly different from local and state police officers. Part of the FBI ethos is built upon its belief that it contains the expertise to solve certain types of crime that other police agencies cannot, and the non-profiler outsider during this time period rarely distinguishes himself/herself from the likes of Popeye Doyle, Harry Callahan, or Frank Serpico.

The criminal profiler emerges as an amalgam of these complex representations of the FBI agent. The FBI agent as profiler provides answers to two representational problems. First, the concept of criminal profiling restores the belief that FBI agents have a special expertise that separates the Bureau from the practices of local/state police.



Second, this expertise is so special—the ability to think and see like serial killers—that the profiler must operate at a distance from the FBI while enjoying its sanction and full access to its scientific superiority. Novelist Thomas Harris is the first to portray this new representation, and his first profiler novel, *Red Dragon* (1981), and second, *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988) are the first to emphasize the new complexity necessary for the FBI to restore its cinematic prestige. Hollywood capitalizes on the success of Harris’s novels in the adaptations, *Manhunter* (1986)<sup>1</sup> and *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991). These two films establish the profiler FBI film and raise interesting questions about why these detectives—specialists in the details of serial murder—restore legitimacy to the real FBI and “truth” to the legendary FBI. This chapter proceeds, then, with an explanation of the criminal profiler’s methods of detection and demonstrates how this expertise is depicted in *Manhunter* and *The Silence of the Lambs*. These foundational profiler films, discussed in this chapter, constitute a new FBI fantasy that restores the tattered image of the immediate post-Hoover years by shifting audience desire away from the “official” desire of the FBI; the criminal profiling method, specifically, makes this shift of desire possible. Whereas pre-profiler FBI films promoted the satisfaction of the Law and the dissatisfaction of criminal desire, I argue in this chapter that the criminal profiler film reverses this trajectory by actively fusing audience desire with criminal satisfaction, leaving agents of the Law in a state of perpetual dissatisfaction.

---

<sup>1</sup> *Red Dragon* was renamed *Manhunter* to avoid confusion with the many martial arts movies that had used “dragon” in their titles.

## ***Manhunter*: The Satisfaction of Seeing It All**

Robert Cettl, who has comprehensively catalogued the history of the cinematic serial killer, loosely defines the profiler figure as any “character imported from outside the investigation, or the corresponding experienced specialist when a pair [of investigators] is involved” and argues that the addition of the profiler character in the 1980s firmly cements the status of films about serial killers as a distinct subgenre. The presence of the profiler, according to Cettl, is precisely what distinguishes serial killer films from the slasher films of the 1970s and the deranged psycho killer films inspired by *Psycho* (1960) and *Peeping Tom* (1960). Identifying Richard Fleischer’s *The Boston Strangler* (1968) as the foundational model of the contemporary serial killer film, Cettl suggests that the serial killer film becomes a fully coded subgenre in the 1980s “in need of elaboration and increasingly self-reflexive delineation in terms of character function, narrative strategy, thematic base, sociological contextualization, and stylistic interpretation” (21). While the 1970s produced a wide variety of films featuring killers, the subgenre does not fully cohere until specific serial killer traits can be identified to separate it from other types of killers. Primarily, Cettl maintains that, unlike the monster, psycho, or slasher, the serial killer is decidedly sane and blends in with his surroundings. He concentrates on victims of a particular type, mostly women, and is motivated by morbid sexual desire, killing his victims intimately. The murders are typically followed by a cooling-off period, in which the serial killer selects another victim. While unable to voluntarily control his murderous impulse, he is not completely unstoppable—like slashers Michael Myers or Jason Voorhees—and the profiler figure, with his expertise

and willingness to look into the abyss of the killer's motivation, emerges as the opponent most able to contain the menace he represents:

The profiler figure is emerging as a mythic figure...[who] knows why and how the killings occur, yet remains free from being a killer despite their [sic] understanding and even dangerous empathy for the serial killer. Thus the profiler is capable of restoring the social and ideological balance upset by the killer, and is so sanctioned to eliminate the killer. (Cettl 28)

The subgenre's dependence upon these two figures maturing together as character types is a significant point, and Cettl, who is the only critic to date to fully identify the importance of the profiler, builds a convincing case for its role as "the central figure of a Patriarchy in crisis." The profiler must rid the culture of the serial killer menace, thus "admonishing aberrance and re-balancing his own psyche as he fulfills the role of savior and protector, restoring Patriarchy" (31). The release of Michael Mann's *Manhunter* marks the first full demonstration of criminal profiling as a response to the serial killer's threat.

Cettl argues that profilers are often depicted as a "cure and restoration" of a fallen culture (31), but his point fails to fully explain the profiler's ambiguity. To cure and restore the dominant patriarchal culture represented by the FBI, the criminal profiler would have to be fully identified with the Bureau's aims and goals, which, as I contend, is a dubious relationship at best. Because of the profiler's over-specialization in the motivations of serial murder, he/she exists on the margins of the FBI and is kept at safe distance from the everyday special agent.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, the distance the FBI keeps from its

---

<sup>2</sup> For example, even non-profilers like Fox Mulder and Dana Scully of *The X-Files* are relegated to the basement of the FBI because of their involvement with the unofficial and "wacky" cases of the paranormal.

eccentric agents would suggest that they are alienated exceptions to its rules and regulations. Indeed, cinematic profilers typically enter early retirement precisely because of the excessive identification with their job,<sup>3</sup> which is where we find Will Graham (William Petersen) at the beginning of *Manhunter*. Graham's "gift" has led him to leave his job with the FBI in order to regain his sanity; he has retired to a beach in Florida with his wife and son to lead a less tormented lifestyle—his near death at the hands of Hannibal Lecter (Brian Cox) driving him to forgo the exercise of his "gift" in favor of his family. The excessive nature of his specialization has driven him away from the FBI; he and his wife feel that his former employer is the problem not the solution. Lured back into the search for the Tooth Fairy murderer by his former boss and mentor, Jack Crawford (Dennis Farina), Will Graham is the very picture of an alienated worker who is fully aware of his exploitation but nonetheless is unable to resist the temptation to look just one more time into the transgressive acts of serial murder. Regardless of Graham's attempt to deny himself the pleasure of his job in favor of his family, Crawford convinces him that he can have both, satisfying his fantasy of being a "normal" family man and a specialist in violent criminal behavior. Offering him what amounts to a forced choice, Crawford shows him photos of the two families murdered by the Tooth Fairy—both photos are idealized portraits of suburban American family life—telling Graham that he will understand if "he cannot look anymore." The choice here is to look again at a world he has left behind or ignore it in favor of his family: the fantasmatic support of this choice is that Graham believes he has no choice at all—his family's continued existence

---

The eccentric FBI agents are quite obviously portrayed as the exception rather than the rule when it comes to the FBI agent.

<sup>3</sup> John Douglas suffered a near fatal brain hemorrhage during a time period in his career where he was handling almost all the profiling requests of the FBI, managing around 300 profiles at a time (*Mindhunter* 1-11).

depends, like all families, upon him not having the choice to see or not to see into the world of the serial killer.

In *Manhunter*, satisfaction is, I contend, translated into seeing it all. Michael Mann manipulates point-of-view shots in order to demonstrate that the profiler's success is dependent on seeing the crime scene from the killer's perspective. Mann employs a repetition of subjective shots that could be from either the killer or the profiler's way of seeing things. The result of Mann's blurring of point-of-view pushes the profiler farther away from the official desire of the FBI and toward the illicit desire of the killer, suggesting, ultimately, that the art of profiling is equal to seeing in the crime scene more than is already there. In order to determine "who" perpetrated the crime, Graham must walk in the shoes of the murderer and see the world the way he does. The conflation of sight between the two characters serves to bring us closer to the killer's transgressive fantasy and partake in his desire to operate free of the demands of the Law. Slavoj Žižek recognizes Mann's skillful manipulation of the profiler's full identification with the killer's vision in Graham's epiphany into the killer's "random" selection of the Leeds and Jacobi families. Throughout the film, Graham watches and re-watches home movies of the Leeds and Jacobi families, hoping to find the unseen clue that has eluded him in his prior viewings. He hopes, in other words, to see in the home movies more than is shown on the screen. At this final screening, he notices that the details of the homes' layout could only be known to someone who has seen the home movies and, thus, realizes that he and the killer have been watching the same movies. The home movies represent the fantasy of seeing it all, the excess of which only the profiler can see. Žižek suggests that the coincidental vision shared by Graham and the killer, Francis Dolarhyde (Tom

Noonan), is a moment in the film when we, the profiler, and the killer fully identify with each other. Žižek explains:

The decisive turn takes place when he [Graham] becomes aware that through the very screening of the home movies, *he is already identified with the murderer*, that his obsessive gaze, surveying every detail of the scenery, coincides with the gaze of the murderer. The identification is on the level of the gaze, not on the level of content. There is something extremely unpleasant and obscene in this experience of our gaze as already the gaze of the other. (*Looking Awry* 108)

The unpleasant obscenity of satisfying his desire to see it all from the killer's perspective brings into relief the ideological stakes of both the film and the cycle. Identifying the profiler with the killer, and not the FBI, *Manhunter* does not employ the profiler as a cure, as Cettl has argued, for the threats to patriarchal Law—even though this is a fantasy, Graham, ultimately, believes he is fighting for. *Manhunter* is not the story of a failed agent who gets to redeem himself by bringing in the big “collar”—Graham is, if anything, too successful at his job, and thus too successful to work “officially” for the FBI. Graham does not lack skill at his job or love from his family, but is nonetheless driven to continue reading and understanding the codes of criminal deviance.

*Manhunter*'s shifting of the FBI agent as represented by the profiler over to the side of the killer marks a departure from pre-profiler FBI films, which reduces the satisfaction necessary for the FBI fantasy to hold. Instead, the evolution of the FBI agent into the profiler realigning our desire with that of the killer, suggesting that satisfaction comes only in outright opposition to the Law, which further exposes the FBI's ideological

mission as a “non-all.” The success of Graham’s ability to see all is not a triumphant exception that plugs the holes in the always-already incomplete FBI fantasy. Rather, *Manhunter*’s exploration into the satisfaction of murderous desire suggests that the FBI’s ability to get its man depends on agents who, to some extent, are serial killers themselves. I am arguing, then, that this represents a significant break from Hoover’s dream of the FBI agent as moral and patriotic symbol of the American people, thus conflating audience desire with the serial killer and not the agent of the law.

### **Did You Want Them to See You?**

The conflation of the profiler and the killer explicitly suggests that the FBI cannot see all when investigating violent crime. The forced choice Crawford offers Graham suggests that regular FBI agents are unable to combat the transgressive behavior of the Tooth Fairy. The failure of the FBI to see all forces it to lure Graham out of retirement and give him full authority over the case. The layering of the crucially blurred points-of-view begins in the pre-credit sequence, which depicts the murder of the Leeds family as seen by Dolarhyde, and the rest of the narrative is built on the repetition of this initial moment. If the methods of the profiler are to be taken seriously (the mystical belief that the profiler inhabits the mind of the killer and sees through his eyes), then the representation of these methods must be portrayed through crucial overlapping moments shared by the killer and the profiler so that the details of the murder can be “seen” through the figure of the profiler and not the killer. Mann employs a sight motif that matches, almost shot for shot at times, what the killer sees with what Graham sees. Because of this, Graham reveals the motive underpinning this inexplicable crime and

restages the crime scene, a task that the ordinary police and FBI cannot do because they cannot see the “secret meaning” lying beyond the crime scene. The profiler, by contrast, can see more of the crime scene than there is to see and screens the killer’s desire for the audience. However, the unseen nature of the crime scene—a secret meaning that emerges from the double perspective of the killer and profile—remains covert at the beginning of the investigation but steadily intrudes upon our awareness, ultimately making us see that we are seeing exactly from the point-of-view of the killer.

Mann foregrounds the killer’s point-of-view from the beginning of the film, orchestrating an opening pre-credit sequence with a hand-held camera shakily tracking up the staircase of the Leeds’s home—the killer’s vision guided by a spot from a flashlight. The scene is shot from the killer’s point-of-view, showing what he sees without revealing his identity. The subjective shot continues through the hall, lingers on the children’s room, and stops just inside the threshold of the master bedroom where Mr. and Mrs. Leeds sleep unaware of the presence of the intruder. Dolarhyde lingers in the doorway shining his flashlight on the true target of his quest, Mrs. Leeds. She stirs and wakes up to realize that a light is flashing in her eyes while her husband continues to sleep. Mann employs slow-motion at this moment to underscore the killer’s ultimate satisfaction. He has chosen this family after obsessively watching their home movies, which the Leeds sent in to be processed at the plant where he works. His interest in them emerges because they represent a certain type of ideal suburban family, making him feel inadequate. As he explains later in the film through a letter to Lecter, Dolarhyde chooses the Leeds because he wants them to see him in the process of his “becoming”—the serial killer’s transcendent and transgressive desire *par excellence*. To realize his desire to be seen in



the process of “becoming,” he kills the family and poses them along the wall with their eyes open. In other words, Dolarhyde desires to be seen by eyes that cannot see all, and by situating the dead family, eyes open, along the wall of the bedroom, Dolarhyde can fully satisfy his desire to see himself as whole.

Mann brings together the profiler and killer’s vision immediately following the opening credit sequence. Sitting on piece of driftwood on the beach, framed by the limitless ocean in the background, Graham, with his back toward the ocean, and Crawford discuss the details of the two murders. Crawford lures Graham into the job by showing him photographs of the two families that Dolarhyde has killed. The pictures of the families are crucial because, like the home movies, they represent the families as happy, satisfied suburbanites: one picture is of a family playing in their backyard pool and the other celebrating Christmas. It is significant that these photographs are of the living families, and not crime scene photos, because it underscores the conflation of the points-of-view of the profiler and killer. Graham and Dolarhyde are attracted to these families, the former through these photographs and the latter through their home movies, and each man sees the families in the same idealized manner. Mann emphasizes Graham’s relationship to the photos by cutting to a shot of his wife and son walking up the beach. The interplay of Graham’s vision of the two families killed by Dolarhyde and his own family are firmly connected by this cut. Upon viewing the family movies, Dolarhyde gets busy killing the Leeds and Jacobis. Graham, on the other hand, gets busy avenging them after seeing pictures of them “perfect” and “alive.” The desire of both men emerges from a similar impulse.

The conflation of their sight is further emphasized when Graham repeats the killer's approach and entrance into the Leeds's home, passing through the same door as the killer and making his way up the stairs in a way that replicates the opening shot sequence. However, this time Mann focuses more closely on the profiler's movements throughout the house in order to emphasize every detail of the crime scene. From the opening sequence, it is unclear how the killer gets into the house, but Graham shows the viewer that he entered through the backdoor. Before he begins to move about the house, Graham pauses just inside the sliding glass door, which is heavily backlit, shadowing him completely. He pulls out a flashlight and shines it straight into the camera, further assuming the shadowy role of the killer. Next, Graham walks through the living room and up the stairs, where Mann replicates the opening shots of the stairs so that visually, the profiler and the killer see exactly the same things. The slow-motion, though, is removed and all that is left of the bodies are blood stains on the floors and walls. The sequence shifts from a pure match to the opening when Graham snaps on the lights of the bedroom, shedding light on the dark room where Dolanhyde killed the Leeds. He sees grotesque carnage: blood stained sheets, arterial spray across the walls, and pieces of broken mirror everywhere. The moment reveals, in a flash, the killer's satisfied desire. The shock of seeing the crime scene, however, is replaced by an incessant need to categorize it. The satisfaction of the transgressive act of murder is turned into a catalogue of forensic information and speculation on the methods of the killer. Using the police report, Graham narrates the events of the murder into a tape recorder while carrying crime scene photographs: the profiler waiting for a clue to emerge out of the "artwork" left behind by the killer. The procedure of the profiler involves an inhabitation of the

killer's satisfied desire, and the pleasurable cataloguing of the crime scene elides the frustration that often accompanies the moments just after the fact of the crime. The conflation of the two characters portrayed through the repetition of their movements throughout the house and crime scene marginalizes the FBI; it remains dissatisfied and in the background, countering its privileged, foregrounded, and satisfied position in pre-profiler FBI films. As Graham positions himself, and consequently the viewer, into the satisfied fantasy of the killer, we can begin to recognize how *Manhunter* structures the fantasy of seeing it all as a means to punish its audience for desiring such a thing.

The profiler's process begun at the original crime scene grows in significance through Graham's analysis of the family home movies that belong to the dead families that both he and the killer have watched, unbeknownst to either. The home movies serve as crucial sites for the film's exploration of the fantasy of satisfied desire. More specifically, they operate as "films within a film" that bring audience visual practices into line with those of Graham, which, as I have suggested, locates the audience on the side of the killer and not the FBI. For example, the home movies represent the satisfied lifestyle of a happy suburban family and deliver an insight into the killer's motive—emerging from the text of the crime scene—that is otherwise not there for the audience to see. In other words, Graham's obsessive (re)watching of the films yields a clue to the killings that is in the crime scene more than crime scene itself. Instead of focusing on just the facts, Graham intuits from the home movies the killer's fantasy to have the family, specifically Mrs. Leeds, see him in his ultimate state of satisfaction. Frustrated from his repeated viewings of the Leeds family happily going through its daily routines, Graham snaps off the VCR and calls his wife on the telephone. During his brief conversation, he

tells his wife that he loves her, she returns his love, and he hangs up the phone. His first breakthrough in reading the crime scene comes as he hangs up the phone, but Mann does depict this breakthrough with a close-up of Graham's "ah ha" reaction. Instead he uses a slow tracking shot, that moves from medium to close-up, of Graham's wife as she sleeps. Accompanied by louder and more suspenseful music, the audience watches Molly Graham sleep in the same way that Dolarhyde watches Mrs. Leeds sleep in the pre-credit sequence. All three lines of sight, Graham's, Dolarhyde's, and the audience's, are brought together for the profiler's first epiphanic moment. By focusing on the wife instead of Graham, Mann manipulates the audience into seeing Molly in a moment of extreme vulnerability. The slow tracking shot and soundtrack create a "zeroing in" effect, as if the camera is really a pair of binoculars or a rifle scope, and Mann allows us to see her from the ultimate voyeur's position—we see her without her knowing it. Mann satisfies our desire to fully see a vulnerable woman from the perspective of a killer, whether we want the satisfaction or not, and then cuts to Graham back in the hotel room sitting on the bed with his back to the television monitors. As he hangs up the phone, his conversation with his wife leads him to realize something that sticks out from the home movie more than the home movie itself. More specifically, his first "lead" is Mrs. Leeds, whom Graham sees anew. Graham realizes that the killer could not reach the full satisfaction of murdering Mrs. Leeds without touching her with his bare hand. While the lack of fingerprints at the crime scene suggests the killer wore rubber gloves, the profiler's mystical process of inhabiting the killer's vision, in combination with the forensic evidence of talcum powder left behind on Mrs. Leeds's leg, makes Graham realize that Dolarhyde's need to be satisfied drove him to remove his gloves to touch

Mrs. Leeds. The first clue, then, does not emerge directly from the home movie, but from the process of inductive reasoning that sees more on the screen than there is to see. As he re-watches the tape, Graham asks questions of the absent killer trying to find answers to his desire: “What are you dreaming? That’s something you can’t afford me to know about. God, she’s lovely, isn’t she? It was maddening to have to touch her with rubber gloves.” The videotapes shift from innocuous recreations of the Leeds’s day-to-day life into depictions of the killer’s desire laid bare, allowing us to see all of his motive and the detection process that goes into catching him. Graham’s insight leads him to the conclusion that the killer left a fingerprint at the crime scene—a clue that the regular police and other FBI agents failed to find—which is ultimately found on the eyeball of the dead Mrs. Leeds. The merging of the killer’s and the profiler’s point-of-view serves to distance the audience from the official desire of the FBI and to align it with the illicit desire of the serial killer.

### **Cultivating Excessive Visual Pleasure**

Trying to conflate the satisfaction of seeing Molly Graham in a vulnerable position with Dolarhyde’s desire for Mrs. Leeds, Mann connects these elements in order to implicate the audience’s desire for deviance. We, like Dolarhyde, fantasize about situations where we view the vulnerable from a position where they cannot see us. Kendall Phillips has argued that *Manhunter* should “be read as a meditation on the visual and potential dangers of looking” (11). Furthermore, Phillips explains,

*Manhunter* is a film about the identification of the protagonist, FBI profiler Will Graham (William Peterson), with the film’s serial killer,

Francis Dolarhyde (Tom Noonan). This identification is based primarily on sharing a point of view that comes quite literally from the act of viewing. This viewing, in turn, is largely a viewing of visual representations [...] and it is here where the audience, also viewing a representation as means of creating identification, becomes implicated in the larger question of the aesthetics of viewing. (11)

Phillips accurately catalogues the film's many visual motifs—photographs, home movies, mirrors, eyes—and demonstrates, in an effective formal reading of the film, the desire to see it all. To reach this conclusion, Phillips relies upon Laura Mulvey's conception of the male gaze and scopophilia, contending that *Manhunter* “embodies the warning Mulvie [sic] issues regarding the fetishistic male gaze and its domination of narrative cinema. The murderous Dollarhyde [sic] is driven, in part, by scopophilia [...] and both Graham and the audience risk falling victim to this obsessive gaze” (12). Phillips's contention that *Manhunter* is heavily invested in interrogating the process of looking is correct, but by using Mulvey he perpetuates the comparison between looking and mastery, which ultimately relies upon a truncated reading of Lacan's theory of the Gaze and eliminates the role of desire. Suggesting that *Manhunter* “can be read as attempting to work through the dangers of obsessive visual pleasure” (Phillips 14) misrecognizes that “obsessive visual pleasure” is precisely why one desires to continue looking beyond what one can see. We do not “fall victim” to “obsessive visual pleasure,” as if there is a choice to see or not to see. Understanding this revision in the traditional notion of visual pleasure, I contend, requires a clarification of the Lacanian notion of pleasure. Phillips, correctly, employs pleasure as a concept that must be avoided. Drawing upon the Freudian notion

of the pleasure principle, Phillips suggests that *Manhunter* serves as a treatise on the distinction between pleasure and reality, with reality serving as a constraint upon the subject's proclivity toward excessive pleasure (14). However, Lacan revises Freud's pleasure principle in order to show how pleasure and reality work hand-in-hand to render subjects into a constant state of dissatisfaction. According to Lacan, the pleasure principle is the command to enjoy as little as possible, a type of safeguard against disruption, tension, and anxiety (Evans 148). Pleasure, therefore, serves as the key component of the subject's consistency rather than something dangerous, which should be avoided at all costs—avoiding pleasure and its dissatisfying influence upon our lives is, ultimately, impossible. The obsessive visual pleasure that Phillips finds in *Manhunter* does not serve as an exceptional case of seeing too much. Rather, the desire to see works precisely in the opposite manner: the pleasure of seeing involves searching for that elusive thing that the subject knows it will never find. Seeing all, then, is a fantasy that is never fulfilled, which operates at a site that Lacan refers to as the opposition between pleasure and enjoyment. The role of pleasure is to function as a limit on enjoyment, but the subject continually seeks to transgress the pleasure principle in order to enjoy as much as possible. However, the enjoyment gained from going beyond the pleasure principle is not more pleasure, but precisely its opposite, more pain because there is only so much pleasure a subject can bear (Evans 92). The scopic drive—the drive to see as much as possible—is something that cannot ever be satisfied. Indeed, the pleasure of looking should be more precisely characterized as the enjoyment of seeing as little as possible. The promise of enjoyment, while potently desirable and always-already unattainable, operates as a disruption to the coherency of the scopic drive, and *Manhunter*

does not warn against the excesses visual pleasure. Instead, it obsessively cultivates it, allowing us to fantasize about fully enjoying what we see, free of punishment.

The positioning of the killer's excessive visual pleasure, though, is not rendered explicitly through Dolarhyde at the beginning the film; his presence is not revealed until the midpoint. Dolarhyde's absence early on is replaced by Hannibal Lecter, who, much as he does for Clarice Starling in *The Silence of the Lambs*, acts as a guide to Graham. Lecter, however, plays a more adversarial role to Graham's investigation in *Manhunter* since it was Graham who put him prison. Graham's scenes with Lecter serve, for the most part, to blur the opposition between profiler and killer. Indeed, Lecter often reminds Graham that his gift for catching killers is because he is one himself: "You came back here to get a look at me, to get the old scent back. Do you know how you caught me, Will? The reason you caught me, Will, is because we're just alike. Do you want the scent? Smell yourself!" Lecter's ridiculing comments operate as the key signal to the audience that Graham's gift is not the simple result of rigorous classroom and on-the-job training. Instead, the comment's aim emphasizes that the profiler's gift—his extra sensory gift for seeing more than there is to see—comes at a price. *Manhunter* is significant to the establishment of the profiler cycle because it is the first to bring the killer and his pursuer into direct correlation with each other instead of simply opposing them. In the world of the profiler film, the killer's fantasy of satisfied desire is not purely a product of some otherworldly evil but one we all have access to, and the choice is ours to pursue it or not. The profiler chooses, for the protection of the public, to become an expert on the killer's way of seeing the world.



During Graham's first visit to Lecter's cell, Mann employs a shot-reverse-shot composition style in order to emphasize each character's point-of-view equally. The shot arrangement invites the viewer into a doubly coded way of seeing, a position reinforced by earlier scenes. The editing, moreover, allows the object under scrutiny equal status with the controlling agency of the film—close-ups of one replaced by close-ups of the other, medium shots of one replaced by medium shots of the other, and so on. During the visit, Lecter detects Graham's ulterior motive for visiting him and commands Graham to look inward at himself where he will find the killer that Lecter believes resides in everyone. Lecter's command to enjoy his natural instinct for murder, intensifies Graham's anxiety—so much so, that Graham panics and attempts to leave the cell area. The guard arrives late after hearing Graham's plea to release him, which allows Lecter the time to remind Graham that he knows more about the murderer's satisfied desire than he thinks he does. Filled with a combination of fear and rage, Graham runs full speed down the hall, escaping the excessive pleasure of regaining his scent. In the frantic escape from Lecter's cell, Mann employs a series of objective and subjective shots, which seem more appropriate for a jail break than a detective leaving a mental institution. Cutting together objective shots of Graham's descent down a spiraling stairwell with subjective, hand-held shots of his panicked desire to escape, Mann represents Graham as a man fleeing the unbearable anxiety of getting too close to his desire. If his desire is to regain the mindset necessary for thinking like a killer, getting too close to it interrupts the pleasure of the investigative process. In other words, the fantasy of satisfaction represented by Lecter's desire profoundly disturbs Graham. However, Graham visited Lecter knowing fully what to expect. The criminal profiler's conflicted desire is depicted

visually when he bursts through the doors of the facility, runs down a ramp, and stops to lean against a handrail. As he leans on the rail, Mann cuts to a subjective shot of his blurred vision of the facility's yard, which is followed by a focused subjective shot of the yard after he calms down. The blurred shot replaced by the focused shot suggest that there is a choice to see or not to see, which, ultimately, is no choice at all. From this moment on, Graham's choice to satisfy his desire to see all—a desire from the perspective of the killer—results in a shift from the safe, pleasurable investigative process of a classical detective and to a more complete inhabitation of the killer's process. Graham from here on explicitly reenacts the killer's desire, thus forcing audiences to see through the satisfied eyes of killer. If conscious sight depends on never seeing the whole picture, then Mann's composition of profiler fantasy asks the audience, in the words of Lacan, "*You want to see? Well, take a look at this!*" (*Four* 101) and demonstrates that "*what I look at is never what I wish to see*" (*Four* 103), thus punishing us for desiring such satisfaction.

Graham's full transformation into a representation of murderous desire begins with the airplane trip he takes after visiting Lecter to investigate the home of the second murdered family, the Jacobis, in Birmingham.<sup>4</sup> While on the airplane, Graham sets his crime scene file on the unfolded tray table. To his left are a mother and her young daughter, who to this point are oblivious to him. Graham removes the two photographs of the families shown to him at the beginning of his investigation and fastens the happy, satisfied depictions of suburban family life to the outside of the file. As he scrutinizes the

---

<sup>4</sup> The primary problem the FBI has with solving this case is its inability to find a connection between the two families. While they are murdered in the same way, nothing else outwardly connects them. They live in different cities and have absolutely no ties to each other. The connection is in the killer's fantasy, and it is the job of the profiler to expose this fantasy and find the motive driving him.

photos, he falls asleep, and the pictures of the happy families dissolve into dreamlike depictions of Graham's wife. Mann composes the dream sequence in shot-reverse-shot, showing Molly, beautiful and smiling, and replaces the shot with the contemplative face of Graham, then cuts back to her. Next, a sharp, straight cut replaces Molly's beaming visage with a crime scene photo of one of the dead wives, which has, along with other disturbing pictures, fallen out of Graham's folder while he sleeps. The young girl next to him notices them and screams as she sees the content of the crime scene photos, startling Graham out of his slumber. The photos of the slain families and their effect on the child starkly depict the limits of the profiler fantasy; we demand that the profiler exist, that he demonstrate the serial killer's thoughts and actions for us, and that he show us how these murders were committed. However, there is a price to pay for seeing what he sees, and the satisfaction of seeing all, of seeing just what the Leeds and Jacobis look like dead, is never what we wanted to see in the first place. The living pictures fastened to the outside of the folder give way to the pictures of violent death hidden just beneath the surface; the profiler brings the killer's desire to our attention, thus satisfying our desire to see and demonstrating the shock of enjoyment that forces us to turn our heads. This is taken further when Graham visits the Jacobi crime scene. After a quick inspection of the house, he goes outside and stands in the woods behind the house. Cutting between objective shots of Graham's retreat into the woods and subjective shots of his view of the house, Mann shows us Dolarhyde's mode of surveillance. Graham climbs a tree and discovers the killer's vantage point, and we see through his eyes what the house looked like from the perspective of the person who would eventually kill the Jacobis. While up in the tree, Graham also finds a "red dragon" symbol carved by the killer, which is the

symbol of his fantasy and, as we find out later from Lecter, the key concept underpinning Dolarhyde's notion of his "becoming." The issue here, though, is that all of these key elements of the film are rendered through the subjectivity of the criminal profiler, and what becomes clear by the end of the film, is that while we think what we are seeing is limited and unfulfilling, Mann is actually satisfying our desire to see what the killer sees.

After coming up short on a few leads, Graham, in frustration, re-watches the home movies of the Leeds and Jacobi families at the same time on monitors sitting side-by-side. He is running out of time to catch Dolarhyde before he commits another murder on his schedule of one family per month. The fused sight motif of the profiler and killer culminates in the side-by-side obsessive reviewing of the home movies. Like the prior screening of the home movies, Graham reaches an epiphany that serves as the final turning point of the story, propelling him into the climactic confrontation with Dolarhyde. Moreover, the final viewing of the home movies reveals the way in which Mann has been bringing together the three sight lines in the film—the killer's, the profiler's, and the audience's—into a single line of vision that promotes the fantasy of seeing all. The second viewing also underscores how much of the killer's point-of-view Graham, and by extension the viewer, inhabits. Much like the earlier scene, Graham sees something in the text of the videos that is there more than itself. Not only does he recognize the inconsistency in the homes as they are depicted in the videos and the way he found them after the murders, but Graham also intuits the killer's method of selection. Instead of benign visual displays of domesticity, the home movies emerge as examples of the killer's desire, and Graham realizes that the killer and he have been watching the same movies, which radically changes the nature of the movies. The profiler fully inhabits the

killer's vision: "You know you need a bolt cutter and every other Goddamn thing, cause everything with you is seeing, isn't it? Your primary sensory intake that makes your dream live is seeing. Reflections, mirrors, images. You've seen these films! Haven't you my man." Here Graham restages the original desire of the killer during his selection and planning process in a way that implicates himself and the audience at a nonspecular point in the film. In this single moment, we are provided the moment of satisfaction that we can now see is in the picture more than itself, and the final clue emerges because the profiler sees the picture exactly the same way the killer does. It should be enough, then, to take this moment of knowledge and follow through with an arrest of the killer, thus satisfying the profiler fantasy. But the unpleasant obscenity of the seeing through the eyes of the killer is the satisfaction audiences have paid for. That perceived sense of satisfaction, however, comes with a price.

### **Desire Satisfied?**

As explained earlier, Cettl has argued that the "serial killer is thus emblematic of a malfunctioning order, and the profiler the agent of its cure and restoration" (31). This would fit as a description of *Manhunter* if the film ended on Graham's final epiphany and the arrest of Dolarhyde. Mann, though, takes this moment of satisfaction and depicts its logical end: the enjoyment of murder. In the climax of the film, Mann has so thoroughly blurred point-of-view that the subject position taken by Graham as he stalks Dolarhyde has completely reversed. Graham is now looking to satisfy his fantasy of fulfilled desire and Dolarhyde's desire has been disrupted by his belief that his girlfriend, Reba, has cheated on him with another co-worker. In other words, Mann has obscured point-of-

view to such a degree that during the climax questions are raised regarding murder and our appetite to see it perpetrated on our behalf. After determining the identity of Dolarhyde through his final analysis of the home movies, Graham races against time to reach the serial killer before he kills again. Dolarhyde has taken his blind girlfriend, Reba, captive in his home and begins menacing her with shards of broken mirror. Arriving at Dolarhyde's house, Graham detaches himself from the rest of the police and stalks the house from the woods surrounding it. The position in the woods is similar to the one Dolarhyde takes up while planning his murders; Graham has completely immersed himself into the subjectivity of the killer. Mann underscores this transformation through the use of heavy backlighting that completely obscures Graham's identity and fully implicates the spectator's desire to *see* Dolarhyde murdered by Graham. Graham watches from the woods as Dolarhyde pins Reba to the kitchen table and holds a mirror shard up against her throat, to which the profiler responds by yelling "stop" and running toward the large window that frames their murderous engagement. Graham runs completely through the window, crashing into Dolarhyde, who catches him, slashes his face with a mirror shard, and throws him to the floor. The killer then goes on to easily execute the other police and FBI surrounding his house and returns his attention to the intruding profiler. Returning to the kitchen, the killer aims his rifle at Graham, but Graham is quicker, drawing his revolver and unloading its contents into the killer. The climactic encounter suggests two things about the profiler/serial killer relationship. First, the profiler is the only legitimate executioner of the serial killer, and this legitimacy implicates the audience in the executioner's desire. Second, and more theoretically, it suggests a limit to the fantasy of satisfied desire. Not only does Graham not allow the

FBI and local police to arrest Dolarhyde, he explicitly disobeys orders to wait for back-up when he charges through the window. In other words, he is driven to disrupt his satisfaction—the scars left on his face at the end of the film testifying to this.

The final meeting between profiler and killer underscores what is ultimately the most significant aspect of fantasy for the profiler genre. Fantasy promotes the notion that we can satisfy our desire and structures it according to the idea that we can get what want each and every day. Profiler films pander to our fantasies of satisfied desire but not from the perspective of the FBI. Instead, a film like *Manhunter* situates our desire on the side of the killer, and the profiler's self-destructive empathy provides us insight into the criminally deviant mind. The result suggests that we can see all there is to see from the perspective of the Law and from the perspective of the killer, and films like *Manhunter* allow us to fantasize about a world where crime is transparent if you know how to inductively reason through crime scenes. But, this fantasy is driven by our desire to see through the killer's eyes, and profiler films knowingly understand that audiences pay for the pleasure of this experience while also desiring the painful reproach of realizing their own capacity for criminal deviance. Fantasy, understood this way, is not an all-encompassing illusion that deceives us, but a story of satisfied desire we tell ourselves everyday that gives shape to our daily reality. However, as we see in Graham's reckless jump through Dolarhyde's window, we often intentionally disrupt our fantasies. Mann emphasizes the danger of getting too close to fully satisfying our fantasies in the climactic scene by shooting multiple takes with cameras set at different speeds and editing together shots that disrupt the visual field instead of providing a seamless link between camera and spectator. The disruptions first appear to be a mistake in the

continuity editing, but when watched more closely, it is clear that the images have been purposely exaggerated to show the seams in Graham's reality nearly coming apart. As he purposefully tears at the fabric of the fantasmatic supports of his reality, Mann tears at the fabric of the film, puncturing its continuity and exposing its seams. The effect broadens Mann's investigation into the nature of vision and points up the limits of the fantasy of seeing it all. But while this fantasy essentially underpins all profiler narratives, not all of them seamlessly combine multiple lines of vision into one single desire to see more in the crime scene than there is to see. While *Manhunter* exploits this desire, the second significant installment in the evolution of the FBI agent as profiler, *The Silence of the Lambs*, separates sight lines in order to investigate the desirable nature of seeing it not-all.

### ***The Silence of the Lambs: The Desire to See it Not-All***

*The Silence of the Lambs* continues to be the highest praised film in the profiler genre. Having won Academy Awards in 1991 for Best Picture, Director, Actress, Actor, and Screenplay, the film transcended its generic limits and was recognized as a major artistic achievement. First and foremost, the economic and artistic success of *The Silence of the Lambs* is based upon director Jonathan Demme's ambitious manipulation of the FBI film, a genre by 1991 at its high point of self-consciousness. Demme restores the FBI to its pre-profiler level of prestige, which had been discarded in the post-Hoover years. Like *G-Men*, *The House on 92<sup>nd</sup> Street*, and *The Street With No Name*, *The Silence of the Lambs* is partially shot on-location at the FBI Academy in Quantico, Virginia. Furthermore, Demme admits in an interview with *Film Comment* that his primary interest



in adapting Thomas Harris's novel was its strong female protagonist, and this led him to realize his long-term interest in making a woman's picture in the tradition of those made during World War II. Demme explains,

Ever since my days of working with Roger Corman, and perhaps before that, I've been a sucker for a woman's picture. A film with a woman protagonist at the forefront. A woman in jeopardy. A woman on a mission. These are themes that have tremendous appeal to me as a moviegoer and also as a director. (Smith 29-30)

Demme, also, enthusiastically supports the "really good pokes at patriarchy" that he feels author Thomas Harris employs in his novel (Smith 30), which comments upon and further enriches the problems the FBI has deploying its ideological mission. Finally, *The Silence of the Lambs* interrogates the traditionally masculine nature of the genre by employing a female lead and a serial killer whose failure as a candidate for gender reassignment surgery has driven him to murder women for their skin, which he plans to eventually wear as his own. Combining different elements of the horror, the detective, and the woman's film, *The Silence of the Lambs* is an FBI film that, on the one hand, self-consciously restores the FBI ideological fantasy and, on the other hand, self-reflexively exposes the limits of its ability to satisfy our desire. Whereas *Manhunter* maintains the fantasy of satisfying our desire to see it all throughout the film, only to punish audiences for their desire for criminal deviance at the end, *The Silence of the Lambs* actively interrogates the conflict between fantasy and desire in every shot of the film.

The film reinforces the profiler cycle's conventions established by *Manhunter*. Like Will Graham, Clarice Starling (Jodie Foster) is an outsider brought in to work on the case of Buffalo Bill (Ted Levine). Being a woman and still a student at the FBI Academy, Starling is asked to join the case by Jack Crawford (Scott Glenn) who sends her on an "interesting errand" to see Hannibal Lecter (Anthony Hopkins) in hopes of convincing him to fill out the Bureau's personality questionnaire. While *Manhunter* obliterates the key boundary separating profiler and killer, Starling is never presented as having serial killer tendencies. However, her burgeoning relationship with Lecter confuses her sense of a stable identity as she attempts to keep things together in his presence. Lecter consistently punctures her defenses with his behavioral insights,<sup>5</sup> but begins to admire her regardless of her status as a law enforcement official. While *Silence* makes less of the conflation of the hunter and prey, it does focus more rigorously on the other key aspect of the profiler method: empathy with the victim. Starling is consistently equated with the female victims who fall prey to Buffalo Bill, and Demme chooses to depict Starling as one of Bill's potential victims. *Silence*, moreover, foregrounds the FBI's expertise in tracking and catching serial killers; the on-location sequences at the FBI Academy, the use of the profiles of real serial killers Ted Bundy and Ed Gein to create the character of Buffalo Bill, and the employment of profiler John Douglas as a consultant on the film, combine to demonstrate the FBI's expertise on this subject. In fact, Demme went so far to understand the profiling method that he wrote profiles, during pre-production, for Buffalo Bill, and the FBI offered critiques so that he could begin, in his words, "comprehending the incomprehensible" of Buffalo Bill's motivation (Smith

---

<sup>5</sup> While a criminal and, by most accounts, insane, in many ways, Lecter is the best profiler of them all. The serial killer as profiler will be something explored in the next chapter, which deals with killers targeting specific profilers in *Copycat* and *The Watcher*.

37). Lastly and most significantly, *Silence*, more than any other profiler film, exploits the key contention that profilers have an extra-sensory gift for sight that goes beyond that of regular police officers. Unlike *Manhunter*, which collapses everything Graham, Dolarhyde, and the audience see into a single line of sight, thus shifting viewer desire away from the satisfaction of the FBI and toward the satisfaction of the killer, *Silence* separates vision into two distinct sight lines: one from the controlling perspective of protagonist Clarice Starling, and the second from an unidentifiable perspective that “follows” her. In other words, Demme skillfully delays the satisfaction of criminal deviance by not showing audiences everything Starling sees. While Will Graham’s inductive method of detection allows him to inhabit the killer’s vision and see more in the crime scene than there is to see, Starling’s empathy is directed toward the victims, limiting her ability to intuit unseen clues from crime scenes—much like a victim never sees “it” coming. Through the course of the film, Starling learns—from Lecter and not from the FBI—to satisfy her ability to see more than there is to see, thus establishing a new component to the profiler fantasy. Whereas *Manhunter* allows us to only fantasize from the perspective of the killer, I contend that *The Silence of the Lambs* allows us fantasize from the perspective of both the killer and victim. Starling’s ability to see not all of her surroundings allows audiences to choose between the total vision of the killer or the limited perspective of the victim.

Of the all the FBI films, *The Silence of the Lambs* continues to receive the greatest amount of critical attention among critics and scholars, but very little of this criticism focuses on the film’s use of criminal profiling. Clearly, much of the critical interest in the film has derived from its depiction of its two antagonists: Buffalo Bill and Hannibal

Lecter. These two figures remain significant to the world of cinematic serial killers primarily because of the radical ambiguity of their representations and sheer audacity of their crimes. Buffalo Bill's gender bending appearance and his commitment to building himself a suit made of women's skin have proven to be fertile areas of investigation for feminism, queer theory, and gender criticism. Diane Negra explores the film's representation of gender relations and argues that *The Silence of the Lambs* is plagued by a "persistent equation of gender crisis with monstrosity" (193). Negra, like many other critics, ultimately concludes that Buffalo Bill's problems with his identity depict a culture fixated upon a fear that masculine and feminine spheres will not remain distinct and separate: "We are at once fearful of difference and fearful of not having difference to rely on" (199). Julie Tharp was one of the first critics to establish the idea of the feminine equaling the monstrous in *The Silence of the Lambs*'s representation of gender. Tharp focuses on transvestitism and boundary crossing of many of the characters. Explaining that on a narrative level gender difference is upheld, Tharp demonstrates that many of these instances of difference are blurred. Tharp argues, for example, that Starling crosses the boundary separating the truly feminine from the truly masculine through an analysis of the horror genre's exploitation of the Final Girl motif—a masculinized female who transcends gender, ultimately allowing her to survive the killer's rampage.<sup>6</sup> Furthermore, Tharp demonstrates that Buffalo Bill's status as a feminine male confounds traditional gender dichotomies without radically altering

---

<sup>6</sup> The Final Girl is a concept developed by Carol Clover in *Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*. Clover argues that the Final Girl "is boyish, in a word. Just as the killer is not fully masculine, she is not fully feminine—not, in any case, feminine in the ways of her friends. Her smartness, gravity, competence in mechanical and other practical matters, and sexual reluctance set her apart from the other girls and ally her, ironically, with the very boys she fears or rejects, not to speak of the killer himself" (40).

stereotypical gender dynamics. Disagreeing with Negra's and Tharp's positions, Diane Dubois suggests that Clarice Starling is a more clearly feminine character; however, the profiler's femininity does not foreclose audience identification. Employing Tania Modleski's revision of Laura Mulvey's male gaze—an argument that suggests female characters can be active subjects in Hollywood films<sup>7</sup>—Dubois suggests that Starling is an active looker who resists the looks of others, concluding that gender difference is challenged and that “violent, voyeuristic and sadistic conventions are held up for scrutiny, and are heartily condemned” through the use of a “strong female hero and a sympathetic and attractive ‘monster’ who encodes female ambitions” (308). Negra, Tharp, and Dubois's analyses of *The Silence of the Lambs* provide necessary clarity to its complex representation of gender. Each article shows how gender representation shifts from strict adherence to codes of difference to a more complicated ambiguous vision. Each of these arguments are significant to *Silence*'s investigation into the victim/killer paradigm because they emphasize the problematic nature of isolating Starling's character into one stable category, thus highlighting the significance of the choice to see all or not—all Demme asks us to make.

Of the many critics who have attempted to unravel the visual dynamics of *The Silence of the Lambs*, Andrew Schopp's “The Practice and Politics of ‘Freeing the Look’”: Jonathan Demme's *The Silence of the Lambs*” stands as a groundbreaking attempt in rethinking traditional notions of spectator vision. Schopp's analysis uncouples Mulvey's conception of the male gaze in order to show that the gaze is not necessarily male and not

---

<sup>7</sup> Modleski argues in *The Women Who Knew Too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory* that the female characters in Hitchcock's films are often more than passive objects of visual perfection. See, for example, her analysis of Lisa Freemont in *Rear Window*: “In *Rear Window*, however, the woman is continually shown to be physically superior to the hero, not only in her physical movements but also in her dominance within the frame: she towers over Jeff in nearly every shot in which they both appear” (77).

necessarily anchored in a singular subjectivity, suggesting that “this film posits sight, seeing, and the gaze as the greatest threats to safety and self” (126):

*The Silence of the Lambs* is highly self-conscious both about its status as film and contemporary film theory. I am not suggesting, however, that *Silence* merely alludes to or questions feminist film theory and its assertions about the gendered gaze. Rather, the film’s formal techniques, coupled with its complex representations of the monstrous, self-consciously complicate claims that the voyeuristic gaze can be definitively gendered. (129)

Schopp’s claim about *Silence*’s self-conscious depiction of the gendered gaze is significant. Primarily, Schopp demonstrates that much of the film is built upon two lines of sight: what he refers to as the internal gaze, situated through Starling’s controlling point-of-view, and an external gaze, freed from any perspective and repeatedly intruding upon Starling, ultimately placing her into the position of the gazed upon (139).

Separating these lines of vision complicates traditional Mulveyian approaches to film theory and undercuts Hollywood film’s status as monolithically patriarchal. Schopp’s analysis resituates spectator identification into a more ambiguous status. In order to more fully realize Schopp’s conclusion, I think situating his conception of the “freed look” into our discussion of Lacanian desire would be beneficial. The choice of the external gaze rests upon our desire to be satisfied and thus locates the audience squarely within the desire of the serial killer. Choosing the limited, internal gaze, on the other hand, forces us into a state of constant dissatisfaction—the look of the victim and the look of Starling as she begins her quest to understand the satisfied desire of the serial killer.

## Where is Your Danger Area?

Unlike other analyses of the sight motif in *The Silence of the Lambs*, my examination identifies the points at which vision fails in *Silence*. Prior criticism too often equates the pleasure of looking with threats to identity, but this misunderstands the role of pleasure. As explained earlier, the pleasure of looking protects the subject from seeing too much, and because sight is always-already limited and dissatisfied, it seeks out only those things that do not threaten identity. Profiler films actively cultivate excessive visual pleasure in order to set desire in motion. It is a mistake to think that these films warn against visual pleasure; instead, it is more appropriate to think of profiler films as commanding us to “Enjoy what you don’t see!” because that is what keeps our sense of stability. Demme’s separation of the point-of-view in *Silence* underscores the film’s fundamental understanding of the split between satisfying sight and dissatisfying sight, except that it reverses traditional notions of this concept, relocating satisfaction away from the controlling subjectivity of the film and into the threatening, ambiguous, external gaze.

The split between the internal and external gaze is evident in the opening credit sequence. *Silence* begins with a shot through dead tree limbs of the gray sky of a fall day and then turns left and tilts down to find Starling struggling to climb a hill using a rope. Starling is introduced at the bottom of the screen using a high angle shot, which reduces her in size and diminishes her presence. Starling struggles to the top of the hill where the camera waits for her. She arrives into a medium shot, stops, looks over her shoulder, and continues running. Demme employs a tracking shot that follows her from behind and introduces the notion of the blind spot in Starling’s vision. The camera follows in much

the same way as tracking subjective shots are used in slasher films. For example, the depiction of Jason Voorhees or Michael Myers stalking victims in the *Friday the 13<sup>th</sup>* and the *Halloween* films, respectively, is often composed in this manner. Following the tracking shot, Demme employs a montage of Starling's different body parts in close-up: "This initial, predatory gaze dismembers her visually, isolating her feet, her back, her front, face, and so on, and this is the first sign aligning the gaze with Buffalo Bill, a figure who also dismembers women" (Schopp 137-38). In other words, the camera literally cuts Starling into pieces. She goes from whole to fragmented after the camera starts chasing her from behind, the implication suggests that she is not only the controlling subject of the film but also a victim of the visual practices of filmmaking. Demme introduces two ways of seeing Starling in this opening sequence that are significant to the way in which she solves the mystery of Buffalo Bill. The spectator has a choice: either he/she can identify with the objective shots of her struggle through the course and align himself/herself with Starling's point-of-view, or the spectator can adopt the Mulveyian male gaze and see her as a fragmented object. Demme renders the choice ambiguously at the beginning and consistently opposes these two ways of seeing throughout the film.

Two short scenes, moreover, reveal Demme's manipulation of what Starling can see and what she cannot see. Starling's first visit to Lecter's dungeon has been discussed extensively in many other articles, and many of these articles focus exclusively on the introduction to Lecter and analyze the emerging gender dynamics of the film, but very few of them pause to analyze the end of the scene in which Lecter's neighbor, Multiple Miggs, flings ejaculate into Starling's hair as she leaves Lecter behind. The moment is brief but instructive about how Demme orchestrates Starling's ability to *not* see. The



scene is designed to be investigative: Starling's mission is to retrieve information from Lecter on the criminal mind—their cat-and-mouse game is the narrative lure that underpins the film's economy of desire. Catching Buffalo Bill is important, but talking to Lecter is the fuel that drives our interest. Crawford gives this “interesting errand” to Starling with the warning that he does not expect Lecter to talk to her and that she needs to guard against letting Lecter into her head, two prohibitions that ensure that her desire will lead her exactly to these points. Furthermore, Crawford provides her with instructions to report back: “How's he look? How does his cell look? Is he sketching? Drawing? If he is, what's he sketching?” Crawford creates a series of visual signifiers for Starling to explore and asks her to create a profile based upon these items. This inventory will lead to an authoritative glimpse into Lecter's psychology, and this type of looking is validated during their first meeting. In fact, Crawford's instructions to report back on what she sees in Lecter's cell are a lure that Demme seeks to criticize rather than endorse. Her vision leads her nowhere during her first meeting; Lecter's comment to “look within yourself” emphasizes her inability to see the threat represented by Miggs. After failing to get any useful information from Lecter, she walks away from his cell and back through the frightening dungeon for the criminally insane. During her conversation with Lecter, Miggs has been masturbating in his cell and throws the resulting semen into Starling's hair as she walks by. She fails to see the threat represented by Miggs and is startled momentarily. Indeed, this moment is quite startling to the audience because the on-screen content is exceedingly out of place in a mainstream, prestige Hollywood film. Miggs's actions go beyond the traditional scare tactics of the horror genre and are more at home in hardcore pornography—his actions akin to a type of “money shot” that serves as

the focal point of the entire hardcore industry. Going beyond the boundary of the traditional “R-rated” visual material is significant to Demme’s approach to sight in *Silence*. As Schopp points out, *Silence* “self-consciously controls visual displeasure” (135) in order to undo the safe visual identification of traditional Hollywood cinema, which, ultimately, exposes Starling’s blind spots. She goes into the dungeon in hopes of seeing all that Lecter has to offer and leaves having been blinded from a source she did not recognize as a threat. The “visual displeasure” of Miggs’s “money shot,” though, comes from the external gaze of satisfaction, which suggests that from that perspective she deserved what she got—a painful moment for the audience which has enjoyed the “too much” represented by the “money shot.” However, the limited, internal perspective never sees this coming, which suggests that Starling’s blind spots, or her inability to see from the perspective of a serial killer, will have to be overcome in order to accurately identify Buffalo Bill and the motive underpinning his horrific crimes.

The split in point-of-view is further reinforced after Starling’s visit to Lecter’s cell through a montage of images of her training at Quantico. The montage begins with shots of Starling at the firing range, aiming and shooting a gun directly into the camera, followed by shots of Starling and a partner at practice where we see her subdue a criminal upon entering a hostile environment. She and her partner storm into a room where a man holds two people hostage. While her partner covers her, Starling moves in to place handcuffs on the perpetrator and bring the situation under control. However, Demme frames this action from behind Starling and leaves a space over her left shoulder open. The space represents the problem she has with seeing all, which is emerging as the spot from which others see her. Moving in with handcuffs ready, Starling approaches the

suspect and takes control of the room, but a handgun enters the frame from the left and comes to a rest on the back of Starling's head. The trigger is pulled to emphasize to her the consequences of not seeing her blind spot, in other words, of seeing not-all of the situation. The scene has a similar effect to Miggs's "money shot." Demme disrupts the pleasure of seeing a perpetrator stopped from committing a crime to underscore not only his protagonist's primary weakness but also the fantasy of seeing any scene as stable. The handgun's intrusion disrupts the pleasure of coherently reading a crime scene for what it is, suggesting that seeing it all is a dubious proposition at best, but desirable nonetheless. Whose eyes is the audience supposed to see through? The eyes of the person pulling the trigger of the gun positioned against Starling's head? Starling's eyes? Miggs's eyes? Lecter's eyes? Buffalo Bill's eyes? *Silence* offers so many subject positions that none are privileged. As Starling realizes the mistake of entering a room without securing all the possible vantage points, the instructor guiding the exercise asks her "where is your danger area," and Starling responds that the corner behind her is the danger area. The instructor informs her that she is dead because she failed to secure her danger area, and this further establishes the satisfaction/dissatisfaction split—the danger areas serving to split along lines of looking at Starling or looking through her. Starling's inability to see her danger areas—the thing that is in the shot more than the shot itself—eventually lead her to seeing how the killer sees his victims, which is the answer that eludes all others trying to capture Buffalo Bill. Typically, profiler films position these kinds of danger areas as areas that satisfy the external gaze—the line of sight that desires to see Starling in peril. But instead, by allowing audiences the satisfaction of seeing her

from this perspective, Demme exposes the horrible content of our desire to see from this perspective.

### **Don't Your Eyes Seek Out the Things You Want?**

Hannibal Lecter asks Clarice Starling this question during their conversation in Memphis, the conversation that leads Starling to understand Buffalo Bill's murderous thought-process. Lecter pushes Starling to understand the nature of the killer by getting her to see his fantasy. However, Lecter instructs the young FBI trainee on the complicated process of vision by pointing out the difference between empathy with the victim and empathy with the killer. He prefaces the question, quoted above, by asking Starling, "don't you feel eyes moving over your body, Clarice?" Left alone, the implication of this question, born out in many scenes where Starling is expressly employed as an object of the look of others, is that women operate primarily as passive objects for men to look at, connoting what Mulvey refers to as *to-be-looked-at-ness* (19).<sup>8</sup> Lecter, though, counters this position by following with a question that repositions Starling as an active subject who desires satisfaction: "don't your eyes seek out the things you want?" The scene and the two questions elucidate the two sight lines employed by Demme and underscores *Silence*'s effective manipulation of desire, or, in other words, its exploitation of both the internal gaze and the external gaze. For Starling to solve the mystery of Buffalo Bill, she must "feel the eyes moving over" her body and resist the lure of seeking out "the things she wants"—the satisfied external gaze serving more as a decoy than a guide.

---

<sup>8</sup> Mulvey argues that Classical Hollywood cinema constructs gender in a way that divides men and women based upon the act of looking. Men, in effect, are active lookers, and women are subjected to the passive position of being looked at (19).

Demme achieves this feeling through a concerted use of tracking and dolly shots instead of typical Hollywood continuity editing. Screenwriter Ted Tally explains on the commentary track of Criterion's production of the DVD<sup>9</sup> that Roger Corman once told Demme that the most terrifying shot in cinema is the subjective point-of-view shot dollying into a closed door. Demme refers to it as "Corman's favorite shot" in cinema, and even though this stylistic idea is provided on the commentary track as almost an afterthought, it can also be understood as a key to understanding Demme's cinematographic approach to depicting the perils of seeing too much. Camera movement typically connotes connection and usually stands in opposition to the concept of montage, which separates the specific visual interests of the film. In other words, montage creates opposition and the moving camera brings disparate elements into contact with each other. Demme's employment of camera movement, especially during the more suspenseful scenes, operates formally to demonstrate that Starling's inability to see is far more significant than her ability to see.

Žižek's theorizing of camera movement in Hitchcock's films is useful for understanding Demme's approach. Žižek argues that the Hitchcockian tracking shot and montage work together "to produce a spot [...] the true form of which is accessible only to an anamorphic 'view from aside.'" (*Looking Awry* 116). Sarah Kay explains that Žižek's reading

illustrates the device of anamorphosis, whereby if we see "reality," the

---

<sup>9</sup> Criterion created a limited run of *Silence* on DVD that features Demme, Ted Tally, Jodie Foster, Anthony Hopkins, and FBI profiler John Douglas on the commentary track. Subsequently, the DVD was produced by MGM/UA, which has no commentary track, and focuses more exclusively on the film's status as an Academy Award winning prestige picture. The Criterion disc is exceptional for its extras because much of it is centered on its exploration into the nature of serial killing. It provides exceptional factual information on the FBI's Behavioral Sciences Unit and how its profiling process works.

real object is reduced to a blot or stain; but if we focus instead on the uncanny, what recedes is our sense of “reality.” The price of seeing everyday reality is that we don’t see the blot, even though this is in fact what frames and gives definition to reality [...] Hitchcock’s films thus show how subjects maintains [sic] themselves, however precariously, in reality: namely, at the cost of *not seeing* something, the objects of fundamental fantasy by which that reality is defined. (62)

Žižek’s analysis focuses on Lilah Crane’s approach to the Bates house in *Psycho*. Hitchcock composes this approach using objective shots of Lilah approaching the house and tracking subjective shots of her view of the house, the result of which “succeeds in bestowing on an ordinary object the aura of anxiety and uneasiness” (*Looking Awry* 117). Hitchcock avoids using objective shots of the house and subjective shots from the house’s point-of-view, and these limitations help create an uncanny feeling because they refuse a neutral view of the house and block the house’s agency. Limiting the sequence to these shots lends the sequence not only what Lilah sees but also the anamorphic view from aside, thus giving the sequence an uncanny dimension that produces a feeling that “in a way, *it is the house that gazes at Lilah*” (*Looking Awry* 118, emphasis in original). In other words, Lilah’s eyes seek out things she wants while feeling the eyes of the house move over her body. The returned scrutiny of the house only works if Lilah remains unaware of somebody actually looking back at her. Demme’s use of camera movement works effectively in a similar way to Hitchcock’s and elevates ordinary objects to the status of the sublime—a process that is necessary to elevating the banal, obscenity of the serial killer to a level sublime enough to warrant the expertise of the FBI. For example,

the subjective shots of Starling approaching closed doors in Buffalo Bill's underground dungeon operate as a substantive moment of excessively painful enjoyment. As Starling chases Bill through the labyrinth under his house, Demme employs "Roger Corman's favorite shot" in a sequence of objective shots of Starling walking down dark, cramped hallways and subjective shots of the many doors she approaches (and there are an uncomfortable amount closed doors in Bill's basement). Once downstairs, Starling walks gun in hand, the camera panning slightly from her view of the hallway to look at each door, refusing to slow down and contemplate for "too long" their mysterious status, thus leaving out the contents behind each door and imbuing them with an almost unbearable mystery. The result of dissatisfying our ability to see behind each door produces a combination of what Starling sees and a view from aside—the decoy gaze that is satisfied and external—looking at her in peril, while her frustrated dissatisfaction lends the scene its tension and mystery. Because of her empathy with the victim, Starling promises something different from the profiler in *Manhunter*, and the tracking shots reinforce this. During this sequence, Starling learns the significance of seeing without seeing all. Instead of fighting the inherent dissatisfaction of her frustrated desire, she fully inhabits the blindness of the victim, using her inability to see raised to the level of the Sublime—the limits of the fantasy of seeing all exposed as hollow. Much like Will Graham's unconscious decision to nearly self-destruct by jumping through a window to stop Dolarhyde from another murder, Starling unconsciously chooses to see not-all in her pursuit of Buffalo Bill. To clarify further how this crucial moment emerges, let me backtrack to the autopsy of Fredericka Bimmel in *The Silence of the Lambs*.

Crawford pulls Starling out of a training session to go to West Virginia where a “floater” (Bimmel) has been found in a river. Starling is added to the FBI team that has been invited to assist the local law enforcement, and Crawford and she oversee the autopsy of the victim. Prior to entering the medical examiner’s room, Starling and her boss deal with the local law enforcement in hopes of being left alone. They walk into the funeral home (where the coroner’s office is) and a waiting camera captures them in a medium profile shot as they walk through the front door and moves in behind them, following them into a waiting room where the police have gathered. Instead of cutting this scene for continuity, Demme employs camera movement much like the opening credit sequence—the characters pass by in an apparent objective shot, the camera reacts like a subjective shot of someone following them. As they enter the waiting room, their backs are to the camera, and as they reach the middle of the room Crawford and Starling turn to face the camera. However, Crawford positions himself in such a way to almost completely obscure the small trainee behind him, her head poking up just above his left shoulder. To further obscure Starling, Crawford plays up the local sheriff’s implicit misogyny by suggesting they speak out of earshot of the lady in the room. As they leave the room, Starling is left surrounded by the remaining deputies in what can only be described as a male *gaze par excellence*. Reduced further in significance by a high angle shot, Starling stands in the center of the shot as the camera cuts to the looks of the men staring back at her. On the one hand, the effect of this sequence of shots belittles her and underscores the patriarchal culture of law enforcement—it should radically undercut her sense of identity and underscore her sense of anxiety. But, on the other hand, the looks of the deputies come from in front of her and not from her danger area. She meets these



looks eye-to-eye, knowing fully the challenge she faces everyday as woman in law enforcement. These male gazes do not diminish her sense of self. Rather, they serve as the key signifier around which her subjectivity revolves. Instead of intruding and disrupting, the men's gazes provide Starling with a perceived sense of coherency and a personal mission. Her job everyday is to prove that a woman can be as effective an FBI agent as a man. Clearly, she sees the looks of the men coming and understands their meaning. However, much like the training sequence earlier in the film, the ambiguous spot behind her, the area she cannot see, is more fascinating.

Behind her and in another room, a funeral service is getting under way, and it draws her attention away from being stranded by Crawford. In a composition strikingly similar to the subjective tracking shots in Bill's dungeon, Starling turns her head to look into the funeral service. Using a subjective shot of what she sees cut together with an objective close-up of her face, she advances upon the coffin at the front of the room, Demme's construction of this sequence raises the level of the coffin and corpse to an uncanny, eerie object. In contrast, the gaze of the men staring back at her in the anteroom actually proves to be powerless—their looks being exactly what they are on their face—sexist. The coffin and corpse, which cannot literally stare back, actually do return Starling's scrutiny but with a blind eye. She advances upon it, and the expression on her face asks "what do you want from me?" The coffin does not and cannot respond but, nonetheless, demands more of her than the deputies' looks. To reinforce the demand represented by the coffin and corpse at the front of the room, Demme uses the moment to flashback to the backstory of Clarice's relationship with her father, who died early in her childhood attempting to prevent a robbery. At the end of her approach to the coffin, a

younger actress replaces Jodie Foster in order to point up the tragedy of losing her father as a young child. Her father's death represents a type of a traumatic, unspeakable moment that Starling cannot put into words without losing her sense of self—Lecter's presence as her analyst serves to bring her trauma to the surface. The stares of the men operate as a conscious structure within her daily life that represent the external gaze of satisfaction, and the coffin represents the dissatisfaction of seeing it not-all. Demme depicts this split through two separate lines of sight, that which she sees and that which she cannot. The significance of these moments for Starling hinge upon whether she chooses to accept the fantasy of seeing all or the reality of seeing not-all.

### **Seeing Eye to Eye**

Returning to Buffalo Bill's dungeon, Demme's consistent employment of the conflict between satisfied and dissatisfied sight as key components of *Silence's mise-en-scène* forces the audience to make a choice during the film's climactic conflict. Choosing the external gaze means choosing to see from the fantasmatic perspective of the killer, which is "both terrifying and pleasurable" and "forces us to accept a position we fear and yet desire" (Schopp 144). The choice of the internal gaze means choosing a reality structured by things we cannot see and confronting the lack that goes with it. Because of the conscious orchestration of two ways of seeing in *The Silence of the Lambs*, Demme effectively fools audiences into believing that Starling has achieved a cathartic breakthrough in discovering the motivation of serial killer's desire to make a suit of women's skin while exploring Bill's first victim Fredericka Bimmel's room. The insight, however, is thwarted by Crawford's information on Bill's location, information he

received from Johns Hopkins's sexual reassignment database, and Demme uses the different locations of Crawford and Starling (the former in Calumet City, Illinois and the latter in Belvedere, Ohio) to draw the spectator into the film's deconstruction of conscious sight. Through parallel editing, Demme is able to couple together the unreliability of Starling to see with the audience's willingness to have its vision manipulated by the cinema. The sequence begins after Crawford believes that he has a location for Bill and after Starling uncovers his motive and, unbeknownst to her, his real location. Cutting back and forth between Crawford's team in Calumet City and Bill inside his house, Demme misleads the audience into believing that the FBI is just outside of his house. During the sequence, Bill cares for his mother and fights with his victim because she has managed to lure his dog away from him. The fight is interrupted by the loud clangs of the doorbell, which Bill turns to reluctantly answer. In one shot, an FBI agent posing as flower delivery man presses a doorbell, and in the next shot, the spectator sees Bill moving toward his front door. Demme has effectively manipulated the audience in the exact same manner as Starling: what one sees with his/her eyes never tells a complete story—there is always something missing from the picture. The viewer must enjoy the door, because what is behind it is never what it seems. In this case, Demme leaves Starling out of the parallel editing sequence, and as the FBI agents crash through the windows and doors of the Calumet City house, Starling emerges from behind Bill's closed door. The FBI agents have gone to the wrong house, thus downplaying the Bureau's ability to fully comprehend what it sees. The pleasure of the FBI detaining and punishing the perpetrator of these horrific crimes has been replaced by the painful

enjoyment—the enjoyment promised by all profiler narratives—of Starling’s encounter with Bill inside of his house.

As Schopp has explained, the aim of *Silence* is orchestrated visual displeasure, and no scene illustrates this point better than Starling’s climactic showdown with Bill in his underground dungeon. Unlike previous scenes where Starling remains unaware of her danger area and pays the consequences for understanding the more that eludes her sight, Starling walks face first into her danger area. Rather than compose her entrance within Bill’s home as similar to previous scenes, Demme chooses to radically shift his practice and have her face the look of the Other, which neither provides answers nor confirmation—Bill is completely lost in his own enjoyment.<sup>10</sup> No matter how much the profiler looks at the serial killer and his motivation, the serial killer will never reflect anything back at the profiler.<sup>11</sup> Instead of consistently backing into her blind spot, Starling walks directly into the most dangerous of areas of Bill’s house. Without the help of backup, Starling walks through Bill’s house asking questions about the prior owners. Buffalo Bill, whom the audience now knows as Jame Gumb, makes a half-hearted attempt to locate information for her. However, Starling sees through Gumb’s act and recognizes that Buffalo Bill is standing right in front of her, seeing in him more than there is to see—the profiler’s extra-sensory gift coming to the fore. The two lines of vision that Demme has carefully kept separate throughout the film begin to converge as

---

<sup>10</sup> As Joan Copjec explains: “When you encounter the gaze of the Other, you meet not a seeing eye but a blind one. The gaze is not clear or penetrating, not filled with knowledge or recognition; it is clouded over and turned back on itself, absorbed in its own enjoyment [...] So, if you are looking for the confirmation of the truth of your being or the clarity of your vision, you are on your own; the gaze of the Other is not confirming; it will not validate. (36)

<sup>11</sup> For example, even though Will Graham in *Manhunter* provides us with a series of theories as to why Dolarhyde murders the Leeds and Jacobis, Dolarhyde never confirms this. In fact, motivation for the killings is only explained by the profiler (and Lecter) in both films.

Starling chases Gumb downstairs into his underground labyrinth, and the film offers a choice to spectators as Gumb cuts the power and turns off the lights, rendering Starling completely blind and placing her under the scrutiny of Gumb's night vision goggles. On the one hand, the spectator can choose the limitations of Starling's sight, which undercuts the fantasy of the profiler's ability to see all. She is literally blind as she fumbles through the dark. Because she is the protagonist, spectators have been guided to see as she sees, which at this point refuses the clarity typical of a film's climax. On the other hand, the spectator can choose Gumb's gaze, the other line of sight that has until now only threatened to intrude upon Starling's investigation but has now erupted full force. The subjective shot of Starling from the killer's perspective is the most horrifying shot in the film and is its most often cited scene. The shot is horrifying precisely because it delivers exactly what profiler films promise, which is to show that elusive more of murder that typically goes unnoticed by the police. In other words, this sequence gives spectators precisely what they desire: to see a female victim through the eyes of the killer. The horror of the subjective shot from the killer's perspective is that it acknowledges the painful enjoyment of this vision and forces us to recognize that we have been looking at Starling from this perspective throughout the entire film. Even though she blindly struggles in the dark to face Gumb, she never turns her back on him, except briefly, which she quickly corrects, thus securing her danger area. The scene verges on the unbearable because of the sustained subjective shot composition; the true horror of the scene comes not from identifying with Starling under scrutiny but recognizing our desire to see as the killer does. The idealized form of vision discussed by film theorists such as Metz and Mulvey stresses the ways in which spectators are positioned by cinema to have

complete dominance and mastery over a shot, and *Silence* demonstrates the horror of such a position if it were actually realized. *Silence* more accurately depicts a way of seeing that splits vision into different lines of sight and allows us to choose, which the profiler genre encourages because of the multiple subject positions it offers. While remaining blind to the lurking danger areas behind her throughout the entirety of the film, Starling's lack of conscious vision allows her to be more aware of the being seen during her ordeal in the dungeon. Turning swiftly around upon hearing Gumb's gun cock, Starling shoots him and shatters the horrible, satisfied gaze of the serial killer, thus freeing the audience from the unbearable enjoyment of seeing all.

## Conclusion

In *Hollywood Genres*, film historian Thomas Schatz employs a four-part schema for explaining the evolution of a genre (37-8). He explains that any particular genre can be broken down into its primitive stage, classical stage, refinement stage, and baroque stage, which mark the genre's transformation from relative balance between form and content to the eventual moment where form overwhelms content, ultimately serving as the only remaining interest for those still interested in exploring its possibilities. On one hand, *Manhunter* and *The Silence of the Lambs* share the distinction of being the first and the most highly regarded films in the profiler cycle, thus serving as the foundations of the genre's classical stage, where form and content appear to effortlessly work together. On the other hand, though, these films represent the baroque stage of the FBI film started by *G-Men* in 1935. The FBI film has evolved beyond its naïve depiction of law enforcement into a complex rendering of the ambiguous relationship between criminal deviance and

the Law. Born from Thomas Harris's novels, these two films have firmly established the character of the profiler in the American imagination, entrenching certain components of genre that future films in the cycle are obligated to employ, refute, or abandon.

In some way, all subsequent profiler films must determine how to depict the FBI because this choice determines the level at which they plan to deal with its legacy.

Foregrounding the FBI within the film's narrative requires dealing with the accumulated distrust and paranoia that surrounded the institution during the post-Hoover years.

Whatever the choice, the most important characteristic of the FBI genre is identification between audience and the Bureau. During the baroque period of the profiler films, audience identification is steered away from the FBI and toward outside figures, who, while alienated from their employer, work on its behalf, thus allowing critical distance between the two. More importantly, the baroque period of FBI film shifts audience desire away from law enforcement and toward the criminal, which reduces the pleasure of punishing criminals found older films like *G-Men*. This shift radically alters the FBI fantasy of satisfied desire and highlights the limits of ideological mission.

*Manhunter* and *The Silence of the Lambs*, furthermore, develop the genre's highly self-conscious relationship to film theory. More specifically, both films operate with a critical awareness of how sight is structured by the cinema and mark ways in which we can understand its problematic nature. By theorizing these films in terms of Lacanian desire, we can begin to see that the classical stage of profiler films undo traditional concepts of satisfied sight and depict it as neither all-seeing nor exclusively gendered. Because of the profiler film's deep investment in notions of transgression, fantasy, and psychosis, it creates an economy of sight that is always-already undercut by the lurking

traumas of the Real. *Manhunter* and *The Silence of the Lambs* install the all-seeing, male gaze as a fantasy that posits the pleasure of seeing as its end goal but actively deconstructs this theoretical structure in order to show the desirability of the fantasy and how it must always end in failure. By promising the audience a vision of murder through the vehicle of the profiler, these two films demonstrate how seeing it all undoes the fundamental lack necessary to subjectivity. *Manhunter* collapses the subjectivities of the profiler and killer so successfully that at the end of the film the spectator becomes aware of himself/herself seeing in a doubly coded way, exposing the interchangeability of the predator/prey structure of the film. The spectator's awareness of seeing himself/herself seeing produces a horrifying understanding of how Michael Mann has implicated him/her in the act of murder. Splitting point-of-view into two separate lines of sight allows *The Silence of the Lambs* to achieve a similar goal. Jonathan Demme punishes the desire to see all by positioning the spectator within the subjectivity of Buffalo Bill during his final pursuit of Clarice Starling in his darkened underground dungeon. Both films serve to establish the codes of the genre and position the split between satisfaction and dissatisfaction as the essential core of the genre.



## CHAPTER THREE

### Between Two Voices: Prohibition and Enjoyment in the Profiler Film, 1995-2000

In the previous chapter, I argued that *Manhunter* and *The Silence of the Lambs* establish and revise the cinematic representation of the FBI agent as the key protector of our “way of life” by fleshing out the threatening Other in the form of the serial killer and providing audiences with an insight into murderous *jouissance* denied by mid-century FBI films. Unlike previous representations of the FBI agent, which range from rolling up gangs to smashing espionage conspiracies, in the earliest profiler films the desire to capture and punish criminals is less clearly aligned with the official desire of the FBI—viewer identification having been shifted over to that of criminal desire through the conflation of the profiler’s subjectivity with that of the serial killer. The blurring of the line between profiler and killer is portrayed through a sight motif that deliberately brings together the vision of the profiler, killer, and audience in order to clearly align the desire of all three, thus shifting desire away from the authority of the FBI. The profiler sight motif runs consistently throughout the cycle. *Manhunter* and *The Silence of the Lambs*, moreover, establish four key components of the genre. First, each film employs an expert in the methods of serial killers who is brought into a failed investigation, often as a last resort, in order to help solve the case when forensic evidence has failed to identify a candidate. Second, the serial killer’s identity is not a mystery and is often revealed early

in the film. Third, the serial killer, as portrayed in the profiler film, is decidedly different from the slasher. In his outer appearance, he is rarely portrayed as being different from other normal looking people. The cinematic serial killer is not a monster or a psycho, but someone who blends in with his surroundings, and his motivation is often driven by morbid sexual interests. Lastly, employing the actual profiling techniques established by the FBI's Behavioral Sciences Unit, the profiler tracks the killer by thinking like him and approaching the crime scene as if he/she committed the crime, which is depicted as a traumatic process that only a few specialists survive the psychological torment.

The profiler films that follow *Manhunter* and *The Silence of the Lambs*—*Copycat* (Jon Amiel, 1995), *Kiss the Girls* (Gary Fleder, 1997), *The Bone Collector* (Phillip Noyce, 1999), and *The Watcher* (Joe Charbonic, 2000)—employ all of these generic conventions while self-consciously complicating the depiction of the criminal profiler. In the foundational films, the process of profiling is unknown to the serial killer because of its relatively recent development. However, by the mid-1990s, profiling is the subject of many crime documentaries, true crime books, and a Congressional investigation into the emerging problem of serial killing.<sup>1</sup> All of these helped raise awareness of the specialization and increased interest in its methods. Moreover, the culture, because of Hollywood's depiction, begins to understand more during this period about the motivations of serial killing, and concepts such as signatures (a type of psychological fingerprint that a serial killer often leaves at all of his crime scenes) become well-known

---

<sup>1</sup> See, for instance, the documentaries, PBS's *Nova: Mind of a Serial Killer* (1992) and *Serial Killers* (2000), which as originally aired on the Arts and Entertainment Channel. As I have explained earlier, former FBI profilers John Douglas and Robert Ressler have moved on from the FBI and have become successful true crime writers. Finally, in the mid-1980s, both the U.S. House of Representatives and the Senate investigated the problem of serial violence. The hearings featured members of the Justice Department, the FBI, and many criminal profilers. Philip Jenkins argues that these hearings responded to a serial killing panic brought on by the arrest of Henry Lee Lucas, a serial killer who claimed to have killed three-hundred sixty people (63-6).

methods of identifying suspects. Profiler films that follow *Manhunter* and *The Silence of the Lambs* continue to innovate the conventions of the cycle with an understanding that the culture has also elevated its understanding of the profiler film's subject matter. Late-millennial profiler films introduce a cat-and-mouse component; each film employs a killer who specifically selects a profiler to torment and befuddle through the course of the narrative. The cat-and-mouse component demonstrates that the Hollywood serial killer now understands the process of profiling and knows the conventions of crime scene analysis, and both of these features allows directors working within the profiler cycle to redefine the complex relationship between the profiler and serial killer. The cat-and-mouse innovation, while not new to crime stories, further conflates the two characters and diminishes the role of the FBI, often eliminating the Bureau completely from the story.

The evolution of the specific components of the cycle coincides not only with culture's awareness of serial killer investigations but with changes in the culture as well. By steering audience identification away from the FBI and toward outside figures like the profiler and the serial killer, the profiler era of FBI film obscures the level of authority the Bureau exerts over American culture. The effacement of its authority coincides with other postmodern cultural trends in the late twentieth century; authority of all sorts recedes into the background as the era of individual power—an era that emerges as the threats of international Fascism and Communism fade into history—overtakes the era of prohibition. The culture of conformity and deference to authority dominant in the early-to-mid-twentieth century is replaced at the end of millennium by a culture of individual autonomy, where “being yourself” is prized (and demanded) above all other cultural

imperatives. According to Lacanian theorist Todd McGowan, a shift in cultural imperatives brings about the decline of the society of dissatisfaction and the rise of the society of commanded enjoyment.<sup>2</sup> In other words, the culture of “No!” is replaced by the culture of “Enjoy!” And the profiler cycle mirrors this cultural shift, which can be traced through close inspection of how the profiling process evolves by the end of the twentieth century.

McGowan argues that the emergence of the society of enjoyment depends on the waning influence of the Symbolic order (*The End* 21-4), and the proliferation of the profiler cycle, I argue, coincides with the FBI's diminished presence in the films beyond *The Silence of the Lambs*. The removal of the FBI's influence—established in earlier films using the FBI seal at the beginning of the film—fully transfers, I contend, all authority in profiler films to the serial killer. Whereas the foundational profiler films established a procedure for catching serial killers and an explanation for their actions, the next phase of films in the cycle takes these essential components for granted and operates from an understanding that the culture is already aware of the profiler's process. Rather than exploiting the menace of the serial killer for ideological gain, these new additions to the profiler cycle focus more intensely on the psychological torture of the profiling process. If *Manhunter* and *The Silence of the Lambs* are allegories of sight's failure to fully see, then the next significant films in the profiler cycle are allegories of commanded enjoyment, which, in Lacanian terms, means the evolution of the profiler character

---

<sup>2</sup> These terms belong to Todd McGowan, and I am employing them throughout this chapter to demonstrate the ways in which these films separate themselves from previous profiler and detective films. McGowan employs these terms in order to demonstrate the shifting ground on which the subject exists in the late-twentieth century. In *The End of Dissatisfaction?*, he argues that subjectivity was once organized around the culture imperative of “No!” and now must respond to the imperative of “Yes!” This change produces new anxieties for the subject and helps explain contemporary phenomena of apathy, cynicism, aggressiveness, incivility, and self-inflicted pain (1-9).

depicts a world made up of diminishing instances of enjoyment and a desire to obtain as much of it as possible.

To better understand the cultural shift away from prohibition and towards enjoyment, it is crucial to understand a concept I call the cutter's paradigm of subjectivity. Slavoj Žižek argues that the phenomenon of "cutters" is emblematic of the subject of enjoyment. Cutters are people (quite often women) who cannot resist the urge to cut themselves with razors or knives, but the cutter does not directly desire to commit suicide as a result of the act. Instead, cutters seek to regain the deadlock of desire, or as Žižek explains:

Far from being suicidal, far from indicating a desire for self-annihilation, cutting is a radical attempt to (re)gain a hold on reality, or (another aspect of the same phenomenon) to ground the ego firmly in a bodily reality, against the unbearable anxiety of perceiving oneself as nonexistent.

Cutters usually say that once they see the warm red blood flowing out of the self-inflicted wound, they feel alive again, firmly rooted in reality.

*(Welcome 10)*

Žižek's reading of the cutter's paradigm effectively characterizes how American culture has shifted from prohibition to enjoyment. Cutters purposefully hurt themselves in order to regain footing within Symbolic reality and not just simply to escape it. The cutter's paradigm is the subject's predicament in the late-twentieth century, and the profiler cycle's depiction of psychological torment follows a similar pattern. Rather than running away from the grotesque and painful encounters of their job, profilers run toward these dissatisfactions. In the following pages, I will demonstrate that the profiler's desire, like

the cutter's, for dissatisfaction operates as an attempt to regain a Symbolic footing rather than a rebellious escape from its suffocating authority.

In this chapter, I argue that instead of tracking the serial killer on behalf of the sanctioned authority of the FBI, the profiler films during the latter half of the 1990s depend on the profiler's and murderer's shared enjoyment of the transgressive act of murder, which leads the profiler to acting out the cutter's paradigm of self-inflicted pain as a way toward (as opposed to an escape from) the deadlock of desire. To support this argument, I will explain how the profiler film changes the nature of authority, and I will employ two Lacanian structures—the Name-of-the-Father and the primal father—in order to demonstrate how the former has given way to the latter, illustrating throughout, with a series of examples from *Copycat*, *Kiss the Girls*, *The Bone Collector*, and *The Watcher*, how the criminal profiler film depicts the cutter's paradigm of subjectivity. My aim is not to position any of these films as radical visions that counter typical Hollywood conventions. Indeed, it is their conventional nature that makes them instructive homologies to the cultural shift from a society of prohibition to a society of enjoyment. In this chapter, I argue that the late-millennial depiction of the criminal profiler exemplifies the characteristics of an era where Symbolic authority has been “outed” as being purely symbolic, leaving private enjoyment to stand alone as the subject's only voice of authority. I intend to show, through the character of the profiler, that, rather than being a release from the grip of authority, the subject's liberated enjoyment, instead, suffocates it with anxiety.

## Between Two Voices

Jacques Lacan divides authority into two categories related to the Oedipus complex: the first, the Name-of-the-Father, or the Symbolic father of the ego and pleasure principle, and the second, the obscene, primal Imaginary father of the Superego and enjoyment. The Name-of-the-Father for Lacan is a complex Symbolic structure that arises out of the subject's Oedipal process and eventually emerges as the injunction "No!" that establishes the incest prohibition. According to Lacan, the "father, the Name-of-the-father, sustains the structure of desire with the structure of the law" (*Four* 34). Because of this foundational authority and the impact it has on the subject's desire from its earliest age, the Name-of-the-Father acts as the fundamental signifier and permits signification to proceed normally, which provides an identity for the subject, naming it and positioning it within the Symbolic order, and, as equally important, acting as a barrier to enjoyment (Evans 119). The Name-of-the-Father is crucial to the establishment of the society of prohibition, and McGowan explains that the Symbolic father's role as a barrier to enjoyment keeps

society free of open displays of enjoyment [...] [and] helps to keep subjects content despite their lack of access to prohibited enjoyment.

Subjects realize that their duty to their father involves refusing enjoyment, and they see that the prohibition of enjoyment applies to everyone else as well. Thus, the figure of the symbolic father helps to make existence under the prohibition tolerable. (*The End* 41)

A properly functioning Symbolic order depends on the Name-of-the-Father policing the subject's interaction with enjoyment, which is to say that it does not do away with

enjoyment altogether, but it, instead, constantly gets in the way of the subject achieving the goals of its desire. Whereas the Symbolic father disrupts, distracts, and disappoints the subject's path toward enjoyment, the primal father of the Superego works to undercut the prohibitions established by the Symbolic. Lacan explains that primal father of the Superego forces the subject to subvert the admonitions of the Name-of-the-Father, instructing the subject to enjoy: "Nothing forces anyone to enjoy except the superego. The superego is the imperative of jouissance – Enjoy!" (*Encore* 3). As McGowan argues, the "emerging society of enjoyment" is characterized by the shift from the Name-of-the-Father to the father of the Superego (*The End* 41-57).<sup>3</sup>

Drawn largely from the subject's cultural imperatives, the Superego controls the subject primarily by punishing transgressive behavior with an overwhelming sense of guilt. Renata Salcel explains that "the Superego functions as the voice that commands the subject to enjoy yet at the same time mockingly predicts that he or she will fail in this pursuit of enjoyment" (51). The Superego demands that the subject achieve enjoyment, convincing the subject that it deserves whatever the Symbolic father may be blocking, while at the same time punishing the subject for these same feelings. Juliet Flower MacCannell clarifies the dialectical relationship between the Superego and the Symbolic father:

Freud described the Superego arising upon the *dissolution* of the Oedipus

---

<sup>3</sup> McGowan demonstrates the difference between the two structures through an example from *Dead Poets Society* (Weir, 1989). He argues that Neil Perry's (Robert Sean Leonard) problem in the film revolves around the conflict between his actual father Mr. Perry (Kurtwood Smith), who represents the Name-of-the-Father, and Mr. Keating (Robin Williams), who represents the father of enjoyment. McGowan explains, "[e]ncouraged by Keating's proclamations about the importance of finding one's own enjoyment, Neil discovers acting is his particular path, the way in which he enjoys," and concludes, "Neil's father occupies the position of symbolic authority, and the commandment of this authority is unambiguous: sacrifice your enjoyment for the sake of symbolic recognition and identity" (*The End* 48). I make this point in order to show that in the world of criminal profilers the Symbolic father's influence has diminished, and the profiler follows the command of the father of enjoyment.



complex. Its advent brings “death” to the prestige that paternal parental Law holds in the formation of the subject (the Father’s “no” is installed unconsciously in the subject as a ban on incest). The Superego disarticulates the subject from the Symbolic Father [...] by articulating subjective freedom: freedom *from* the Father’s dominion; freedom *to* enjoy. About the Father, the Superego tells us: “He’d never really castrate you!” which, put another way, implies, “He’s merely Symbolic.” Yet even while the Superego persuades the child he is free, the crudeness and raw force of the *Ur-Vater*’s jouissance is settling into his body, inhabiting and inhibiting it at the same time. (66)

MacCannell’s description of the Superego’s emergence establishes two important components of the conflict between the Name-of-the-Father and the Superego father. First, she explains that the Superego’s control over the subject comes about as the Oedipal complex dissolves, thus reducing the significance of the Symbolic father’s authority. Established as the “No!” that impedes the subject’s desire, first for its mother sexually, and second for desire in general, the Symbolic father remains significant to the subject as long as his authoritative “No!” blocks and redirects the subject’s initial desires. Second, MacCannell asserts that the emergence of the Superego replaces the Symbolic father’s authoritative “No!” with the imperative “Enjoy!” Instead of blocking and redirecting the subject’s desire, which keeps the subject in a state of persistent dissatisfaction, the Superego tells the subject that it deserves the satisfaction of enjoyment that exists just beyond the Symbolic father’s “No!” Without the Symbolic father’s external admonition, all that is left for the subject is recourse to its internal

commanding and punishing voice, a voice that simultaneously tells the subject it can “have it all” while making the subject feel guilty for realizing the desire no longer blocked by the diminished Father. Instead of life being characterized by what is missing, the subject under the command of the Lacanian Superego must navigate a universe where there is too much—too much satisfaction, too much punishment, too much Law, too much God—and the anxiety of not getting what it wants is replaced by the anxiety of always-already being able to desire whatever the subject wants without prohibition. Indeed, life at the end of the twentieth century has offered an abundance of objects of desire where no longer are we told “No!” we cannot have what want; rather, the era of abundance suggests that there are no prohibitions to our desire, and all that is left for the subject is to make the right choice in fulfilling its right to enjoyment.

The reduction of Symbolic patriarchal domination in the universe of the Superego has a paradoxical effect on the subject. Instead of liberating the subject, unfettered realization of enjoyment pushes the subject to further enslave itself and return to a world where desire is limited. Put another way:

The problem with a society of “too much choice” is that, on the one hand, there seems to be less and less demand coming from the Other and that the subject is much freer than in the past, while, on the other hand, the subject is constantly encouraged to pursue his or her own [enjoyment]. We thus have a perception that we are now free from old types of cultural and family constraints and that we can create an image of how we want ourselves to be and thus come close to a[n] [enjoyment] that we feel

brings us satisfaction. But although people in the developed world now have all this freedom and choice, they do not seem more content with their lives than their predecessors. (Salecl 62-3)<sup>4</sup>

Traditional patriarchal authority is typically organized along the lines of a Symbolic public face and its shadowy supplement, the Superego. Slavoj Žižek argues that the “Superego emerges where the Law—the public Law, the Law articulated in the public discourse—fails; at this point of failure, the public Law is compelled to search for support in an illegal enjoyment” (*Metastases* 54). Let me clarify Žižek’s point with an example from the sport of baseball. In Major League Baseball, for example, it is illegal for a pitcher to intentionally hit a batter with a pitch—the punishment for this transgressive act typically being ejection from the game and a monetary fine from the League. While this behavior violates the public rules of the game, the fans, players, and coaches share in the knowledge of the “unwritten rules” of baseball which articulate a variety of reasons for deliberately throwing at a batter. Primarily used as retaliation for something the public rules fail to address, the “unwritten rules” of baseball fill in those gaps missed by the written rules. Everyone knows that hitting a batter is illegal, nonetheless, the spirit of the game depends upon the players providing this self-corrective measure while pretending to act as if the illegal action was never intentional. Žižek explains that this type of private, unwritten supplement to the existing public rules represents the “spirit of community at its purest, exerting the strongest pressure on the

---

<sup>4</sup> To argue that we live in a culture of choice, which provides us limitless opportunities for enjoyment, is problematic. We only need to consider moments when we travel to different cities within the United States where we find the same restaurants and retail stores. Or we only need to think of the Pepsi Challenge commercials, which asked you choose cola A or cola B, when, no matter the choice, we are going to be drinking cola. This is all to say that inhabiting a culture of enjoyment is impossible, and we still live in a society characterized by prohibition. The key difference, however, is that our first impulse is to listen to the command to “Enjoy!” before we consider the prohibitive injunction of “No!”

individual to comply with its mandate of group identification” (*Metastases* 54). The pitcher does not want the ejection and fine—he would rather continue playing in the game—but living up to the obscene demand to enjoy his illegal act (for his team) and pretend as if he does not enjoy it (for traditional authority) actually proves his willingness to be a “team player.” The Code Red ordered by the marine colonel played by Jack Nicholson in *A Few Good Men* similarly points to the line between the public Law and its Superego supplement:

The function of the “Code Red” is extremely interesting: it condones an act of transgression—illegal punishment of a fellow-soldier—yet at the same time it reaffirms the cohesion of the group—it calls for an act of supreme identification with group values. Such a code must remain under cover of night, unacknowledged, unutterable—in public everybody pretends to know nothing about it, or even actively denies its existence.

(Žižek, *Metastases* 54)

This relationship between the public Law and its unwritten supplement, as explained in these two examples, is not designed to underscore the public Law’s weakness. Instead, these descriptions demonstrate the way in which traditional power works (as opposed to something like totalitarian power) and strengthens rather than weakens Symbolic public Law. Without its shadowy underside, the public Law’s appeals to prohibition can not clearly define itself as necessary and better for the common good.

Confidence, however, in Symbolic structures like the Name-of-the-Father and the public Law—represented, for example, by real fathers and law enforcement agencies—

has faded toward the end of the twentieth century.<sup>5</sup> The effacement of Symbolic authority coincides with other postmodern cultural trends; multiculturalism, women's rights, and gay rights have chipped away at the power of the patriarchal edifice and have signaled a shift in thought that envisions a culture where the power of Symbolic institutions to regulate and enforce certain behaviors comes under question. In other words, everyone knows that Major League Baseball's ban on beaming is just a "rule" while at same time fully supporting the pitcher's right to retaliate. The rule has become hollow and the individual's right has become the authority. The emerging shift in attitudes toward authority has led to the unraveling of patriarchal institutions, exposing the lack of real authority that structures their Symbolic claims to it. The shift away from Symbolic authority and toward Superego authority correlates to a culture where enjoyment is always a threat to one structured on its scarcity, and McGowan argues that the emerging society of enjoyment affects a shift in the way the subject relates to the Other:

Historically, the social order has always provided some degree of respite from enjoyment. Though the prohibition of enjoyment does, in some sense, deprive the subject of her/his enjoyment, it also frees the subject from the suffocating presence of the Other and the Other's enjoyment. In other words, the Name of the Father is, in the first instance, liberatory, precisely because it brings distance. (*The End* 35)

---

<sup>5</sup> See McGowan (*The End* 41-42). In the chapter, "The Decline of Paternal Authority," he describes the loss of confidence in the Symbolic father: "Thus, the figure of the symbolic father helps to make existence under prohibition tolerable. Though there always remains a distance between the actual flesh-and-blood father and the symbolic father, the actual father stands in for the latter, attempting to embody symbolic authority [...] Though the society of prohibition requires and values the symbolic father, this figure has almost completely disappeared from the contemporary cultural landscape. This absence of the traditional father is a symptom of the emergence of the command to enjoy [...] There is no room in this society for the traditional symbolic father because his presence bars enjoyment."

In other words, the fragmenting of the Symbolic authority at the end of the twentieth century allows those shadowy, unspeakable supports to overflow the growing gaps in the social order. Rather than being able to keep the Other's enjoyment at safe distance—the key ingredient necessary for the structure of desire—the subject is surrounded by the constant presence of enjoyment. McGowan, ultimately, surmises that the culture of the Superego no longer requires “the old ‘entry fee’ into the social order that Lévi-Strauss emphasized [...] the social no longer explicitly demands a sacrifice of enjoyment, but instead demands enjoyment itself as a kind of social duty” (*The End* 35). The profiler cycle, I argue, fits squarely within this shift in authority. The profiler, and those characters aligned with his/her goals, metaphorically depict a world of ascendant Superego authority.

### **The Rules vs. the “Right Results”**

The dissolution of the FBI's role as the primary authority figure in profiler films is one of the key signifiers of the cycle's evolution. Instead of acting as agents of the FBI's official desire, profilers are portrayed as marginal figures who are brought into cases that the FBI cannot solve on its own. Profilers, I contend and will demonstrate, operate at the very limit of the FBI's authority because they “see through” its Symbolic authority, and their suspicious attitude toward the phallic authority of the FBI is often translated on-screen by the casting of women and African-Americans as the lead characters. These casting decisions help reinforce the notion of the waning power the Name-of-the-Father to regulate our Symbolic reality and usher in a period where the Others traditionally locked out by the patriarchy operate as new figures of authority.

Psychoanalysis has often been characterized by its detractors as hostile toward women,<sup>6</sup> specifically, and minority groups, generally, because of the tendency to identify them as nothing but Others who are denied access to the dominant culture.<sup>7</sup> Sarah Kay, however, suggests that the very nature of their status as Others provides women and minorities an insight into the “non-all” of phallic enjoyment. She argues that phallic enjoyment, like language, is often depicted as being “‘all’ there is—it is just that, at the same time, it invites suspicion that this ‘all’ is not all it’s cracked up to be” (84). The result of casting women and African-Americans in the lead roles of profiler films does not provide us with an example of some phallus-free form of enjoyment, and I am not trying to suggest as much. However, I am arguing that these consistent casting helps underscore the stumbling block these Others represent to the functioning of Symbolic authority. These traditional Others operate as agents of enjoyment who, formerly denied of such a status, underscore the cycle’s suspicious attitude toward the power of the phallic authority and its claims of being “all there is.” Much like Buffalo Bill’s misogynistic indifference to Clarice Starling’s feminine threat in *The Silence of the Lambs*, the profiler cycle during

---

<sup>6</sup> Lacan’s assertions that “there is no such thing as Woman” (*Encore* 72-3) and that “there is no such thing as a sexual relationship” (*Encore* 34) have created problems for many feminists. Sarah Kay explains that Judith Butler objects to the Lacanian schema for sexual difference because “[i]mposing two clearly demarcated sexes, male and female, and their interdependence in normative heterosexuality, Lacan (Butler thinks) relegates to the shadows of abjection the variety of sexed bodies and sexual proclivities which don’t fit his scheme” (93).

<sup>7</sup> My point here does not indicate my intention to do a feminist analysis of the profiler genre, although I do think there is much to offer from such an investigation. I am, however, deeply interested in the proliferation of women as the protagonists in the profiler cycle. For more about contemporary debates between psychoanalysis and feminism, see *Contingency, Hegemony, and Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*, in which Slavoj Žižek debates Judith Butler over feminism and psychoanalysis. Sarah Kay sums up the significance of their debate: “Most outspoken in this respect [of Žižek’s perceived misogyny] has been Judith Butler, whose initial critique of Žižek appeared in *Bodies that Matter* (187-222). Since then, Žižek seems to have gone out his way to script himself as Butler’s obscene, macho counterpart. She attacks hate speech, and he rails against political correctness; she is sympathetic to identity politics, he denounces it as a capitalist trap; she critiques Lacan’s account of sexual difference; whereas he elevates it to a central principle of philosophy; she calls for a ‘critical rethinking of the feminine’ (*Bodies that Matter* 189), while he inveighs against ‘feminists’” (74).

the 1990s empowers the traditional Other and positions it as a blind spot that patriarchal authority fails to see.

*Copycat*, *Kiss the Girls*, and *The Bone Collector* embody the profiler's attitude toward authority and identify a fantasy of enjoyment as equally accessible to all who have historically been denied its "benefits." The FBI agents and the police officers that interact with profilers while they work are typically played by incompetent, corrupt white males who are also, in the some cases, the serial killer. I want to suggest that *Copycat*, however, changes the "white male only" formula and casts a woman as the lead police detective who aids criminal profiler Helen Hudson's (Sigourney Weaver) pursuit of serial killer Peter Foley (William McNamara). Detective C.J. Monahan (Holly Hunter), moreover, represents the profiler cycle's suspicions toward the phallus, which is depicted throughout the film as "the rules" and the concept of restraint. For example, in a training session with her male partner Reuben Goetz (Dermot Mulroney), both cops approach, according to police procedure, through a dilapidated hallway and towards an apartment door. They take their positions, listen, burst through the door, and subdue the fake targets. This scene is short but very important in establishing Monahan's suspicious attitude toward her male partner's incompetence. After storming through the door, Monahan holds her fire while Goetz unloads his clip on the target, going overboard in shooting the would-be perpetrator. She reviews his procedure in a mocking tone:

Monahan: The good news is you're still alive.

Goetz: You see a downside I take it.

Monahan: This is pretty remedial stuff, Reuben.

Goetz: Remedial? Let's review the situation.



Monahan: Didn't anyone at the academy teach you to shoot conservatively? (Pointing to the target) Boom, boom, boom, boom, boom, boom. You shredded him.

Goetz: What can I say? I'm an intuitive cop with poor impulse control.

Monahan, by contrast, is the very picture of impulse control. She responds positively to the restrictions of procedure and wholeheartedly believes in the rules regardless of how much they might get in the way of exacting justice to its fullest extent. Goetz's "Dirty Harry style" of shooting first and asking questions later borders on, as Monahan puts it, the psychopathic. To show Goetz how to properly subdue a perpetrator, Monahan shoots three precise shots into the shoulder of a fake man holding a woman hostage and says, "the shoulder of the gun hand is exposed. You hit the brachial nerve, he drops the gun. You read him his Mirandas." More to the point, while instructing him on proper procedure, she also carries on a flirtatious relationship with Goetz, which she never consummates, choosing to abide by the regulations that prevent her from dating a co-worker. She has learned the lesson of illicit love, revealed in her backstory, after dating another policeman in the past. Goetz, however, fully enjoys himself as an instrument of Symbolic authority, never thinking about the consequences of his actions and intuitively understanding that overwhelming force is the best way to deal with a culture on the brink of being overrun by rampant crime. To further reinforce Goetz's status as a tool of patriarchal authority, Amiel depicts Goetz as a type of Don Juan who has more women than he can handle. At the end of the training sequence, his cell phone rings, and he pretends to be uninterested in answering it. Monahan derisively asks him, "don't you want to know which one it is?" Goetz answers the call from one of his many girlfriends,

and Monahan relieves her anxiety by shooting three more shots into the target, holding the gun sideways, “gangsta” style, showing the audience the small transgressions against procedure that she uses when she gets too close to enjoying herself. The difference between Monahan and Goetz is crucial because in films from the pre-profiler era Goetz would eventually learn the lesson of “the rules,” but, as I demonstrate, it is Monahan who learns to shed “the rules” and be more like the enjoying Goetz.

The establishment of Monahan’s positive response toward the rules and regulations of the job is to unmask their ineffectiveness in apprehending serial killers. The unmasking of the rules develops into a command to transgress them for the sake of dealing with criminals such as serial killers who are so far beyond the law that they require extreme measures. Monahan’s role in the film is to depict the lesson of the failed limits of Symbolic authority. She learns this lesson in two subsequent scenes similar to the training scene with Goetz. Having been reassigned to Chinatown, Goetz is brought back into the investigation by Monahan after they contact imprisoned serial killer Darryl Lee Cullum (Harry Connick, Jr.) for his advice on the case. While Monahan returns to the precinct, Goetz finishes up some business with his Chinatown detail. The precinct is crowded with a large number of perpetrators, and one young man, who is handcuffed to a chair, notices that another detective has unholstered his handgun and placed it in his desk drawer. Taking advantage of the crowded circumstances and the strain on the detective’s attention, the young man pushes his chair back behind the desk and removes the gun from the drawer. When Goetz arrives to uncuff him, the young man pulls the gun, puts it against Goetz’s head, and takes him hostage in an effort to escape from police custody. Backing up through a series of doors that lead out to the foyer of the precinct, the young

man continues to use Goetz as a human shield, but he does not notice that at the same time, Monahan has entered the building from his side. She recognizes the situation and sneaks up on the two men with her gun drawn. She yells “Hey!” and the young man turns to look at her. Monahan, as she did in the training exercise, expertly fires a single shot into his shoulder, missing Goetz, thus subduing the would-be escapee. Her devotion to the rules *appears* to have paid off in this situation. She has saved her partner, restored order to situation, and kept the perpetrator alive, and, more than anything, she has demonstrated the impulse control that marks the *difference* between cops and criminals. However, Goetz fails to secure the gun, and the still alive young man picks it up and shoots him through the heart, killing the young detective instantly. Monahan learns, as her captain explains, that she made the right decision, but she got the wrong result. By the end of the film, the cumulative effect of Monahan’s progress demonstrates the inability of the rules to create the “right results.” The scene suggests that, in order for the police to effectively suppress crime, the difference between cop and criminal should be erased because “the rules” fail to fully eradicate the criminal threat.

The profiler cycle consistently suggests that the rule of law has failed and that it needs to be relinquished in favor of excessive, extra-legal uses of violence. The climax of *Copycat* establishes a model found for this type of Superego supplemental violence in every profiler film following. Profiler films continually champion an excessively violent death for the serial killer because capture, trial, and detention would undoubtedly fail to force the killers to fully pay for their transgressions. The climax of *Copycat* demonstrates this point. Monahan arrives just in time to shoot Foley before he can stab the profiler Helen Hudson to death. Shooting according to procedure, again, Monahan

fires her revolver at the killer's shoulder, forcing him to drop his weapon, but this time she does not stop short of "finishing the job." In a parallel of the police station shooting, Foley believes Monahan will not go beyond the rules of police procedure to stop him. The serial killer turns to draw his gun on her, but because Monahan no longer believes in the restraint that underpins Symbolic authority, she fires five more shots into Foley's chest, moving in to kill him for sure with a final shot to the head. She goes beyond what is necessary to subdue him, showing poor "impulse control" and acting out the Superego's command to create the "right results." In other words, Monahan refuses the desire to satisfy Symbolic authority and gives into the Superego imperative to go beyond its failure. Her path toward this climactic moment reveals the profiler cycle's investment in exposing the anxiety that goes with following the rules, transgressing them in favor of fulfilling her own inner enjoyment.

The notion that the representatives of Symbolic authority have failed to contain violent criminals, and that achieving this goal requires excessive action beyond the law, is not exclusive to profiler films. The profiler cycle does, however, place this style of Superego justice in the hands of Others typically excluded from both official and unofficial brands of justice. *Kiss the Girls* and *The Bone Collector* both extend this emerging trope of the cycle and revise it by giving African American leads, Alex Cross (Morgan Freeman) and Lincoln Rhyme (Denzel Washington) respectively, the role of filling in where the patriarchal law fails. In both films, the profiler injects himself into an ongoing investigation of serial killers who continue to baffle the FBI and local police. The climaxes of each film follow precisely the model established in *Copycat*. *Kiss the Girls* opens with Alex Cross patiently, and by the book, talking a desperate woman, who

has murdered her abusive husband, out of killing herself. Cross shows sympathy for her situation and explains that the justice system provides an exception for cases like hers, allowing her to feel briefly as if her situation is not completely lost upon the uncaring rules of the patriarchal law. The opening scene is replicated in the film's climax, but, this time Cross tries to give the serial killing cop, Nick Ruskin (Cary Elwes), the chance to explain his reasons for collecting and killing young women. In a room slowly filling with leaking gas, Cross puts down his drawn revolver in an attempt to calm Ruskin, patiently telling the killer that if he blows himself up, no one will ever understand his grand vision. Cross, however, has placed his gun cleverly behind a carton of milk, which the killer does not see, demonstrating that the serial killer's dual role in this film—as an agent of the law and its enemy—makes him doubly blind. Ruskin taunts Cross with comments about kidnapping and raping Cross's niece, to which Cross responds that “he doesn't work like that,” shooting Ruskin in the process through the carton of milk, thus containing the muzzle flash and eliminating the killer/cop. Cross's decision is the same as Monahan's; each mimics the structure of the Superego filling in where the Symbolic fails.

While *Copycat* and *Kiss the Girls* clearly establish the police and FBI as failed examples of the Name-of-the-Father and resort to the Superego's imperative in key actions of the climax, *The Bone Collector* shifts the representation of the two structures by openly denouncing traditional authority from the beginning of the film, thus providing further legitimacy to the extra, shadowy supplement as the primary authoritative voice. In other words, whereas the Name-of-the-Father is proven to be impotent in the first two films, it is a *de facto* state of affairs by the time of *The Bone Collector*. The Symbolic authoritative structure is represented by the institutional bureaucracy of the New York

Police Department and Captain Howard Cheney (Michael Rooker), and the Superego support is represented by quadriplegic profiler Lincoln Rhyme. Amelia Donaghy (Angelina Jolie), a rookie beat cop, is caught in the middle of these competing voices as each authority figure tries to control her access to an unfolding case of spree murders. Cheney does not want her on the case because it violates procedure, and he believes Donaghy lacks the necessary experience for such a complicated series of crimes. Rhyme, however, believes she represents something different from the traditional police officer and offers her the opportunity to do, what he calls, “real police work.” Since he is paralyzed, Rhyme works from his bed, and, using a radio and camera attached to Donaghy, commands her through the various crime scenes. In contrast to Rhyme’s “real police work,” Cheney appears suspicious, overbearing, and incompetent—at one point he marshals the entire police force’s arsenal to arrest the wrong man, and at another, the director, using parallel editing, misleads the audience to believe the police captain is also the killer.

Rhyme’s authority, established through his authorship of various true crime books, leads audiences to believe that the rules of police bureaucracy need to be broken in order to successfully rid society of criminals. Through a series of crime scene analyses, Rhyme guides Donaghy on how to collect evidence, but more importantly, he teaches her how to “feel” her way around a crime scene. Donaghy does whatever he asks, no matter how dissatisfying, because she and the audience have no option other than following Rhyme’s lead. Rhyme goes so far as to tell Donaghy that the police are the worst contaminant of crime scenes, and, consequently, many of the policemen who populate the film despise his methods. Rhyme’s belief in his concept of “real police

work” allows him to successfully unpack, through Donaghy, the many clues the killer purposefully leaves behind, ultimately identifying the killer as the technician who services Rhyme’s medical equipment. Seeking to exact revenge on the profiler for testifying against him, the serial killer, Richard Thompson (Leland Orser), attacks Rhyme at home, and like *Copycat* and *Kiss the Girls*, execution is the preferred method of dealing with the intruding killer. Interestingly enough, Rhyme, who has absolutely no physical ability to defend himself other than his head, whispers instead of using his normal voice, which lures the killer in closer, testifying to the power of Rhyme’s voice and allowing him to bite the killer in the neck until he bleeds to death. Rather than a satisfying end that solves the gaps produced by Symbolic authority, *The Bone Collector*, like *Copycat* and *Kiss the Girls*, validates the “unwritten” rules of law enforcement as “the rules,” thus further aligning the profiler method of crime prevention with the methods of the killer.

The profiler as voice of the Superego effectively portrays that the Name-of-the-Father has been overtaken as the primary voice of authority. The profiler films of the 1990s exploit the Superego imperative by identifying the Symbolic authority’s inability to fully protect society from dangerous criminals and convincing audiences that extreme crime fighting measures are an absolute must regardless of their potential for going beyond the law. To further support the Superego imperative, the casting of women and African-American men—who have been traditionally locked out by the patriarchy and treated as Others—proves to be an effective metaphor for the enjoying subject previously denied full access to the culture. To suggest that the profiler film creates a world where enjoyment is accessible to all, however, is false. Enjoyment stays just beyond the

subject's reach, and, in McGowan's conception of the society of prohibition, the subject is prohibited by specific cultural barriers from ever fully realizing the full promise of enjoyment (*The End* 1-9). This state of affairs for the subject, McGowan suggests, produces dissatisfaction as the organizing principle of life and allows the subject to cover over his failed attempt to gain enjoyment with fantasies of satisfaction (McGowan 1-9). Rather than changing this basic principle of the subject's desire, the society of enjoyment changes the coordinates, replacing the prohibitive "No!" with the transgressive "Enjoy!" The change does not affect enjoyment's elusiveness, or its painful shock, but the command to enjoy does change the subject's belief in its right to satisfaction, and that it indeed should already be living in a state of satisfaction. The changed coordinates—from a society organized around dissatisfaction to one where satisfaction pre-exists the subject—reorient the subject's fundamental fantasy, forcing it to fantasize about the possibility of lack rather than covering it up. Profiler films thus help explain the ways in which the Superego has overtaken the Name-of-the-Father, and in what follows, I shall also demonstrate how the cycle depicts the changing nature of anxiety brought on by the society of enjoyment.

### **Show Me the Anxiety!**

The emergence of enjoyment as a social duty fundamentally alters the nature of anxiety. As explained in the first chapter, in order for the subject's fantasy frame to hold, the subject must convince itself that some kind of object can be obtained in order to plug the hole, or lack, that constitutes subjectivity. That object is the *objet a*, which, as Lacan reminds us, belongs to the Other who never relinquishes control. Therefore, subjects are



reduced to believing that Symbolic structures of authority hold the key to its identity, but these representatives of authority never fully recognize the subject, which, ultimately, provokes the anxiety that Lacan argues serves as the predicament of subjectivity. The anxiety that something is always missing, and that some Other controls our access to it, is crucial to the subject's consistency. Anxiety is not, in the words of Salecl, something "one needs to control and hopefully in the long run get rid of," but is, ultimately, the exact way in which the subject relates to the world (15). Moreover, anxiety

is also in a specific way linked to the desire of the Other—what provokes this anxiety is the fact that the desire of the Other does not recognize me, and even if I have the impression that the Other does recognize me, it will not recognize me sufficiently. The Other always puts me into question, interrogates me at the very root of my being. (Salecl 25)

Salecl, moreover, suggests that the postmodern condition's *raison d'être* has been to alleviate the subject's anxiety by diminishing the status of the Other and exposing the hollowness of its authority—not only is there no one behind the curtain pulling the strings but there is not even a curtain (1-2). Global capitalism insists that the antagonisms of previous generations have been solved, and the 1990s promised to be an era of anxiety-free abundance—an era without lack (Salecl 1-2). The Superego authority that structures the logic of global capitalism—an authority that demands that you can now finally enjoy yourself and therefore must—manifests itself as the imperative message emanating from popular culture, found everywhere in the structural appeals of television, cinema, advertising, and architecture. The emergence of the criminal profiler in popular culture fits squarely into the "Super-ego-sizing" of the culture, an appeal that demands full

revelation of enjoyment, which the profiler cycle exposes as the “enjoyment of as little as possible.”

Salecl explains that, among the many places we can find the logic of the Superego, its full revelation can be seen in the architecture of restaurants and the public relations strategies of politics:

If one looks at the design of many new restaurants, one can see that the work process is supposed to be totally exposed to the public. Everywhere, one now finds restaurants which look like factories—when one walks in, one sees low-paid workers preparing the food, washing the dishes, etc.

(41)

Politicians, moreover, have transformed the ways in which they campaign by “exposing the secret” of the candidates, using advertising techniques that show the candidate as a “real person” who drinks coffee, shaves, collaborates on his speeches, and throws a football, all of which become the reason to vote in lieu of a speech that delivers any specific policies (Salecl 41-2). Indeed, much care is taken by politicians to prove that their public acts are exactly same as their private ones. Popular television, furthermore, has probably done more to “expose the secret” of the way we live through reality programming. In these shows, audiences get to see how other people live in situations similar to our daily existence, and they aim at reducing the anxiety over our lifestyle choices through a validation of how alike we all are. Shows like MTV’s *The Real World* expose the inside world of roommates chosen to live together by casting agents so that we can see how little difference there is between them and us, and its quasi-documentary cousin, *Cribs*, reveals the inside of celebrity homes, allowing us access to the bedrooms,

bathrooms, refrigerators, and garages of pop singers, athletes, and actors. The inside of their houses become their public faces, in effect, showing us that nothing is missing in our perception of them. The special features on DVDs operate much in the same way. Part of the appeal of the DVD has been the packaging of deleted scenes, behind-the-scenes documentaries, and explanations of digital special effects. Indeed, these special features have become the main reason to buy certain DVDs because they reveal the formerly hidden aspects of filmmaking, and the special features point up the constructed nature of the film and demystify the entire filmmaking process. Salecl's contention that the private has invaded the public space helps make the appeal of criminal profiling more apparent. Criminal profiling, I contend, seeks to make more public the mystery of the criminal mind, and by providing more knowledge about criminal deviance, criminal profiling should help reduce the subject's anxiety in an increasingly anxious time.

The result of this private intrusion into the public has also had a significant effect not only on the public identity of celebrities but on private citizens as well. Identity has never been quite as public as it is today. The Internet has created a world where all of our private information—birthdates, social security numbers, credit card numbers, bank account numbers, shopping habits—have become exposed to the public eye, so much so, that the anxiety of identity theft has become one of the defining anxieties of the era of abundance. The era of the Superego tells the subject that it deserves to wrest control of its identity from the false Symbolic authority, which, rather than giving the subject more control over his identity, exposes the subject to more and more assaults. Instead of having anxiety about the Other not noticing it, the subject has anxiety about being noticed too much. Whereas in the society of prohibition the subject always-already feels as if its

identity has been, to some degree, stolen, the society of enjoyment tells you that your identity is special, unique, and for no one else to control. Because “being yourself” is prized above all other cultural attitudes in the era of enjoyment, anxiety in the society of enjoyment emerges precisely at the moment when the subject realizes that there are too many identities from which to choose. Instead of not recognizing us, the reduction of Symbolic authority, through the culture’s unquenchable thirst for exposed secrets, insists that we are not all that different from the Other, and, in order to reconstitute the vanishing distance between the subject and the Other, subjects begin turning their insides out. The confessional culture of daytime television, the self-punishment of diseases such as anorexia and bulimia, and the self-discipline of vigorous exercise are all good examples of the ways in which subjects attempt to reconstitute their split—thus imposing a regime of dissatisfaction upon themselves. Rather than consciously pursuing satisfaction only to have this pursuit derailed by the unconscious, the subject of enjoyment, like the cutter explained earlier, consciously chases after its own dissatisfaction in the forms of self-inflicted pain, public embarrassment, and debasement at the hands of others in order to continue complying with the unconscious’s demand for disruption. Profiler entertainment, I shall demonstrate, depicts the suffocating anxiety of the late-twentieth century.

The fragmenting of Symbolic authority allows the seamy, obscene underside of the Superego to become more prevalent in our culture, commanding subjects to behave as if the Other does not exist while predicting its failure at achieving this goal. Another place where the Superego has overtaken the Symbolic is in advertising. Whereas advertising formerly operated as perfect conduit for dissatisfied desire, making subjects

feel as if something is missing in their lives only to be filled by the advertised product, late twentieth century advertising mimics the Superego's command structure. The most famous example of this, of course, is Nike's "Just Do It!" slogan and its commercials featuring regular people pushing their limits athletically: "[t]he 'Just Do It!' ideology relied upon the idea that the subject is 'free' in the sense of being a non-believer in authority and a person capable of changing his or her identity at will" (Salecl 50). The most famous of these commercials features the Beatles's "Revolution" accompanying the on-screen action, which effectively captures the anti-authoritarian and individualist messages contained in the "Just Do It!" ad campaign. More recently, the soft drinks Dr. Pepper and Sprite have featured the commands—"Be You!" and "Obey Your Thirst!"—in order to reinforce the same connotations as the Nike ad. Both marketing campaigns prey upon the Superego's insistence that, first and foremost, the subject is now required to appear likeable to itself—since, of course, Symbolic authority has been a hoax all this time—and drinking Dr. Pepper and Sprite is a way to demonstrate how different the subject is from others while making it feel valuable because the product supports the notion that "being you" has always been better than "being you for someone else." The overwhelming insistence to throw off the shackles of the prior generations' naïve belief in authority leads to a reversal in the way anxiety emerges. Instead of emerging as apprehension of the possibility of failure, anxiety in the era of abundance emerges at the possibility of success (Salecl 51).

The "outing" of Symbolic authority, the exposure of the formerly hidden inside, and the command to rebel, all work to convince the subject that it no longer needs to worry about what might be missing. The combination of these elements has changed

anxiety from something that needs to be repressed to something the subject needs to actively engage in order to overcome. Indeed, the repression of anxiety is no longer considered to be necessary to join the social order and is often characterized as unhealthy. The cultural trends that McGowan and Salecl recognize as fundamental expressions of the Superego's emergence operate as a backdrop for the rising popularity of the criminal profiler, and the picture of anxiety I have attempted to paint in the previous pages is crucial to understanding how profiler stories are constructed. The concept of making conscious displays of anxiety should not be understood as a failure of the profiler to "keep it together" under the heavy burden of his/her chosen profession. Rather, wearing anxiety "on your sleeve" is the primary signifier of a successful profiler, a point that emerges when contrasting the profiler to its cinematic ancestors: the classical and hardboiled detective.

Žižek divides detective stories into two categories—the classical and the hardboiled—in order to demonstrate that both are effective examples of how subjects avoid the Real of their desire. Žižek's classification of detective stories fit effectively into McGowan's concept of the society of prohibition, where Symbolic authority properly functions, forcing the detective to constantly overcome barriers in order to discover the secret world of enjoyment represented often by a missing object, clue, or person. Žižek explains that the classical "logic and deduction" story involves a detective who is confronted by a crime scene that, as a rule, is also a "false image put together by the murderer in order to efface the traces of his act. The scene's organic, natural quality is a lure, and the detective's task is to denature it by first discovering the inconspicuous details that stick out, that do not fit into the frame of the surface image" (*Looking Awry*

53). The detective's job, when faced with this false scene, is to locate the thing that does not fit within the picture and isolate the clue that does not make sense to those looking at it. Usually something quite insignificant, the thing missing from the crime scene is typically unmasked, which changes the nature of the crime scene and reveals the identity of the killer. Moreover, the detective's job is, much like the analyst in the psychoanalytical process, to lead the reader through a series of distracting false solutions, which are necessary in order to demonstrate the ways in which subjects avoid finding what they are looking for, ultimately identifying the murderer "not simply by perceiving the traces of the deed the murderer failed to efface, but by perceiving the very absence of a trace as itself a trace" (*Looking Awry* 58). The classical detective's retelling of the murder, which is only able to be retold after the fact of solving the case, takes a series of meaningless clues with no obvious pattern, and the detective's presence "*guarantees that all these details will retroactively acquire meaning,*" which allows us to better understand that the detective story

at the beginning is a void, a blank of the unexplained, more properly, of the unnarrated [...] The story encircles this blank, it is set in motion by the detective's attempt to reconstruct the missing narrative by interpreting the clues [...] The detective's role is precisely to demonstrate how "the impossible is possible" (Ellery Queen), that is, to resymbolize the traumatic shock, to integrate it into symbolic reality. The very presence of the detective guarantees in advance the transformation of the lawless sequence into a lawful sequence; in other words, the reestablishment of "normality." (*Looking Awry* 58)

For Žižek , the detective story describes precisely how subjects constantly pursue their desire by looking for what is missing, an object of desire typically held captive by the Other, only to never completely find it. The detective, though, operates as an analyst who leads us through the story in order to show us how to access our desire “without having to pay the price for it” (*Looking Awry* 59).

The hardboiled detective novel, however, provides a very different picture of subjectivity according to Žižek. Instead of keeping the detective at a distance from the traumatic crime and allowing him to retell the story after the fact, the hardboiled novel hurtles the detective into the action of the unfolding plot, which reduces the distance typical of the classical detective story, thus engaging the detective more intimately with the stakes of the crime. Classical detective stories are often told either from the perspective of an omniscient narrator or a third-person narrator who is not the detective, but the hardboiled detective novel is most often told from the first-person perspective. This change in narrator shifts the reader away from not having to pay the price for his/her desire to having to engage it directly. The typical narrative involves a private detective hired to recover some kind of missing object (i.e. Hammet’s *The Maltese Falcon*) or a missing person (i.e. Chandler’s *The Big Sleep*), which is usually a lure that has nothing to do with why the detective is hired in the first place. The detective, then, spends the majority of the narrative unraveling what hides behind the decoy of his original mission. The process becomes a matter of personal honor to the detective so that he can show that he will not be “played for a sucker.” The concept of not being “played for a sucker” is crucial to understanding how the hardboiled detective relates to subjectivity. Through a



mask of cynical wisecracks and repressed emotions, the hardboiled detective keeps his anxiety under wraps because it can be manipulated by the Other and used against him.

Žižek argues that the form of the detective story (classical realism) gives way to the hardboiled (modernist) form of the detective novel because the former could no longer adequately represent subjectivity, which is replaced by the latter's more radical representations of an increasingly complex reality. The criminal profiler emerges as the postmodernist equivalent of these two figures primarily because it effectively captures the predicament represented by the Superego's ascendance and the social duty to enjoy. If the hardboiled detective undergoes a nightmarish loss of reality by coming too close to Real of his desire, learning ultimately to never cede his desire to the Other, the profiler actively pursues ways in which to cede his/her desire in order to fully understand the nightmarish loss of reality that the hardboiled detective so desperately resists. Consider, as an example, Mike Hammer's (Ralph Meeker) stone-faced, dogged pursuit of the Great Whatzit in *Kiss Me Deadly* (Aldrich, 1955). At the end of the film, as Lily Carver (Gaby Rodgers) opens the box that will kill her and destroy the beach house, the Great Whatzit represents more than Hammer bargained for and teaches him a lesson about the price you pay for pursuing enjoyment. Ultimately, Hammer's painful encounter with the enjoyment of the Great Whatzit is the end point, for the most part, of *film noir*, which begins its generic evolution hiding enjoyment at all costs to depicting its full eruption on-screen. The profiler film begins, I argue, with enjoyment already established as the *de facto* state of affairs for the detective. In other words, the box is always-already open, the profiler knows its contents, and he/she spends all of his/her time furiously trying to close it.

The trajectory from the classical to the hardboiled to the profiler brand of detective story depends on the various ways in which enjoyment factors into the progress of the protagonist and the anxiety that emerges from his/her quest. While enjoyment is divided, hidden, and partially revealed through the course of the classical and hardboiled stories, the murderous threat of the Other's enjoyment, represented by the serial killer, pre-exists the profiler's insertion into the narrative and demands his/her full investment into the killer's world-view. Much like our drive to see beyond the Symbolic façade into the hidden inner workings of reality, the mind of serial killers moved from our imagined sense of their dreadful actions to part of our Symbolic reality because of criminal profiling. Unlike the hardboiled detective's protection of his desire at all costs, the profiler undergoes a complete loss of desire and succumbs to the demands of Superego-like serial killer. The profiler, in effect, begins the film after immersing himself/herself into the enjoyment of the serial killer and understands the powerful demands "to Enjoy!" The cat-and-mouse profiler film, therefore, is an exercise in the profiler's attempt to reconstitute his/her prohibition-based "normal" desire. Much like the subject who can "have it all" in our enjoyment-driven culture will punish itself by purposefully cutting his/her arm, the cinematic profiler shows us how anxiety emerges precisely at the point of too much success, which they react to by attempting to reconstitute a life of prohibition and self-inflicted dissatisfaction.

### **The Fantasy of Dissatisfaction**

In addition to demonstrating how the Superego has emerged as the primary voice of authority in the late-twentieth century, *Copycat*, the third film in the profiler cycle,

extends two important trends established by *Manhunter* and *The Silence of the Lambs* and amplifies the cycle's insistence upon increased demonstrations of anxiety. First, *Copycat* continues the tradition of depicting the profiler as "retired," which signals to audiences that he/she has achieved such success that retirement is necessary to avoid a full mental collapse. Second, *Copycat* features a woman in the lead profiler role—Dr. Helen Hudson—which underscores the cycle's dependence on traditional Others who can see patriarchy's blind spots. These two crucial connections are established in the opening, pre-credit sequence of the film. The film begins with an overhead shot of students sprawled out in various poses of study and conversation on a university campus, where inside one of its lecture halls Hudson delivers a talk on the nature of serial killers, presented in a voice-over that accompanies the shots of the college students. The first shot of Hudson is a close-up of her mouth, not her actual mouth, but instead a reproduced image enlarged upon a screen so that the large audience can see her as she speaks. This image testifies to the importance of her lecture and identifies the film's interest in the concept of simulation. Hudson describes to the students how serial murderers select their targets and how they methodically go executing their plans. The emphasis of her lecture is that, regardless of the amount knowledge law enforcement has pertaining to the methods of serial killers, they remain difficult to catch. To prove her point, she asks all the men in the audience to stand up. Then, she narrows the field by eliminating those of a certain age—under twenty and over thirty-five—and race—Asian or African-American. Left in the crowd, then, are white males age twenty to thirty-five who are only notable for how unremarkable they appear. Hudson points out that nine out of ten serial killers look just like the men in this room, who if they asked, would probably be able to get most of

the women in the room to go out for a drink.<sup>8</sup> She explains that most serial killers are quiet, unassuming, and would go otherwise undetected by the police and potential victims. The point of her lecture is significant: serial killers do not have to sacrifice their enjoyment to exist within the social order—they get to take part in the social order and have unlimited enjoyment through their killing. Her description of the serial killer’s squares up with how Salecl and McGowan describe the subject’s predicament in society of commanded enjoyment. Hudson concludes her talk with the assertion that serial killers are proliferating at an uncontrollable rate, and upon this admission, Hudson thinks she sees notorious, and allegedly imprisoned, serial killer Darryl Lee Cullum in the crowd, who makes a throat-slashing gesture toward her. Her hallucination identifies her particular trauma and emphasizes her profiling method of envisioning herself as the object of enjoyment for serial killers, which she describes later in the film by referring to herself as their “damn pin-up girl.” Her demeanor and attitude at the lecture suggest that her total knowledge of the mind of a serial killer has not led her to enjoy the benefits of being successful at her job but toward the painful realization of this kind of knowledge. Profiling for Helen Hudson, I shall demonstrate, is not about filling in the missing pieces of the puzzle; it is about finding solace away from the menace of the puzzle being complete.

The satisfaction of the total knowledge of the motives behind serial killing does not translate into anything resembling success in her life. Hudson has been both the pursuer of serial killers and the near victim of one, narrowly escaping a death at the hands

---

<sup>8</sup> To reinforce this point, Amiel surreptitiously includes a shot of the serial killer Peter Foley, whom Hudson helps catch by the end of the film. Foley also appears on the margin of another shot in the first major police station scene after the film’s first murder. Both of these appearances come well before he is identified as Hudson’s antagonist.

of Cullum at the end of her lecture that starts the film. Instead of using her total knowledge of murder to the benefit of law enforcement, Hudson retreats into her fortress-like apartment, which reveals a desire to restore a sense of prohibition and dissatisfaction to her life. Hudson's retreat inward is a crucial structure replicated across the profiler cycle that suggests, not an escape from the problems of the social order, but an attempt to feel some kind of "shock" of the Symbolic's deadlocks, lacks, and failures. Following the credits of *Copycat*, Amiel introduces the audience to the "lifestyle of success" typical of the profiler's existence through a series of shots that show Hudson waking up in her apartment, thirteen months after the lecture, in a cold sweat from a nightmare. She is disoriented and afraid. Amiel underscores this with an unsettling series of oblique camera angles. Her dreams have been overtaken by her traumatic experience with Cullum, and in order to calm down, she attempts to recite in order the last names of the presidents of the United States, which she never finishes, rarely getting past Madison without losing the order and jumping to the twentieth century. While Hudson attempts to remember these names, she searches frantically for her anti-anxiety pills to restore her to a state of prohibition. She finds her pills at her computer desk and takes them with a large snifter of brandy, chugging an almost full glass. She shields herself from anxiety by medicating herself with a regimen of pills and alcohol that helps restore her to what she believes is normalcy. Salecl argues that we are often led to believe that anxiety is an obstacle that we must overcome, with medication if necessary, to lead full lives of enjoyment (141-42). Hudson's predicament at this point in the film is that of a troubled person who is trying to overcome her anxiety; she uses the presidential name chant and anti-anxiety pills to restore balance to her life. But the society of commanded enjoyment

that she lives in does not operate this way. Hudson's retreat into her prison of an apartment and her self-medication through pills and alcohol are things she uses to consciously dissatisfy herself. In other words, she does not want to get rid of her anxiety, and *Copycat* demonstrates that she will do almost anything to avoid satisfaction.

*Copycat* is the one of the first films to portray the newly emerging technology of the Internet and its advancements in communication through email and chatrooms, which operate as a metaphor for Hudson's disinterest in pursuing a fantasy of a single or whole identity. Homebound and profoundly agoraphobic, Helen Hudson's only communication with the outside world comes through her computer, of which she has three, which sit side-by-side on her desk. Each of the computers has a different use: one for research, one for writing, and one for communication. After having the panic attack previously discussed, Hudson sits down at the nest of computers and enters a chatroom. She searches for others who might be awake this early and briefly exchanges messages with another chatroom inhabitant, comparing how long both women have been housebound. Hudson has confined herself to her apartment for thirteen months. This moment in the chatroom shows how Hudson cultivates her anxiety rather than controlling it, contradicting the typical impulse to envision the Internet interaction as some kind of salve to the anguished conscience. It is, rather, another example of the way in which Hudson imposes dissatisfaction upon herself. Not only does Hudson remind her chatroom partner that she is by far the most housebound of the chatroom's participants, Hudson's identity is dispersed across three different screens. The computer and the Internet are typically thought of as a bridge to other communities, allowing for more positive communication with other kinds of people, which did not exist prior. The

Internet is often identified as a liberating force of the future that will help democratize communication, but it also serves to further dilute and disperse subjectivity. On the Internet, subjects can manipulate their identity to the point that they can try on different masks that extend beyond the non-cyber Symbolic reality. I am arguing, ultimately, that the Internet allows subjects to be the subject “that-is-more-than-myself,” and Hudson employs her technology precisely for this effect. Rather than reducing her anxiety, her cyber identity—username She Prof—fuels her dissatisfaction. In fact, her cyber identity is her dissatisfied self, allowing her to continually reinforce those things that keep her from fully enjoying the satisfaction she deserves. The Internet chatrooms allow Hudson to create a firewall against the encroaching demand to enjoy “being yourself” and create an environment where she cherishes her lack of a unified identity.

To better understand *Copycat*'s reorientation of the subject's anxiety in the society of enjoyment, another San Francisco film, Alfred Hitchcock's *Vertigo* (1958), can help us understand the difference between the society of enjoyment and a society based upon prohibitive desire. *Vertigo* opens with Detective Scottie Ferguson (Jimmy Stewart) chasing a criminal across the city's rooftops. Instead of catching the man he is chasing, he falls, slides down the angled roof, and catches on to the edge, thus saving himself from a fall that would have killed him, which, of course, is exactly what happens to the policeman accompanying him on the chase. The policeman attempts to help Scottie but loses his footing and falls to his death. The result of this accident leaves Scottie forever traumatically scarred:

The scene fades to black, and the viewer never knows exactly how Scottie extricated himself from this precarious situation—only that he somehow

did, but at a cost. Scottie now suffers from a professionally and personally crippling fear of heights, which he must attempt to overcome throughout the rest of the narrative. (Simpson, “*Copycat*, Serial Murder” 152)<sup>9</sup>

Simpson correctly points out that *Vertigo*'s traumatic opening leaves Scottie with something missing that he spends the rest of the film trying to cover over. He does this through his obsessive following of Madeleine until her “death” and his deranged remaking of Judy into the woman of his dreams. *Vertigo*, I suggest, is a testament to the evanescence of the *objet a* and its unyielding attachment to the Real of the subject's desire. Scottie's fear of heights in *Vertigo* and Hudson's fear of open spaces are problems both characters attempt to overcome. The comparison, again, is useful primarily because of the result of each character overcoming his/her fear depicts completely different pictures of anxiety. Scottie chases after Judy by forgoing his fear of heights and scaling a stairwell into the bell tower of the mission. Judy falls to her death leaving Scottie without the thing that would fully satisfy him. Hitchcock's paean to obsession ends with Scottie in a complete state of lack, having overcome his fear for nothing. In the climax of *Copycat*, Hudson has been captured by Foley and taken back to the lecture hall from the beginning of the film, where the serial killer attempts to re-create her traumatic experience with Cullum. Hudson manages to escape her captor by running toward the roof of the building where she is forced to overcome her fear of open spaces. Instead of confronting the realization that she overcame her fear for nothing, Hudson's willing embrace of her fear suggests that doing so leads to success. In other words,

---

<sup>9</sup> In this article, Simpson also compares *Copycat* to *Vertigo* (as well as *Dirty Harry* and *Psycho*) to demonstrate how the former mines many other films and genres for its plot elements. He concludes that borrowing from other significant reactionary films in “cinema history convey, via the symbolic shorthand of genre conventions, some indications of *Copycat*'s political orientation” (“*Copycat*, Serial Murder” 153).



Hudson pursues dissatisfaction in order to successfully eliminate her pursuer. Whereas *Vertigo* instructs on the reality of failed desire, *Copycat* depicts its protagonist as fully invested in her dissatisfaction; she has shrugged off all recourse to Symbolic authority and laughs in the face of the threat of the Superego by inviting the serial murderer to kill her because the whole thing to her has become absurd. Scottie's realization of desire's inability to fulfill his satisfaction squares up with the society of prohibition, and Hudson's public expression of her own privately enjoyed anxiety demonstrates how detective films have evolved within the culture of enjoyment. Salecl explains the difference between the two radically different portraits of subjectivity:

The fact that the subject remains anxious about whether the big Other exists, or what the Other wants are signs that there has been no turn to a psychotization of society at large. And the very fact that the subject experiences anxiety should not be taken as something that prevents the subject's well-being, but rather as a sign that the subject is struggling in a particular way with the lack that marks the individual and the antagonisms that mark the social. (147)

Scottie remains the very picture of the subject who "remains anxious" about a Symbolic authority that refuses to give him what he wants, while Hudson realizes that her complete inward turn—which has not delivered on the private enjoyment promised by such a move—has left her begging the public eye to notice her rather than attempting to escape from the public's scrutiny. *Copycat* depicts anxiety, similar to the cutter, as a self-imposed necessity in lieu of a waning Symbolic, not because it allows the subject to

escape reality, but precisely the opposite: the conscious attainment of more dissatisfaction allows the subject to feel more connected to reality in the society of enjoyment.

While the public display of private anxiety is a relatively new feature of the profiler cycle in *Copycat*, it becomes a regular feature of these films by the time of the release of *The Bone Collector* and *The Watcher*. Both of these films provide a variation on the same private isolation theme established in *Copycat* and further reinforces the notion that the Superego's command to enjoy is nothing more than the command to enjoy as little as possible. In other words, the cinematic profiler evolves over the decade of the 1990s as a character who does two things different from its ancestors. First, the profiler operates outside of the system, or the Symbolic authority, as a supplementary version of the law that does not have to "play by the rules," while having complete sanction from that same authority to implement his/her own justice because of the special ability to see crimes from the criminal's perspective. Second, the profiler is allowed to trade-in the normal sacrifices that other FBI agents and police make. Law enforcement officials are public servants, and popular culture constantly reminds audiences of the sacrifice they make in order to provide protection, but profilers are altogether different in this regard. Because of their specialized skills and determination to study the cruelest criminals, profilers are not required to sacrifice their private lives for the public good. Instead, they get to have both. As *Copycat* demonstrates, the Hollywood profiler lives in isolation away from the messy entanglements of the public order and, by doing so, can contribute to society by tracking the methods and motives of serial killers using their expertise, sometimes without ever having to leave the house. *The Bone Collector* and *The Watcher* portray subjectivity, I argue, as a mixture of these ideas, both films painting a picture of

public engagement without ever leaving the privacy of home. The profiler cycle's consistent coupling of private enjoyment with no regard for public sacrifice, I contend, creates the impression that the concept of a neutral public world no longer exists. The theme of "successful" private isolation, first seen in *Copycat* and fleshed out later in the decade, compares favorably to McGowan's description of the private world as

the world of the ego. In the society of enjoyment, the ego, like one's house, is a fortress to be defended and enhanced, if possible. But the more the more desperately the ego tries to defend and promote itself, the more it feels itself under attack. The more security devices we install in our house, the more unsafe and threatened we feel. This is the inescapable logic of the ego. It is always looking to defend or expand its territory and realizes that every other ego it encounters is trying to do the same [...]

For the ego, no space is public or shared. (*The End* 173)

The "logic of the ego" explained by McGowan is a defining feature of the profiler cycle, and this feature forces a choice upon audiences, asking them to determine the value of continuing to invest in the public world or retreating into the private. Given the cycle's consistent demeaning of public institutions and valorization of the private experience, a choice does not really exist, leaving only the private for audiences to identify with and, thus, underscoring Lacan's contention that "what is meant by defending one's goods is one and the same thing as forbidding oneself from enjoying them" (*The Ethics* 230).

As explained earlier, *The Bone Collector* undermines Symbolic authority to the point of suggesting that the police detective in charge of the investigation is also the killer. This suggestion is an important ingredient to the film's validation of the voice of

the Superego, but, and more importantly, Rhyme's bed-ridden paralysis articulates more clearly the profiler cycle's negation of the public world. Having been injured at a crime scene, Rhyme has been reduced to, in his words, "two fingers, shoulders, and a brain." He lives in large apartment, much like Hudson's, and depends on a series of machines to keep him alive and connected to the outside world. Moreover, Rhyme desires to die. From the beginning of the film, we are aware that he has made plans with a doctor to make "the final transition" and no longer live with his deteriorating body that is one seizure away from leaving him in a vegetative state. Rhyme's death wish emerges precisely at the end of his ability to go on fully and properly enjoying his life. However, the serial killer operating in New York City, who stages murders that mimic those found in nineteenth century true crime books, interrupts the profiler's "final transition." The crimes befuddle the police, and their confusion necessitates Rhyme's inclusion into the investigation. His paralysis, however, precludes him from being able to leave his home. So, the police come to him, setting up an investigative unit inside his apartment. The combination of these two elements further negates the public and its institutions. From his bed, Rhyme accurately determines every move the killer makes and guides the police through the various crime scenes.<sup>10</sup> Rhyme's decision to join the investigation rather than committing doctor-assisted suicide suggests that dying is another way for subjects to manifest their enjoyment for the public gaze. Dying "on your own terms" is a way to

---

<sup>10</sup> I contend that the profiler's ability to investigate an ongoing series of murders from his bed is a variation on the "armchair detective" popularized in the nineteenth century and perfected in the stories featuring Nero Wolfe. The connection between the two forms, which I described earlier in the classical/hardboiled/profiler comparison, is fully fleshed out in the character of Rhyme. If the classical detective retroactively provides meaning to particular objects by symbolizing a series of false and disconnected events into a narrative, thus filling out an absence with a presence, the profiler demands that we see a presence in everything and convinces audiences that a crime scene is a total picture of a serial killer's behavior and motive.

defy death's destabilizing influence over the subject's life. In other words, Rhyme gives up the opportunity to do things the way he wants to in order to take part in another investigation, echoing Will Graham's "reluctant" choice to join the investigation of the Tooth Fairy in *Manhunter* and Helen Hudson's injection of herself into C.J. Monahan's flagging pursuit of Peter Foley in *Copycat*. While profiler films favor private isolation, the protagonists always join in the messy entanglements of "one more investigation," portraying the profiler's duty to the public, not as some notion of sacrifice, but as a courting of dissatisfaction that undoes their perfectly sealed private lives. After dispensing with the killer, we see that Rhyme has traded his bed-ridden life for the mobility of a wheelchair and his isolation for a relationship with Donaghy, fitting into Hollywood's traditional happy ending. This ending, however, should not be read as a flight into a fantasy of satisfaction. Rhyme gives up on his desire to die and chooses the more unsatisfying pursuit of a shared life, which in the case of the profiler film is a "shock" rather than an escape. Once the profiler ceases defending his right to die—to enjoy his life on his own terms—he signals his interest in enjoying as little as possible.<sup>11</sup>

The significance of the isolation and privacy installed by *Copycat* and *The Bone Collector* reverses the typical understanding of prohibition. Rather than functioning like the incest ban that organizes all social relations, the concept of prohibition radically changes in the society of enjoyment (McGowan, *The End* 11-14). No longer do the goals

---

<sup>11</sup> The ending of *The Bone Collector* oddly echoes Frank Capra's *It's a Wonderful Life*. Both end at Christmas with the protagonist surrounded by family and friends having made a choice to sacrifice something in order to appreciate his "wonderful life." George Bailey and Lincoln Rhyme, however, have made decidedly different sacrifices. Bailey sacrifices his private enjoyment in favor of the social order of his family and the town of Bedford Falls, and the film alerts audiences to the satisfying nature of his sacrifice. Rhyme sacrifices his desire to die in order to make do with the dissatisfying prohibitions of his paralysis and a shared life with Donaghy, performing his dissatisfaction for the public eye at the dénouement of the Christmas party. Rhyme's reconstitution of the fantasmatic prohibition is only satisfying as long as it is for the public's gaze.

of prohibition clearly align themselves with reality. Instead, I argue that prohibition has been realigned with the aims of fantasy and operates as a desired state, a kind of nostalgic space beyond reality, once enjoyment has been installed as the primary organizing principle of the culture. Such a society demands that we enjoy ourselves all the time, and to do so, we have to get as far away from the Other's enjoyment as we can. Thus, the society of enjoyment is a private one where we retreat deeper and deeper into our homes and away from the community in order to chase after more and more fleeting moments of our rightful enjoyment. Enjoyment for the split-subject never becomes more attainable no matter how much of a right we have to it and remains just as shocking and ephemeral as in any other time before. Therefore, the subject must demonstrate a willingness to chase it no matter what. In the society of prohibition, sacrificing enjoyment is ideologically "worth it" because the community accepts us for such a relinquishment. In the society of enjoyment, a life well-lived is characterized only by a dogged pursuit of enjoyment. The sacrifice the subject makes in such a pursuit is that the promise of privacy fails to fully validate the pursuit of enjoyment, which paradoxically makes privacy less "worth it" in the world organized by private enjoyment. The subject must prove to the Other that it is enjoying all the time in order to secure full membership in the culture. As soon as we begin to talk about, think about, divide, control, and/or manage enjoyment, it slips away and reveals our limited access to it, making it disappointing and leading the subject to proving its devotion to enjoyment as a goal through its willingness to suffer.

Whereas reality forces the subject to suffer in the society of prohibition, the subject fantasizes about the possibility of suffering in the society of enjoyment.

Enjoyment and suffering become more clearly linked in the society of enjoyment, and for the purpose of this study, in the profiler cycle of films during the 1990s. Joe Charbanic's *The Watcher* brings these two concepts together in much the same way as *Copycat* and *The Bone Collector*. However, profiler Joel Campbell's (James Spader) isolation and suffering cannot be simply attributed to an injury or an almost deadly encounter with a killer. Rather, his suffering is clearly self-inflicted.

Unable to catch David Allen Griffin (Keanu Reeves), the serial killer who murders the profiler's mistress, Campbell leaves the case and Los Angeles for Chicago in order to give up, seeking out the seclusion we have come to understand as typical of the cycle since *Manhunter*. Moving to Chicago allows Campbell to distance himself from the investigation and completely restore dissatisfaction as the guiding element in his life. Restoring desire requires distance from the Other. The removal of distance between the subject and Other is another outgrowth of the Superego's growing influence over cultural imperatives. The Superego constantly asserts that this distance, regulated by Symbolic authority, is phony and commands the subject to believe that it has as much of right to enjoyment as the Other does. The distance motif of the profiler cycle signals to audiences that late-twentieth century culture has become suffocating because the Other and the subject no longer have any distance from each other. The blurring of the line between the subjectivity of the profiler and serial killer reinforces the Superegoic notion that that line is unnecessary, thus establishing the ubiquitous desire of the profiler to distance him or herself at the beginning of each profiler film. By medicating himself with painkillers (both oral and intravenous) and living in a squalid apartment where he rarely does more than sleep on the sofa, Campbell's self-imposed life of prohibition is

juxtaposed to the enjoyment he gained in his former relationship with Griffin, which stems mostly from his absolute knowledge of the process of serial killing. He is an expert, like Helen Hudson in *Copycat*, who has chosen to turn his back on his expertise. Through a series of counseling sessions that the profiler has with his therapist, Dr. Polly Beilman (Marisa Tomei), Campbell describes in detail the lack of distance between the serial killer and the profiler:

It's never quite that easy. You go through the door. They're never just sitting there waiting for you with a welcoming smile on their face. Best you can do is hope they fuck up and do what you can do to be there when they do [...] This man's whole life is about killing. He studies it. He knows forensics. He understands police procedure. He prepares methodically so as to not leave any evidence at the scene.

*The Watcher* emphasizes the blurring of profiler and killer during Campbell's description of the Griffin's knowledge of police procedure through an associational montage of Campbell talking about each step of the serial killer's process and Griffin performing his gruesome task. When the profiler describes the ways in which this killer stalks women, the director cuts to Griffin stalking a woman, and so on. This montage of the profiler describing Griffin's actions demonstrates the complete knowledge that criminal profilers (and by extension us) have regarding the serial killer. However, all of this knowledge and complete access to the inner lives of the most deviant criminals has not produced satisfaction for Campbell. Instead, it has produced a great deal of dissatisfaction.

Charbanic employs a series of long shots, high angles, and expressionistic lighting in order to depict Campbell's isolated life of prohibition. After visiting his psychologist,



Campbell returns home to his apartment. Charbanic distances the audience from the protagonist by situating the camera at one end of a deserted hallway and framing Campbell's entrance at a considerable distance, which reduces our identification with him. Similarly, Charbanic diminishes Campbell's stature further through a use of extreme long shots and backlighting, resulting in his identity being completely obscured by shadows, which is further underscored by his retreat away from the camera with his back turned. After discarding his mail, taking a few painkillers, and rummaging through his near-empty refrigerator, Campbell sits on his couch and thumbs through a Victoria's Secret catalogue, looking at few pictures and tossing it aside. The moment is telling primarily because of the significantly different role fantasy plays in a profiler film. Fantasy is no longer about longing stares at beautiful models in their underwear; fantasy in the profiler cycle is about cultivating a distance from satisfaction and imposing baroque prohibitions. In other words, Campbell's dissatisfaction is not the result of some Symbolic authority telling him that he is prohibited from looking at women modeling in their underwear. Rather, the "Super-ego-sizing" of the culture tells us that looking at scantily clad women is perfectly fine, and, in fact, it is our duty to shrug off the dusty, old mores of an unenlightened culture and enjoy the female form without guilt. Campbell, however, asserts his dissatisfaction with this cultural cue and tosses the catalogue aside. Campbell's isolation, finally, is not the result of the FBI firing him or of some other Symbolic authority denying him his satisfaction, nor has he been forced to make a sacrifice in order to secure the smooth functioning of the social order. His life of prohibition operates completely on the level of "logic of the ego" which allows him to

imagine himself to be troubled and tormented because he needs to keep himself away from the oppressive Superego command to enjoy himself.

The profiler's self-imposed dissatisfaction is more clearly apparent when contrasted with a Chicago homicide detective with who Campbell eventually partners when Griffin begins kidnapping Chicago-area women. Charbanic juxtaposes the characters of Detective Hollis (Chris Ellis) and Campbell in order to demonstrate the difference between the weakened profiler and the vibrant city cop. While the effect of the juxtaposition adequately points up the passive position of the profiler and the active presence represented by Hollis, the contrast also clearly identifies the cycle's dependence on the fantasy of complete enjoyment, which is portrayed by Hollis's ability to "do it all." After finding photos of two recent murder victims, one who lives in the same apartment building as him, Campbell immediately calls Detective Hollis to alert him to the disturbing fact that he has received these pictures. Hollis answers his phone in the middle of a high-speed pursuit of a car thief. Instead of telling Campbell to hold or that he will call him back, he effortlessly takes the call while weaving in and out of traffic.<sup>12</sup> Yelling over the sound of screeching tires, Campbell explains to Hollis that he has received pictures of the victims while they were alive and just prior to their deaths. Hollis responds to this by slamming on his brakes and telling the ex-FBI agent to hold-on because the car thief has decided to make a run for it. Hollis jumps out of his car, with his phone in hand, and runs after the fleeing criminal, who has made his way toward a

---

<sup>12</sup> This is the first of what are many high-speed pursuits in this movie, which typifies the movie's belief that an overwhelming police response to all crimes is always necessary. In fact, the police response is so overdone that it seems more like someone's "wet dream" of what a proper police response should be. Huge SWAT teams, large fleets of helicopters, and car chases, without regard to civilians, litter the landscape of this film. Charbanic's vision of police presence seems more like an occupying army has taken over Chicago. It is, then, amazing that anyone gets away with any crime in this film.

waterfront deck. The detective jumps on one of the deck's railings, phone still in hand, and leaps onto the back of the suspect, thus subduing him on the spot. His phone goes flying across the deck, and Hollis, still aware of his ongoing conversation, gets up, dusts himself off, picks up the phone, and continues his conversation with Campbell, saying: "OK, sorry to keep you. Now, you want to meet me back at my office? [nodding] All right."

Hollis is the exact opposite of Campbell; this opposition clarifies the difference between cynicism and naivety in the society of enjoyment. The world-weary Chicago detective is in the throes of the enjoyment of his job, and his enjoyment is dependent upon a healthy dose of cynicism. Campbell's cynicism is evident in his response to Hollis's initial description of Griffin's virtuosity as a killer. While Hollis looks at the pictures of the killer's victims, the seasoned Chicago cop scoffs, "Goodness gracious. Nothing like a good serial killing to kick off the holiday season." As McGowan explains, the cynic is the subject of enjoyment *par excellence*:

the role of cynicism [...] allows the subject to overcome his lack, to feel secure in her/his knowledge of the Other. In contrast to the naïve subject of desire, the cynic has insight into every secret; there is no aspect of the Other that remains mysterious to the cynic. This insight into the secret of the Other provides the cynic with a sense of being privy to the Other's enjoyment; for the cynic, there is no inaccessible *objet petit a*. (*The End* 121)

Hollis is the cynic that Campbell is trying not to be. Campbell knows very well—because the culture constantly reminds him—that Symbolic authority is a fiction and that

there are no secrets the Other can keep from him. This is made clear when he discusses his complete knowledge of the serial killer's methods with his psychologist during their sessions together. Campbell chooses, however, to medicate himself with painkillers in order to increase a sense of lack that provides distance between himself and the awful things he knows. For the subject to truly be constituted by desire, the Symbolic must play an alienating role, which helps the subject see its role within the larger social order. McGowan argues that the danger of contemporary cynicism revolves around the

command to see everywhere and everything. We see everything—and thus become cynical—and yet we really don't see anything of importance. This leads us to believe, as good cynics, that there is nothing of importance, that there is no object of desire [...] No encounter, for the cynic, ever involves the Real; that is, something that might take the subject by surprise and disrupt her/his symbolic system. (*The End* 135)<sup>13</sup>

By the end of the twentieth century, the depiction of criminal profiling evolves into precisely what McGowan describes in the preceding description of the cynic. Campbell has seen the “everywhere and everything” of the most deviant criminal behavior, and instead of enjoying it, he has chosen to believe in a fantasy of prohibition where he can envision himself as dissatisfied. His lifestyle of painkillers and squalor is supported further by his move Chicago so that he can be closer to the grave of his dead girlfriend, which he visits everyday, forcing himself to re-examine his lack—his ultimate dissatisfaction. However, he is a true cynic who no longer can be taken by surprise and

---

<sup>13</sup> McGowan's assertion that the Real does not exist for the cynic does not diminish or eliminate the Real's destabilizing effect. On the contrary, such a belief only exacerbates the Real's ability to derail the subject's progress. If anything, the cynic in the society of enjoyment is the most dissatisfied subject in the culture because it can be so easily disrupted (*The End* 135).

has lost his desire, and these things—the drugs, the squalor, the dead mistress’s grave—are fantasies of lack, which drive him toward the cutter’s paradigm of shocking oneself back into reality. Ultimately, I contend that the components of lack that structure Campbell’s life—and the cinematic profilers that precede him in *Copycat*, *Kiss the Girls*, and *The Bone Collector*—are the profiler’s hedge against the overwhelming belief that his life is sliding towards nonexistence.

## Conclusion

The evolution of the profiler genre has depended primarily on the erosion of Symbolic authority and ascendance of the Superego in its place. *Copycat*, *Kiss the Girls*, *The Bone Collector*, and *The Watcher* continue and extend the generic conventions established by *Manhunter* and *The Silence of the Lambs*: all six films employ an outside expert in serial killing brought into an investigation after it fails to identify a suspect; each film revolves around a sophisticated killer who easily blends in with the rest of society and whose identity is well-known to audiences; each film conflates the subjectivity of the protagonist profiler with the antagonist serial killer; and each film uses the official criminal profiling techniques of the FBI’s Behavioral Sciences Unit. The significance of each of the four films, I have argued in the previous pages, resides in their reflection of the culture’s shifting attitude towards authority and anxiety. The shift in cultural attitudes evident in the profiler cycle is what allows these films to continue to flourish into the early twenty-first century. The profiler film operates as an uncanny homology to the rise of the society of enjoyment, helping to dismantle the society of prohibition and ushering in the reign of the Superego as the primary force in our culture.

The shift from desire to enjoyment has forced the culture to focus inward and away from the public good, making our desire for private enjoyment a social duty rather than something we are required to keep hidden. The profiler film has evolved at the end of the millennium into a precise example of a key reversal: dissatisfaction has changed from a key repression for the subject to a desirable outcome for the subject of enjoyment who fears the possibility of being nonexistent. Dissatisfaction, then, changes from something we use fantasy to cover up to something we fantasize about, and the profiler film demonstrates that, if you are dissatisfied, it is entirely your fault and no longer the fault of the continually diminishing authority of the Symbolic Law. Whereas past detectives, like the classical and hardboiled, exemplify a world where enjoyment is always-already missing, *Copycat*, *Kiss the Girls*, *The Bone Collector*, and *The Watcher* depict the profiler adrift in a world saturated in an overwhelming public display of private enjoyment.

Many film critics and scholars have worried in the past that films such as *Copycat*, *Kiss the Girls*, *The Bone Collector*, and *The Watcher* will desensitize audiences to the horror of murder. They criticize these types of films for the potential numbing effect they might have on audiences, and they argue that films with excessive violence will lessen the impact of criminal behavior and distance audiences from the horrible acts people sometimes perpetrate on other people. Richard Dyer succinctly captures the film critics' warning :

Serial killing is often taken to be the crime of our age. It is held to be facilitated by the anonymity of mass societies and the ease and rapidity of modern transport, to be bred from the dissolution of the affective bonds of

community and lifelong families and fomented by the routinisation [sic] of the sexual objectification of women. It is supposedly a symptom of a society in which worth is judged in fame, to the point that spectacularly terrible killing is just a route to celebrity. (17)

Dyer's point is to suggest that serial killing exists on a level plane with other celebrity, thus draining it of any of its Otherness and making it as familiar to us as any other aspect of the culture. He sees the leveling effect as being symptomatic of our postmodern tendency to cynically dismiss the significance of anything of importance. This belief, Dyer argues, has been facilitated by a disconnected society of uninterested citizens. Indeed, the serial killer seems to flourish precisely at those points where no one seems to paying attention. The extreme violence perpetrated by serial killers that continues to flourish in a society where more knowledge than ever permeates the culture would, on first appearance, suggest that society does not care or remains oblivious to rising levels of violence. After watching film after film depicting the many possibilities available to one person to harm another, does it not seem reasonable that audiences would eventually become unaffected by such brutality? Does not the profiler film's depiction of the inner world of serial killers contribute to a distancing effect that separates deviant crime and our ability to care?

The emerging society of enjoyment suggests otherwise. Dyer's warning comes from a thinking rooted in the society of prohibition where enjoyment still represents a hidden threat, but in the society of enjoyment "imaginary enjoyment is so far from being a threat that it is our fundamental duty. And it results in a society of increasingly docile subjects" (McGowan, *The End* 73). However, these docile subjects are far from

desensitized subjects because a retreat into the Imaginary and away from the Symbolic effectively shrinks the distance with which the subject can keep between itself and enjoyment. The less distance from enjoyment does not liberate the subject from the oppression of authority. In fact, it does exactly the reverse. By retreating into the Imaginary, the subject moves farther and farther away from its ability to enjoy. The society of prohibition creates barriers that allow the subject to posit a distant and transcendent space that it only knows through absence and never truly experiences, but nonetheless chases its entire life. The society of enjoyment dismantles these barriers and commands the subject to imagine life where everything is available, and as “we turn from a society that overtly prohibits enjoyment to one that commands it, we begin to feel the suffocating effects of this increasingly total presence” (McGowan, *The End* 76).

Depictions of the criminal profiler evolve along the same trajectory. Instead of desensitizing audiences in the way Dyer describes, the profiler film actually presents a world of “increasingly total presence,” a world suggested by the late-millennial depiction of the criminal profiler and one that is specifically dealt with in the cycle’s shift from the movie screen to television. As the profiler figure evolves, from the cutter’s paradigm established by Helen Hudson, Lincoln Rhyme, and Joel Campbell, into the quasi-psychic figures of Frank Black from Fox’s *Millennium* and Samantha Waters in NBC’s *Profiler*, we discover that, while enjoyment is everywhere, our access to it is increasingly Imaginary and thus less and less available.



## CHAPTER FOUR

### Nothing can be Lost: *Millennium*, *Profiler*, and the Post-High-Tech Detective

In the previous chapter, I argued that the evolution of the profiler genre during the mid-to-late 1990s can be linked to a shift, according to Todd McGowan, in cultural attitudes toward prohibition and enjoyment. Reading *Copycat*, *Kiss the Girls*, *The Bone Collector*, and *The Watcher*, I demonstrated that each film depicts, through the character of the profiler, a society that has exchanged prohibition for private enjoyment as a foundation for cultural organization. Rather than portraying the subject's sacrifice as necessary for the price of admission into the Symbolic, criminal profiler films reduce the significance of public authority and replace it with the private world of the individual—an emerging structure that compels the subject to pursue its own enjoyment without regard to the Other. The criminal profiler film of the late 1990s portrays the protagonist as an isolated figure who has separated himself/herself from the rest of the world in order to focus on the psychological torment that accompanies his/her profession. The late-millennial cinematic criminal profiler hides, ultimately, from the destabilizing, and eventually painful, encounter that comes with meaningful interaction with the Other, symbolized here by the serial killers that the profiler tracks. Because of these painful encounters with their prey and the accompanying glimpses into enjoyment of murder, these character types have given up on their knowledge of the criminal mind and, instead, have chosen to abandon criminal investigation in favor of isolated private enjoyment.

The depiction of the profiler's retreat into isolation, on the one hand, suggests that such a move is wholly deserved because of the failure of public institutions to protect society from the most dangerous criminals, and on the other hand, the turn away from the social order will lessen the messy entanglements that come with interacting with other people. The promise of such a world of unfettered private enjoyment, however, does not provide a respite from either, and, in each case, the criminal profiler cannot resist the desire to reinsert himself/herself into one last case—or, in other words, they cannot resist the desire to dissatisfy themselves.

The profiler film in the late-twentieth century represents a response to the command to enjoy that produces more, and not less, anxiety. The cycle reflects the waning influence of Symbolic's demand to sacrifice private enjoyment for public life, which allows the subject to follow the command to "Enjoy yourself" for its own sake and without regard to the Other. *Copycat*, *Kiss the Girls*, *The Bone Collector*, and *The Watcher* suggest that Symbolic authority is arbitrary and can be avoided, but, as Todd McGowan argues, this notion of an impotent Symbolic simply effaces its influence rather than eliminating its oppressive presence:

We no longer experience the symbolic order taking its 'bite' of enjoyment out of us, the extraction of its 'entry fee.' Nonetheless, the symbolic order continues in its constitutive role in our lives, though we become increasingly unable to experience it. This change in our experience allows us to imagine ourselves enjoying—not bound by the symbolic strictures that once deprived people of enjoyment. This enjoyment that we experience, however, is only the image of enjoyment, and imagined

enjoyment. In contrast to the society of prohibition, the society of enjoyment thrives on imaginary enjoyment [...] Enjoyment in the Real—an experience delimited by the symbolic Law—remains just as scarce. (*The End* 40)

In the society of enjoyment, subjects do not have to pay a price for their desire. In other words, subjects can believe they effectively create a distance between themselves and the Symbolic prohibitions that constituted the past. By retreating into a more and more private world—a private world that the culture of enjoyment encourages—the subject exists at a distance from an increasingly complicated and dangerous world. The distance, however, according to McGowan, is only Imaginary, and the opposite actually occurs. Rather than shutting off the outside world, the profiler demonstrates that the turn toward private enjoyment actually obliterates the barriers that we think enjoyment provides. Instead of desiring that which is absent, subjects in the society of commanded enjoyment are lost within a world of what McGowan calls “increasingly total presence” (*The End* 66-73).

The concept of “total presence” is very important to the explication of stories about criminal profilers as they move from their cinematic phase to the televisual phase. The profiler television show emerges at the same time as other technological advances that ostensibly increase people’s ability to live more meaningful private lives. The rise of the Internet in the late 1990s promises complete access to all kinds of information and consumer products without leaving home; the mobile phone allows people to communicate anywhere and anytime without the limiting constraints offered by “land lines”; GPS (global positioning systems) units, either handheld or in cars, provide

directions to and from anywhere, ultimately eliminating the anxiety of losing one's way; DNA technology helps identify more criminals and map the human genome; and the rise of digital culture—CDs, DVDs, cameras, and televisions—delivers the “full sound” and “full picture” that analog systems failed to capture. Part of the title of this chapter is paraphrased from an advertisement for an Aquos high-definition television that promises that it can deliver a picture of such high quality that “nothing is lost.” The ad features a golfer who hits a wayward tee-shot and cannot find his ball. The viewers watching the Aquos high-def TV, however, can see the ball clearly on their screen, sending the message that the television provides a clearer picture of reality than does the golfer's experience. These examples, I contend, all combine to suggest that the right kind of technology can provide those elusive elements that contribute to life's frustrations. Whether it is information, consumer products, DNA gene therapy, or brilliant sound and picture, these advances in technology are often presented as providing *more* than there is in reality and, therefore, lessens the subject's dissatisfactions. In other words, I am arguing that technology's promise reduces the potential for dissatisfaction by providing *more* than the subject ever asked for.

Advancements in technology have been crucial to the story the FBI tells about itself. From fingerprints in the 1930s to brain mapping in the 2000s, the FBI has traditionally relied upon technology to separate itself from other kinds of law enforcement agencies. In the late 1990s, two remarkably similar shows, Fox's *Millennium* (1996-99) and NBC's *Profiler* (1996-2000), debuted, and both shows relied heavily upon the emerging technologies of the Internet, DNA samples, and surveillance in order to focus on the exploits of the Bureau's most advanced agents, the criminal

profilers, and their pursuit of the most dangerous criminals, serial killers. While each show employs technology in order to convince viewers that its overwhelming power can lead to a world without crime—a world where “nothing can be lost”—*Millennium* and *Profiler* also feature criminal profiler protagonists who demonstrate quasi-psychic detective abilities, thus undercutting FBI claims to technological superiority. More precisely, each profiler literally sees images in his/her head of the murder scene from the killer’s perspective, providing special access for the viewer to the murderous enjoyment of the serial killer. On a weekly basis, Frank Black (Lance Henriksen) and Samantha Waters (Ally Walker) are brought into cases where the basic procedure of investigation has failed to produce a suspect and an exhaustive use of the latest technology has not led to any new clues. At the limit of technology’s fallibility, profilers are required to provide something that reaches beyond the scope of technology’s promise. Like the high-definition television, the criminal profiler’s status as a quasi-psychic—a gift that always goes unexplained—supplies reality with *more* than reality itself. The fantasy of “total presence,” as I argue in the following pages, emerges in the criminal profiler television show at the point where technology fails the investigation and the imaginary, psychic visions of the protagonists fill in the gap. The profiler emerges at the end of the twentieth century as a homology for the concept of “total presence,” or a kind of post-high-tech supplement to the failure of technology to help the FBI to get its man.

## Technology and the FBI

Scientific advancement and rational criminal investigation have always been crucial to the FBI's legitimacy. The conflict between these two goals of the FBI agent battled each other in competing radio programs during the 1950s. Shows like "The FBI in War and Peace" and "Top Secrets of the FBI" continued to depend on the G-Man formula made famous by Cagney, but these two shows were never authorized by Hoover. To compete with them, Hoover authorized the radio show "This is Your FBI," which focused exclusively on the Bureau's scientific prowess. Richard Gid Powers explains that Hoover's show

were almost obsessively nonsensational. There were no chases, no fights, no shooting [...] Since the show was intended to cool down any antispy hysteria ignited by programs like 'The FBI in War and Peace,' the show's thesis was that there was no glamor in spying or spy-chasing [...] It also tried to prove that catching spies was boring work, hardly worth the attention of anyone with anything else worth doing. (*G-Men* 223)

Powers, moreover, asserts that "the static and monotonous quality of 'This is Your FBI' may have well been one of the show's biggest assets. If the men who understood national security could be so calm about it [...] then there was no reason for the public to get upset about the problem" (*G-Men* 224). The show ran for eight years, but it never shook its competition, which "kept dispatching its own unauthorized G-Men to battle crooks and Communists according to the old detective rules of war" (Powers, *G-Men* 224). The competition between the two formulas has been a mainstay of popular depictions of the FBI since its inception. On the one hand, popular culture has always

depended upon an FBI agent who could fight using the “criminal mind” and methods, and on the other hand, film, radio, and TV has employed the scientific might of the FBI to demonstrate that the criminal stands little chance of escaping from its all-seeing presence. The quasi-psychic profiler, I shall demonstrate, undercuts both of these components of stories about the FBI.

The advances in technology at the end of the twentieth century, I argue, have impacted American culture to such a degree that we believe in the possibility that technology will create a world where “nothing can be lost.” We, moreover, are reminded on a daily basis that through emerging technologies of the Internet and cable television that all events can be accounted for on a daily basis.<sup>1</sup> Consequently, the depiction of the FBI makes similar promises, and the profiler era of FBI narrative is underpinned by the notion that no crime should escape its scrutiny. In the following pages I shall demonstrate that, regardless of the FBI’s technology, *Millennium* and *Profiler* employ profilers who have psychic visions that go beyond technology. Rather than opposing the psychic profiler with the FBI’s technology, I will argue that the profiler’s visions operate as a supplement that reinforces technology’s necessity.

## Images of Crime

Both *Millennium* and *Profiler* feature criminal profilers who employ a sixth sense for seeing visions of crime scenes. Moreover, each character continues the lifestyle choices of the profilers featured in Chapter Three. Both have quit the FBI because of

---

<sup>1</sup> Consider the proliferation of what used to be “local news” that is now treated as “national news” by the cable television news channels. One might consider this the Rodney King-ification of news gathering. The message of such an approach is nothing evades the public eye. If it’s a police beating, a car chase, or fire in any town within the United States, the cable news channels go to every length to prove that they can provide extensive coverage of anything “newsworthy.”

traumatic encounters with serial killers: Black quits after suffering a nervous breakdown caused by his failure to shut off the horrible visions of murder in his head, and Waters quits the FBI after the serial killer Jack-of-all-Trades murders her husband. Both profilers retreat into their separate private worlds, and in order to avoid the dissatisfaction of the Symbolic, both characters make it known to everyone that they want to be left alone, moving far away in order to find “happiness.” Black moves his family from Washington DC to Seattle, where he and his wife buy a yellow Colonial style house within a neighborhood populated by happy and helpful group of neighbors. Waters takes her daughter deep into the rural countryside of Georgia to live with a childhood friend, her former boss the only person aware of the location. Black and Waters exemplify the typical state of affairs for successful profilers who can no longer go on being so successful. Their lifestyles suggest to viewers that violent crime has become such a problem by the end of the twentieth century that even the most expert of crime fighters have given up trying to combat its outbreak. Waters and Black have chosen, instead, to turn away from their public duty and toward their own private enjoyment.

While *Millennium* and *Profiler* contribute and extend upon the tortured life motif of the criminal profiler, both shows depend more heavily upon the genre’s continuing manipulation of enjoyment over desire. More specifically, private enjoyment is not only depicted through their lifestyle choices but also in how each show employs technology. Each week Black and Waters decode the meaning of grisly murder scenes when the FBI’s superior technology fails. Fingerprinting, blood typing, and DNA matching always come up short when agents are on the trail of master criminals, and these shows endorse the fantasy that justice requires turning away from these approve techniques of crime



detection and toward the unexplainable and extraordinary gifts of profilers. The films that precede the televisual depictions of profiling hint at the notion that these detectives have supernatural gifts but never go so far as to claim they do, preferring to suggest that profilers achieve their goals through a mixture of forensic science and creative intuition.<sup>2</sup> The creators of *Millennium* and *Profiler*, however, leave no doubt about how the protagonists go about solving crimes, using flashcuts of what they see in order to depict the lead detectives as literally able to see more in the crime scene than others. The flashcuts are the defining feature of each show's *mise-en-scene*, and they serve, not only as each show's innovative approach to visual design, but as the key component of the way in which each manipulates enjoyment and underpins the profiler as a structural representation of the society of enjoyment. Rather than working from the unsatisfying admission that some cases are plainly unsolvable, Frank Black and Samantha Waters, because of their ability to psychically tap into the killer's vision and present those images to the viewer, depict all crime as solvable.

Violent crime at the end of twentieth century seems to happen more randomly than in previous decades because it has been, according to McGowan, understood increasingly as a particular act divorced of its universal context. He argues:

Crimes appear, in other words, in almost every instance as particular acts without any link to the universal, without any connection to the social order in which they exist [...] Hence, it becomes impossible to interpret

---

<sup>2</sup> John Douglas does not like the equation of criminal profiling with supernatural or psychic abilities. While they are often asked questions about their uncanny ability, criminal profilers are insistent that profiling is primarily about studying prior offenders and types of crimes. Douglas describes the process as looking at “the case reports, the crime-scene photos and descriptions, the victim statements or autopsy protocols—and then put[ting] myself mentally and emotionally in the head of the offender” (*Mindhunter* 147). Profiler entertainment, however, is replete with psychic profilers, suggesting the profiling method is an inexplicable, mystical process.

crime, to grasp particular crimes within their universal significance [...] [and] despite its appearance of isolation and particularity [...] one could convincingly argue that crime should be easier to understand within the current context of global capitalism than ever before in human history. (*The End* 99)<sup>3</sup>

*Millennium* and *Profiler* contribute to our increasing inability to situate violent crime within a social context because each show portrays crime as a random and isolated event, and the increasing randomness of crime necessitates a crime solving process that is itself also random and isolated. Rather than examining the ways in which global capitalism has made it easier for individuals to live lives of private enjoyment and the increasing fear of random acts of violence that attend those private lives, profiler television shows depict crime as an isolated event that only individuals with unexplainable supernatural powers. Even though we know more, by the end of the twentieth century, about the motivations and patterns of serial killers, solving serial murders, as presented by these two television shows, depends only on the images Black and Waters see inside their minds. This is another way of saying that one can only combat the Other's enjoyment with more enjoyment.

The flashback motif found in each show is crucial to understanding the profiler's supplemental relationship to technology, and to explain its centrality, the profiler show should be seen in opposition to other police procedural shows precisely because of their divergent attitudes toward the publicly agreed upon rules of crime scene investigation and

---

<sup>3</sup> To add to McGowan's point, Eugene Jarecki's *Why We Fight* (2006) argues that the media failed to understand the events of 9/11 in a universal context, settling instead on the constant refrain of "why do they hate us" instead of properly analyzing the historical and economic motives of the hijackers. Since media analysts could not conceive of Al Qaeda's attack as anything other than random, isolated, and particular, they were unable to translate events beyond those of the essentially private experience of its viewers.

the supplementary justice represented by profilers. The most popular contemporary television franchise from 2001-2006 has been *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* and its two spin-offs, *CSI: Miami* and *CSI: New York*. These two shows have changed much about the way crime scene investigation has been depicted on television by focusing, almost exclusively, on the scientific and forensic data cultivated from the different crime scenes investigated from week to week. While *CSI*'s heavy emphasis on science is innovative, its storytelling formula follows a traditional hermeneutic of suspense based upon deferral and delay. A typical show opens with a crime that reveals what happens to the victim but fails to yield a suspect. The detectives descend upon the scene, begin collecting evidence, and then spend the rest of the show decoding its meaning. Prior to each commercial break, *CSI* identifies a suspect who is brought in for questioning, and upon returning from the break, the suspect is revealed to be a decoy that propels the audience toward another false suspect, another commercial break, another false suspect, and another commercial break until in the final minutes of the show, the real perpetrator of the crime is identified and punished.<sup>4</sup> *CSI*'s formula is not unique in recent primetime television. NBC's *Law and Order* franchise, ABC's former ratings heavyweight *NYPD Blue*, and CBS's *Without a Trace*, *Cold Case*, *Close to Home*, and *Numb3rs* (sic) all employ this same formula of deferring the identity of the criminal, which depends on the delay provided by the natural commercial breaks and the notion that crime scenes are intentionally misleading.

---

<sup>4</sup> Paying close attention to the show's narrative patterns will also reveal a variation on this formula. If the real suspect is identified before the last commercial break, something will often emerge to derail the process of justice and deny the viewer of its desire for punishment. Very often, however, a second storyline will be introduced during one of these episodes that allow the viewer offload the frustration of the near-miss of the first.

In television crimes shows based on deferral, the identity of the criminal is often missing from the narrative until a moment of payoff at its culmination. In each of these deferral driven shows, the crime scene is central to the unfolding events, and great pain goes into preserving its original state. Doing so allows the detectives to examine the scene in its most pristine state possible. Tape announcing “Do Not Cross” is placed around the scene, beat cops are admonished for having disturbed the scene in any way, and close scrutiny is paid to whether the “perp” forced his way into the house or robbed the victim. Emphasizing crime scene security details exhorts viewers to recognize that the crime scene is always under the threat of falling apart or being contaminated, thus highlighting the crime scene’s unstable, ephemeral nature. Like unreliable eyewitness testimony, the meaning preserved in these crime scenes is limited by their temporary nature, which threatens to obfuscate key details or never reveal important clues at all. To cut off the sliding signification of the original crime scene, detectives have the scene extensively photographed. Long after the original crime has faded and been resymbolized by those still connected to its traumatic content, the crime scene photo lives on, testifying to the grisly events that took place. Rather than being an incomplete record of those events, crime scene photos, because they outlive the crime and original crime scene, evolve into being images that show more than the crime scene itself.

The crime scene in profiler narratives are dealt with in an entirely different manner, the focus on which shifts to immediate enjoyment of their full revelation rather than missing clues. Profilers have an entirely different relationship to crime scenes than do regular police detectives, and the crime scene photo takes on more significance for the former than the latter. Criminal profilers are always brought in after the fact of the crime

when regular detectives have failed to solve the mystery, and profilers rarely have access to the original crime scene. They often rely only on crime scene photos and the case file to develop a profile of what type of offender the local police should be looking for. Moreover, profilers look at these images differently than the first cops on the scene. Instead of trying to detect what is missing from the picture (whether it is the crime scene or the image), the profiler operates from the belief that the scene and its image show all there is to know about the criminal. In other words, the crime scene and the suspect are one and the same—the perpetrator’s identity is thought to be written across every detail of the scene. Instead of viewing the scene as misleading text that hides the suspect’s identity, profilers insist that the scene intentionally reveals its author. John Douglas often refers to the relationship between serial murderers and their crime scenes as being the same as that between an artist and a painting. Douglas explains,

But for now: *if you want to understand the artist, look at his work*. That’s what I always tell my people. You can’t claim to understand or appreciate Picasso without studying his paintings. These successful serial killers plan their work as carefully as a painter plans a canvas. They consider what they do their “art,” and they keep refining it as they go along.

*(Mindhunter 110, emphasis in the original)*

Douglas’s “auteurist” approach to profiling forms the spine of much of the process. It is a combination of interviewing serial murderers and studying all of the crimes they have committed in the past. Douglas claims that such an approach brings together his belief that personality determines behavior (*Anatomy* 9-10). Crime scenes, then, become not only reflections of the people who “painted” them, but, in the minds of many criminal

profilers, they literally represent exactly who the criminals are. They breakdown crime scenes first by determining whether the scene is organized or disorganized and proceed using these two categories to ultimately define the person they are looking for. Each category reflects the two basic personalities of most murderers, according to Douglas, and tells him whether the murder was premeditated (organized) or random (disorganized).<sup>5</sup> From this starting point, profilers proceed toward identifying the type of person who would commit this type of crime. The crime scene photo serves the profiler as a visual record of the killer's work, and long after the original scene has disappeared, the profiler relies upon these photos to show him/her the personality embedded within the image. Whereas the original crime scene always threatens to occlude key information, the preserved image promises to deliver more.<sup>6</sup> The crime scene photo, consequently, becomes a reality that is different, and more, than the reality of the original crime scene,<sup>7</sup> and, because profilers consider the crime scene to absolutely reflect the identity of the suspect, the crime scene photo connotes a sense of wholeness that the incomplete, ephemeral, and fragmented original crime scene cannot.

To make this contrast more clear—the contrast between the photo of abundance and the lacking original crime scene—a short but significant scene from *Copycat* is instructive. After joining the investigation for serial killer Peter Foley (William

---

<sup>5</sup> For a good example of the organized and disorganized serial offender, see Douglas's profile of the Trailside Killer in *Mindhunter* (148-161).

<sup>6</sup> The proliferation of television shows focusing on "cold cases" has also contributed to the importance of the crime scene photo. An increase in news programs (NBC's *Dateline* and ABC's *Primetime Live*), documentaries (A&E's *Cold Case Files*), and fictional dramas (CBS's *Cold Case*) that focus on old crimes have also raised the significance of the crime scene photo to communicate overlooked information that eventually helps solve the crime.

<sup>7</sup> One only needs to consider the former site of the World Trade Center as an example between an original crime scene that has been covered over, thus emptying it of its traumatic content, and the television footage that continues to recreate the trauma of 9/11. Indeed, Paul Greengrass's attempt to recreate the exact details of 9/11 in *United 93* can be seen as a feature length crime scene photo, and much of the national media's hand-wringing over its 2006 release focused on whether America was to ready deal with a movie about 9/11, testifying to the traumatic potential of the image, not the impact of the original crime.

McNamara), profiler Helen Hudson (Sigourney Weaver) examines the crime scene photos brought to her by the San Francisco detectives leading the case. She studies them throughout the evening and, without ever visiting any of the original crime scenes, she deduces the motive of the killer within one sitting, while the two SFPD detectives have continually been mystified by the killer's constantly changing *modus operandi*. Hudson realizes that she has seen these photos before. The photos reveal that the killer has been murdering victims and posing them in order to mimic famous serial murderers of the past. The images, by virtue of their dependence upon the past for their content, are simulacra of murder, which disconnect the image from the original crime, and since an expert like Hudson is the only one who can read the photos correctly, suggests that the simulacra reveal more information than the original crimes. The simulated crime scenes literally become the way that the killer and profiler communicate with each other throughout the film, and this communication through images delivers a satisfaction of abundant information—a total increasing presence—that the original crime scene of lack cannot. For the profiler as the subject of enjoyment, the crime scene photo provides total meaning and reveals its author. Profilers, like John Douglas and the fictional Helen Hudson, persuasively argue that, with the proper understanding of their method, all objects reveal total meaning and produce a belief that no detail is too minor. The crime scene photo helps underscore the satisfying belief that, with the proper set of skills, we can capture full meaning from the image.

*Millennium* and *Profiler* translate the crime scene photo and its promise of total meaning into the flashback. This visual motif serves as a psychic flash from the profiler's perspective that allows viewers to see the crime as it happened. These flashing images

allegedly grant total access to the event and serve to stop interpretation, thus closing off the neverending chain of associations. The crime scene, finally, exists in the mind of the profiler and not in reality, thus underscoring the role of these new detectives as post-high-tech supplements to the failure of technology to stop violent crime. The psychic flashback of the profiler's thoughts, discussed in the following pages, demonstrates that technology fails to fully protect from serial criminals while also reinforcing the need for more and more technology.

### ***Millennium***

As is the case with most television shows, the pilot episode is an important source of information regarding the ways in which a particular show establishes its narrative and aesthetic practices. After the ratings success of his first show *The X-Files*, creator Chris Carter was given the opportunity by Fox to develop another show to air on Sunday nights after the network's flagship shows, *The Simpsons*, *King of the Hill*, and the aforementioned *The X-Files*. With *The X-Files*, Carter focused on the exploits of two FBI agents, Fox Mulder (David Duchovny) and Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson), who dwelled within the basement of the FBI building and investigated cases of the paranormal—cases that few believed had merit. Each week the two agents looked into evidence of extra-terrestrial life that often put them at odds with their own government, and each episode contributed to the growing mythology of a grand conspiracy within the government to hide the fact that the United States had not only had contact with aliens, but had employed alien technology against an unknowing public. *Millennium* provided Carter with the opportunity to expand upon the paranoia generated by *The X-Files* but do



so in a way that focused more on reality rather than the paranormal. Wanting to explore the nature of evil, Carter conceived of *Millennium* as a project that would investigate the monsters that live anonymously among us as well as anxiety about the approaching millennium.<sup>8</sup> *Millennium*'s pilot episode, shot in thirty days as opposed to the customary eight, established three key components of the show that are rigorously replayed throughout its three season run. First, the credit sequence creates the tone of the show by focusing on images of disconnection and loneliness that allows the enjoyment of the Other to fester and spread.<sup>9</sup> Second, the pilot opposes Black's family life inside his yellow house in Seattle with the evil that exists in the outside world, thus bringing into high relief Black's attempt to combat the Other's enjoyment with his own. Third, and most importantly, the pilot introduces viewers to Black's extra-sensory gift for seeing through the eyes of the killer through the use of flashback images, merging the killer's enjoyment with his own.

*Millennium*'s credit sequence reveals a great deal about its world-view. Inspired by the photographs found in Robert Frank's *The Americans*—a work that has been described as a collection that captures the bewildered, lonely, despairing, and angry faces of Americans, linking the young and old, rich and poor, through an overwhelming sense

---

<sup>8</sup> I am drawing these conclusions from the interviews with Carter and the *Millennium* cast that appear on the sixth disc of the first season DVD collection. Carter is always generous with explanations of the stylistic and narrative choices he makes while constructing an episode.

<sup>9</sup> Often credit sequences are treated as an afterthought and serve only the utilitarian purpose of explaining briefly who contributed to this week's show and how, but *Millennium*'s opening titles go much farther than the typical sequence, establishing a reminder each week of the foreboding mood of isolation and disconnection central to its world-view. *Millennium*'s credit sequence, in other words, transcends the typical utilitarian nature of television show credits and mimics the look and feel of the more sophisticated montages we see at the cinema. In fact, it would be more appropriate to refer to it as an impact montage, which brings together images of similar content in order to overwhelmingly advocate a particular position. In this case, the credit sequence for *Millennium* captures the mood of enjoyment at the end of the twentieth century, but it does not portray enjoyment as we might expect. Instead, it depicts the aftermath of a culture turned so inward that all that is left is strife, pain, and loneliness. At the center of the sequence is the show's logo, which features an ouroboros, a snake eating its own tail that signifies the circle of eternal being and an end to suffering.

of isolation (Taubin 88)—art director Ramsey McDaniel’s evocative montage effectively captures a feeling of isolation and loneliness. Each image in the opening montage depicts a figure or object in total isolation, not in a way that points up its alienation, but in a way that illustrates the private individual’s world as one where no one cares to notice anymore. Two images stand out amongst all the others and effectively capture the tone of the whole piece. First, just after the logo, there is a long shot of woman shot in silhouette with her back to the camera, standing to the right side of screen and underneath an arch. The composition of the shot is of a classically isolated figure: she is heavily shadowed, facing away from the viewer, marginalized to left side of the frame. All of these aspects of the composition obliterate any sense of identity, and the image evokes the weight of despair. The head and arms of the isolated female figure collapse under their own weight as the first shot dissolves into the next, and it is significant that no other object or person appears in the image to force them down. Had there been some other force acting upon the image of the listless woman, we might consider this shot to be image of alienation or an example of the subject’s inability to overcome the prohibitions of the Other. However, the effect of the woman’s head and arms collapsing under their own weight testify the purely individual status of the woman’s isolation. Later in the montage, another shot of an isolated female figure shot in silhouette walking across the ledge of bridge articulates the same feeling. This image, however, depicts the female figure attempting to balance herself without falling, warning viewers of the potential fall she could take. The lonely woman crossing the bridge raises the question of whether or not anyone would be there to notice if she fell, depicting, again, the world of private isolation and disconnection. A series of words accompany the montage in order to

further evoke these feelings. Much like its more famous cousin, *X-Files*, which overlays the sentence “The Truth is Out There” upon its final image, *Millennium*’s credit sequence employs the words “Wait” “Worry,” and “Who Cares?” While “Wait” and “Worry” further clarify the montage’s portrayal of the proliferation of anxiety spurred on by an increase in disconnection, the final words, “Who Cares,” doubly insist that the end of the millennium is characterized by a sense of forbidding isolation. As the words appear on screen, they emerge first as “Who Cares,” which conveys the sense that no one cares, as in a cynical dismissal of the result of some event. A question mark—“Who Cares?”—then follows the words on-screen, pointing up a different meaning once we consider it as an interrogative, which asks viewers whether anyone can be bothered to care. Or, in the words of the society of enjoyment, the question asks viewers whether they are willing to turn away from their own imagined enjoyment and consider the Real implications of confronting its limits. The final words of the sequence appear within an image of Frank Black’s yellow house that, for Carter and his collaborators, represents an image of familial happiness in an otherwise decaying world. Shot from a low-angle, the house appears as an oasis at the end of a montage of dark images, but just above the house, we notice low hanging clouds shot using time-lapsed photography, giving the clouds a menacing appearance as they pass swiftly over the brightly colored house. The final image establishes the main conflict that forms the thrust of most of the three seasons of *Millennium*: can we turn toward our own happiness and enjoyment as a way to deal with a society awash with the total increasing presence of other peoples’ enjoyment?

Frank’s yellow house plays a significant role in establishing *Millennium*’s belief in private enjoyment as the answer to multiplying problems of the world as it descends

into the chaos represented by the end of twentieth century. Following the pilot episode's opening credit sequence, Frank Black and his family, wife Katherine (Meghan Gallagher) and daughter Jordan (Brittany Tiplady), move into the yellow house to "put some roots down," as Frank explains to his new neighbor. The Blacks had been living in Washington DC, and it was there that Frank suffered a nervous breakdown after tracking the serial killer Dr. Ephraim Fabricant, a point we learn later in season one. Frank drives the family into the driveway, their eyes closed, and surprises them with their newly painted house. His decision to paint it yellow is met with unanimous praise, so much so, that Katherine tells him as they are moving boxes inside that she is "really happy right now" and thinks "this move was the right thing." The goal of their move to Seattle is to take Frank away from the torture of tracking serial killers for a living and to provide a sense of security to his family. As we learn in many of the subsequent episodes, Frank's ability for tracking the most dangerous criminals is legendary at the FBI, but he decides to turn his back on his responsibility to the Bureau in order to retreat into the imagined happiness of his new family situation in Seattle. While the yellow house is featured prominently as a refuge of familial enjoyment in the credits and throughout the first season, Frank is unable to keep the outside world from getting in. At the end of the moving-in scene, Frank goes outside to encounter a meddling neighbor who seems a bit overly curious about what the criminal profiler does for a living, and after politely dismissing the neighbor, Frank picks up a newspaper to see that an unsolved murder of a female exotic dancer continues to baffle police. Frank eventually joins the case, thus disrupting his imagined happiness. Frank, moreover, receives disturbing Polaroid photos from a stalker at the end of the pilot episode. The photos show Frank's family and home,

signaling that potential threats of the outside world cannot be protected by the enjoyment of the yellow house.

The failure of private family enjoyment as security, initially represented by Frank's yellow house, is employed throughout the three seasons of *Millennium*, and this is extended to include an examination of the movement of families in the 1990s out of the suburbs and into exurban private communities. The rationale for moving farther and farther from urban centers and its encroaching presence upon the original suburban communities, built originally in the 1950s and 60s, is to avoid the crime of the decaying city. Today's exurban communities are typically all-inclusive and provide all the amenities that the city does, which allow its dwellers to avoid any messy, dissatisfying entanglements. *Millennium*'s relentless focus on the evil represented by serial killers at the end of the century spreads into these exurban communities in effect to show that privacy fails to fully protect those who believe they have transcended the problems that attend public engagement. The new communities—complete with walls, gates, cameras, motion sensors, and private security guards—are unable to fully expel the deviant enjoyment of violent criminals from their fortresses of happiness. For example, a season one episode entitled “Wide Open” focuses on a serial killer who attends open houses in newly built exurban communities. While at the open house, the killer manages to hide until the residents attempting to sell the house return home for the evening. Once the family goes to bed, the killer comes out of hiding, kills the parents, and hides their daughter in a ground level ventilation shaft, all the while videotaping the event, which he sends to the real estate company. The episode director, James Charleston, reinforces the lack of safety afforded by privacy by isolating specific shots of the home's alarm system

and its digital display that ironically reads “Armed—All Secure.” Frank sums up the inability of the apparatus of privacy to protect exurbanites from random killers in an explanation of the killer’s motives: “He’s teaching us a lesson about our pretensions to safety, about how vulnerable we are.” In another episode during season one, entitled “Weeds,” a killer stalks another exurban community, looking for fathers who he believes have sinned and killing their sons as punishment. As the killer drives around the community, subjective shots illustrate the way he sees the world. The glossy perfection of the exurban landscape is replaced by black and white shots of decaying yards, normal people morphing into demons, and filth collecting everywhere; the killer sees a world overgrown with sin and sets out to clean it up by kidnapping teenage boys and subjecting them to torture, until the fathers admit their sins, or killing the boys if they do not. Other residents are unable to comprehend that their safe community and its attendant technology could fall prey to such a threat, which is summed up nicely by a policeman at the end of the show who asks, “How could this happen here?” *Millennium* accurately depicts the central problem of a society of “total presence” as represented by Black’s yellow house and the exurban community: the subject’s belief that dissatisfaction can be overcome through constant attention to one’s own private enjoyment leads to less and less enjoyment, and eventually, to no enjoyment at all.

The movement toward enjoyment and enjoyment’s subsequent retreat is clarified as the show’s thematic crux in an episode entitled “Lamentation,” which introduces audiences to Dr. Ephraim Fabricant (Alex Diakun), the source of Frank’s breakdown, who has escaped from prison. More importantly, audiences are introduced to the character of Lucy Butler (Sarah-Jane Redmond), who is a recurring character in all three

seasons of *Millennium*. While never clearly explained, Lucy Butler appears in three different episodes and symbolizes the human manifestation of pure evil. She appears in “Lamentation” as Dr. Fabricant’s wife, in season two as a woman who kidnaps teenage boys (locking them in small rooms under her house and subjecting them to a never ending soundtrack of Muzak), and in season three as a nanny for a rich couple Lucy intends to kill. She is Frank’s primary nemesis in the millennial battle with evil, and in “Lamentation,” she punctures the security of the yellow house, kills a cop in Frank’s basement, and effectively destabilizes the Black family’s private world. Katherine makes this point effectively when she tells Frank that they are fooling themselves into believing that the house would protect them—her point is reinforced when she is kidnapped during the season one finale. Over its three season run, *Millennium* rigorously insists upon the inability of private, secured communities to protect people, assaulting viewers with show after show making this very point. However, the lesson to be taken from the accumulated failure of enjoyment to insulate subjects is not that life is dissatisfying and we should get used to it. Rather, *Millennium* returns constantly to the notion that subjects can engage the Real by constantly seeking their own enjoyment. The quest for private enjoyment is a misleading path where subjects believe in private enjoyment as a transgressive act that will deliver them to the Real. McGowan reminds us that the enjoying Other was primarily characterized, in the society of prohibition, as external, or “as those we ostracize from the social order.” But *Millennium* brings the enjoying Other into the private, secure homes of exurbanites, which significantly changes the way we regard the Other’s enjoyment. McGowan argues that this change produces a new kind of paranoia:

In this way, the society of enjoyment produces paranoia: paranoia results

from constant confrontations with the enjoying other and the belief that this other is enjoying in our stead. We receive an imperative to enjoy, but rather than feeling as if we are actually enjoying ourselves, we impute enjoyment to the other, an enjoyment that is “rightfully” ours. The problem is that this appearance of the other’s enjoyment does not simply appear in its “proper” context, as external to the social order, at a distance. Instead, it appears directly in front of us, exposing our failure to enjoy and flaunting its success. (*The End* 113)

*Millennium* flaunts the ability of the Other to invade the “secure” exurban communities, and the inability to properly contextualize the Other’s enjoyment cuts off the characters’ ability to properly interpret the significance of enjoyment’s intrusion. Instead, the Symbolic frame has dissolved in the society of commanded enjoyment as represented by *Millennium*, underscoring McGowan’s contention that “it is impossible to locate [enjoyment] in a proper symbolic context. This impossibility shapes our response: we can’t interpret the other’s enjoyment, so we feel as if we must destroy it” (*The End* 113). The impasse between proper context for violent crime and the inability to interpret it is central to understanding *Millennium*’s representation of the failure of exurban communities and technology to adequately protect its residents. This failure makes a figure like the criminal profiler—who can see images of the serial killer at work without the aid of technology—an absolute necessity.

Ex-FBI criminal profiler Frank Black can see images of criminal acts from the perpetrator’s perspective. This is not something the show hints at or dances around. In fact, his gift of insight is the focus of the show, and each week during its three year run,



Black's ability to see what the criminal sees serves as the primary vehicle by which law enforcement officials apprehend violent offenders. No other tool of detection is given equal billing with Frank's ability to see images of murder from the perspective of the killer. As a point of contrast, Will Graham of *Manhunter* is portrayed as having an uncanny intuition, but his understanding of criminality is never portrayed as extrasensory or infallible. Black's ability is both, and the creators of *Millennium* want viewers to make no mistake about the truth that emerges from his insight. Black's ability is first shown to viewers following the introduction of the yellow house. After reading a newspaper headline about an unsolved murder in Seattle, the retired profiler visits the Seattle police department to offer his expertise. While standing over the body in the morgue, Frank stops the medical examiner from opening the body bag, leaving its contents, the murdered body of an exotic dancer, hidden from the audience's view. Instead of showing the viewer the aftermath of the murder, the director of the pilot employs a series of flashcuts, while the profiler stands next to the body, that show the actual murder taking place. These graphic images, shot from the subjective point-of-view of the killer, are what Frank sees, and the profiler narrates the contents of the body bag without ever looking inside, leading the medical examiner to refer to him as "the man with the x-ray eyes." The flashcuts, shown in short, fragmented bursts, depict from Frank's point-of-view, first, the victim in sheer terror as she is being chased in her home, second, her body laying in a pool of blood, and, third, the killer positioning the victim's body after she is dead. Added together, the images take viewers through the entire process of the crime, but unlike a documentary approach, the images do not objectively reveal all there is to see. Instead, the truth of these images is portrayed only through the

subjective point-of-view of the profiler, which, because of his power to understand the experience of the Other, is never questioned.

The consistent employment of flashcuts to depict the reality of the murders perpetrated in *Millennium* points up, moreover, the role of the profiler as a post-high-tech supplement to traditional crime detection. This supplemental relationship can be explained more effectively by contrasting the role of the symbol and the image in the society of enjoyment. According to McGowan, the successful transition from the society of prohibition to the society of enjoyment depends on the subject ignoring the dissatisfactory symbol in favor of the imagined satisfaction of the image (*The End* 59-60). He argues that the image reigns in the society of enjoyment because it promises a sense of wholeness that the symbol cannot (*The End* 70). Choosing the image over the symbol is a reversal of the choice Lacan argues we make during the mirror-stage (*Ecrits* 4). Whereas the subject of prohibition is coerced into siding with the Symbolic and its concomitant life of dissatisfaction during the mirror-stage, McGowan argues that the subject of enjoyment is commanded to avoid dissatisfaction at all costs, thus leaving only images of enjoyment from which the subject is supposed to choose (*The End* 71). Instead of the pleasure that emerges from routinely being denied your own personal enjoyment, the subject of today's culture is offered all encompassing enjoyment all the time. The flashcuts that Frank Black sees, I have argued, serve a similar purpose. Rather than the painstaking process of evidence collection and evaluation, the depiction of criminal profiling as the gift of an isolated, individual man suggests that solving the societal problems represented by crime would be easy if we had more detectives who think similar thoughts, see similar images, and comprehend the enjoyment of the transgressive

behavior of the society's most violent Others. In effect, Frank's visions as depicted through the flashcuts operate similarly to the crime scene photo that I discussed previously. The crime scene photo's enduring permanence and the belief that it reveals the sum total of the killer's personality, as opposed to the ephemeral original crime scene's potential for contamination, signify, in a hyperreal sense, more truth as a copy than that which it simulates. Frank's gift, I contend, carries similar weight as the hyperreal image; Frank's ability to see the crime scene is authentic and operates as the only confirmation of the criminal activity depicted in the show. Ultimately, the world of *Millennium* is one where the enjoyment of the Other, as represented by deviant criminals, is on constant display. Whereas the threat of enjoyment lurks outside of society's well-established boundaries in something like a Hitchcock film, it is totally present in the world of *Millennium*, and the show contends that the only way to deal with such totally present enjoyment is to confront it with our own enjoyment, thus further obfuscating the lack that forms subjectivity. As McGowan explains, in the world of clashing enjoyment, the subject can relate to the Other in the same way—a way that seems entirely undisturbed by the authority of some third party, be it the symbol, the word, the FBI, or the rules of the criminal justice system (*The End* 72). The diminishing influence of a third party allows subjects to imagine themselves as “isolated monads”<sup>10</sup> who do not have to renounce their enjoyment upon entering the Symbolic, and Frank Black is effectively the model of such an isolated monad.

---

<sup>10</sup> “Isolated monad” is another term used by McGowan to describe the subject of enjoyment (*The End* 72). McGowan explains the experience using Lacan's description of the Imaginary sphere as a “closed world of two,” which describes the identification of the subject with its counterpart or alter-ego without the mediation of the Symbolic (*The End* 72). The isolated monad is much like the infant that goes through the mirror-stage and refuses to recognize its castration.

The criminal profiler's homologous relationship with the notion of the subject as isolated monad is effectively depicted through *Millennium's* preference for the image over the word. Black, for example, delivers in almost every episode some kind of verbal explanation of the serial killer's state of mind to state/local police detectives and/or whoever else he might be consulting in that week's episode. His verbal explanation is, more often than not, met with skepticism and sometimes derision because it fails to simplify the killer's motivations for those who wish to satisfy their desire to easily understand what the Other/killer wants. While these verbal descriptions are based upon Frank's extrasensory gift and are utterly validated by the show's end, the other representatives of the various levels of law enforcement find his answers and advice for identifying and apprehending a suspect (and him, for that matter) a bit spooky, for lack of a better word. However, once Frank's ability for seeing images is explained and understood, little doubt is expressed. The pilot episode provides another good example of this conflict between word and image that we see followed throughout *Millennium's* three seasons. In a meeting with the Seattle police department, Frank delivers his profile of the "Frenchman" who has murdered the exotic dancer. Frank explains to the assembled detectives that the killer is fond of reciting William Butler Yeats's poem, "The Second Coming," while watching dancers and subscribes to the poem's apocalyptic prophecy, which combined with some passages from Revelations, make up the world-view of killer. The other detectives regard Frank's description as complete nonsense and refuse to engage the idea that the killer kills because of, in their words, some "screwy French poetry," saying that Frank tells a "good story" but that his profile "does not support the evidence." Ultimately, the cops collectively decide that they do not have the

“time to waste” on Frank’s “good story” because it fails to simplify the case. In other words, the Seattle detectives equate the profiler’s description with dissatisfaction and refuse to engage it because it fails to satisfy their view of crime as a random assault on their private enjoyment. Considering Frank’s “good story” would reveal a context for the killer’s actions and their inability to understand it. As we discover by the end of the pilot episode, Frank’s profile is exactly correct, but it is only after he describes his ability to see images that the lead Seattle detective, Bob Bletcher (Bill Smitrovich), begins to believe in his skills of the criminal profiler. After confronting Frank in the parking garage of the police station, detective Bletcher asks the profiler, “Why should I listen to you” and commands him to “tell me why I’m wrong.” Their ensuing conversation is a significant example of how the image has overtaken the word:

Blecher: Tell me how you know. Why are you so sure? You see it, or something?

Black: It’s complicated, Blech.

Blecher: What do you see?

Black: I see what the killer sees.

Blecher: What? Like a psychic?

Black: No. I put myself in his head. I become the thing we fear the most.

Blecher: How?

Black: I become capability. I become the horror. What we know we can become only in our heart of darkness. It’s my gift. It’s my curse. That’s why I retired.

Frank's description of being able to engage the Other on equal terms is precisely what the subject desperately desires in the society of enjoyment. Instead of feeling the jolting dissatisfaction of not understanding some "screwy French poetry" and apocalyptic prophecy, we see, through Frank, images that provide the total satisfaction of the killer's world-view. Frank provides viewers with the satisfying sense that "nothing can be lost," and *Millennium's* consistent exploitation of the image as the truth of the Other, as opposed to the "good story," suggests that crime can only be solved, with the hopes of preventing it before it happens. While Frank's gift promises to provide a Real experience that will satisfy the viewer's/his desire, the enjoyment of the isolated monad only produces images of satisfaction that produce even more problematic anxieties, and Frank's day-to-day life further clarifies the impossible fantasy of a world where "nothing can be lost."

Rather than producing a stable world without violent crime, Frank's gift brings him and his family nothing but unhappiness. The power of his gift helps local and state police catch and kill murderers from week to week, but it does not help alleviate the sense that a formidable level of random violence is growing unchecked at the end of the twentieth century. *Millennium's* focus on the perilous rise in violence is coupled with a weekly investigation into apocalyptic prophecy, and features a shadowy "consulting group," called the Millennium Group.<sup>11</sup> The group is made up of ex-FBI agents who consult different levels of law-enforcement across the country. The Millennium Group in the first season, while somewhat mysterious, helps out on the police's most befuddling

---

<sup>11</sup> In another instance of fact and fiction merging in the world of profilers, the Millennium Group is modeled after the real life Academy Group. Made up of former FBI agents, the Academy Group consults private industry on how best to protect itself and investigates crimes on its behalf. The group employs the Red Dragon as its logo, which it borrowed from Thomas Harris's bestselling novel of the same name. For more information see this website, [www.academy-group.com](http://www.academy-group.com).

cases, but in season two, the Group begins to actively seek ways to bring about the apocalypse. In order to do so, they have hired Frank under the pretense of doing detective work while exploiting his gift for their own gain. The Group is so certain that the apocalypse is coming at the end of the twentieth century that it employs Frank to see the signs of its impending doom. Moreover, the Group wants to ensure that the apocalypse puts an end to the problems plaguing society. To that end, they unleash an airborne virus at the end of season two in order to bring the end closer, which underscores their desire to shrink the distance between reality and the transcendental beyond. Their knowledge of the signs of the future and Frank's gift for seeing what will happen do not, however, bring stability or any sense of order to the world of the show. Instead, the more the Millennium Group tries to control events, the more events spiral out of control, and the ever-increasing chaos is felt by audiences through their identification with the criminal profiler. For example, Frank's yellow house is violated at the end of season one, detective Blecher is killed in his basement, and his wife is kidnapped by a mysterious man who has been sending Frank frightening Polaroids of his family and home. Frank rectifies Katherine's kidnapping by the beginning of season two and has to kill his tormentor in order to do so. His violent outburst does not, however, end his dissatisfaction because his wife leaves him shortly after he kills to rescue her. She no longer believes his gift protects the family, rightly seeing it as a source of more anxiety instead of less. At the end of season two, Katherine Black dies in the Millennium Group's apocalypse-inspired release of the airborne virus, and Frank is unable to stop it. Her death prompts Frank to take his daughter, move back to Washington DC, quit the Millennium Group, and rejoin the FBI. But these moves, which are designed to protect

his family's home life, fail again to do so. The final episode of the series, entitled "Goodbye to all That," ends with Frank interrupting his daughter while at school, taking her out of class, and running away hand-in-hand. *Millennium's* finale sums up the show's main point over its three seasons: the more we seek private enjoyment the less enjoyment there is. While the show's creators did not believe that Frank and his daughter running away to nowhere would be the end of the show, the final image effectively captures its consistent depiction of a world suffocating from increasing instances of private enjoyment's intrusion into public. Rather than finishing with Frank in a climactic clash with a manifestation of pure evil or with the Millennium Group, the show ends on an image of a family in flight for more private, familial happiness and security, which have been the unattainable goal from its first episode. *Millennium's* portrayal of the criminal profiler has proven to be an alarmingly consistent portrait of a detective who exists primarily as a supplement to established law enforcement, thus promoting a belief in the law's seamy underside and a disbelief in public institutions.

### ***Profiler***

*Profiler* organizes and exploits the concept of private enjoyment in similar ways to *Millennium*, so much so, that it is easy to understand why both shows debuted in the same year. Rather than focusing on the end of the twentieth century as the cause of violent crime, *Profiler* takes a more classic approach to its depiction of profiling, capitalizing, as best it can, on connections viewers can make between it and *The Silence of the Lambs*. The connections are numerous, but the most obvious is the use of a female profiler, Samantha Waters (Ally Walker), as the protagonist, and her cat-and-mouse



relationship with the serial Jack-of-all-Trades (Dennis Christopher). The meta-story of the profiler and her inability to catch Jack-of-all-Trades informs the plot of every show for three seasons and is finally completed by the second episode of the fourth season. The comparisons between *Profiler* and *The Silence of the Lambs* exist largely on a superficial level, but much can be learned by the way each exploits the notion of enjoyment. *The Silence of the Lambs* denies Clarice Starling her own enjoyment and forces her to confront her dissatisfaction. For example, we only need to look at the opening credits where we find Starling running an obstacle course and passing a sign that says, "Hurt. Agony. Pain. Love It!" The sign suggests that her career as an FBI profiler will be guided by dissatisfaction, which, as an agent-in-training, is appropriate. However, Samantha Waters is at the other end of the career ladder. She is recognized, like Frank Black, as the top profiler in the country. Rather than enjoying her success, Waters, at the beginning of the series, has retired and chosen to not use her special ability for seeing into the minds of serial killers. She lives in a secret location with her daughter and childhood friend, Angel (Erica Gimpel). This living arrangement is a necessity because of the murder of her husband by Jack-of-all-Trades. She chooses, then, to retreat into private isolation. She leaves a successful career, lives in a highly secure, rural location, and operates under the suspicion that an intruder could find his way into her house at all times. Like Helen Hudson in *Copycat*, Waters purposefully avoids her former success. She is, however, lured out of hiding to rejoin a FBI task force, entitled the Violent Crimes Task Force, after learning that Jack has come out of hiding for more murder. *Profiler's* depiction of the emerging society of enjoyment depends on two significant components: first, Waters is never able to satisfy her desire for constant,

private security away from the violent world of the Other, and second, her post-high-tech gift for visualizing crime from the perspective of the perpetrator suggests that crime prevention is the purview of mystical figures, who operate without the dissatisfying constraints of the public law.

During its four season run, *Profiler* focuses on illustrating the inability of private isolation to protect the people who believe the most in privacy's promise. Viewers learn in the pilot episode that Sam has chosen to leave the FBI in favor of a life of private isolation in order to protect her daughter. She has chosen to work as a photographer after quitting her career as a profiler and makes a living selling her photographs. The significance of her lifestyle change, however, is the importance of private security that she places on her life. Even though Sam believes it is her duty to hide from the outside world, she barely hesitates to return to the world of crime fighting when her old boss, Bailey Malone (Robert Davi), begs her to return and help out with an unsolvable case. After negotiating the conditions of her return, which involves moving into a fortress-like apartment inside a fire house, Sam relents and joins the investigation of the murders of wealthy single women in the Atlanta area. Much like Frank Black's belief in the power of his yellow house to bring happiness to his family, Sam believes that her apartment can protect her daughter and roommate while she rediscovers her gift for seeing images of the crime scene from the killer's perspective. The apartment has FBI agents working as firemen who watch it at all times, cameras placed inside her home that see every room, and FBI front companies strategically placed all over the neighborhood. This level of protection, however, fails to satisfy Sam's desire for complete isolation. Many episodes focus on Jack's potential penetration of her home and, eventually, his actual penetration

of her apartment in season two. Sam and her daughter spend many nights at her office instead of their highly secure apartment to avoid the dissatisfactions that Sam's job brings to their lives, and the problems of her job follow her into her romantic life as well. Despite the high level security that accompanies her, every time Sam attempts to enjoy her life she is punished, suggesting that, even though we believe that we deserve private enjoyment and tenaciously pursue it, enjoyment becomes harder and harder to find. Sam hides from the world because her husband has been murdered, but her isolation continues to cause problems rather than solving them. Throughout the first three seasons, Sam fails to keep her roommate from being kidnapped; she fails to keep a task force member's husband from being kidnapped and tortured; she fails to protect her boyfriend's life from the sinister Jack; she fails to keep other partners from all sorts of violent attacks; she fails to recognize that the task force has captured the wrong man when it thinks it has apprehended Jack; she fails to avoid being kidnapped by Jack, twice; and, most of all, she fails to keep the disturbing aspects of her job away from her daughter. *Profiler's* representation of Sam's life suggests that the subject of enjoyment cannot have a public life that allows you to have relationships with others. Instead, the constant search for enjoyment is always private, as depicted in *Profiler*, but it nevertheless fails to protect any of the characters and, in fact, brings about more violence and bloodshed for Sam and her family.

*Profiler's* insistence that an engagement with public life is detrimental to the all-important goal of private satisfaction is reinforced in many episodes. While chasing Jack-of-all-Trades makes up the bulk of the meta-story of *Profiler*, individual episodes often investigate different criminals who employ crime as a weapon against the failure of

public institutions to fulfill their duties of protecting the public. In other words, the many criminals examined by *Profiler* on a weekly basis advocate vigilantism as a means of correcting the failures of the public Law. Unlike the other crime shows, which employ delay tactics, discussed earlier in this chapter, *Profiler* does not defer introducing its weekly criminals or hide their thoughts. Instead, the private lives of criminals are introduced early in each episode, and their identities are rarely a mystery. The mystery of each episode depends upon an articulation of why each criminal does what he/she does, and the vigilante episodes portray, most effectively, the ways in which enjoyment opposes public life. In a season one episode entitled “Film at 11,” for example, a vigilante stalks, videotapes, and exacts punishment upon a criminal he believes the justice system failed to successfully prosecute. His tapes are constructed in two parts: part one shows local evening news coverage of the offender being released for lack of adequate evidence, and part two shows the vigilante’s fulfillment of real justice where the public Law failed, which he denigrates as another example of the failings of “bleeding heart liberalism.” The vigilante kills a rapist by castrating him, kills a drunk driver by setting him and his car on fire, and kills a drug dealer by forcing him to overdose on his own drugs. Another episode entitled “Crisis” focuses on the leader of a vigilante group, the Patriots For Peace, who advocate an end to nuclear proliferation, by threatening to bomb a room full of government dignitaries in order to get what they want. The government’s failure to disengage its nuclear arsenal, even though the Cold War has ended, infuriates the peace activists to the point of taking the law into their own hands. Both episodes suggest that the compromises of the public world no longer effectively protect private citizens and their right to enjoyment. *Profiler*’s representation of vigilantism as an

answer to the failure of the public world recognizes that the idea of a public world has fundamentally changed by the end of the twentieth century. McGowan argues that “[t]he idea of the public world, [as] a neutral territory free from private interests, has lost its viability because, swept up in the promises of the society of enjoyment, we no longer want to pay the price for entering this world” (*The End* 155). The vigilante criminals and the criminal profiler are both figures that represent an antidote to the failures of the public world. Both structures represented in *Profiler*, I contend, exhort audiences to see the battle between criminals and crime fighters as conflicts where neither should have to stand on either side of the “neutral territory” of the public world. *Profiler* effectively shrinks the “neutral territory” in between cop and criminal through its reliance upon the gifts of the criminal profiler. The representation of the rising occurrences of vigilantism, according to McGowan, demands that we understand that giving up our private enjoyment, even temporarily, has come to be seen as too high a price when we cannot be sure that the Other is willing to make a similar sacrifice (*The End* 156). While the vigilantes are properly punished at the end of each episode in *Profiler*, that does not return viewers to a belief in the often dissatisfying compromises of the public world. Conversely, *Profiler*’s reliance upon the inexplicable sixth sense of Sam to see images from the criminal’s perspective direct viewers to believe that crime detection in the society of enjoyment is best fought by those who can tap into the private experience of the criminal. Criminal profiling, I am suggesting, offers the opportunity to detect crime without compromises and without worrying about whether the criminal will sacrifice his/her enjoyment enough to be caught.

Sam's ability to see images from the killer's point-of-view allows her to successfully apprehend criminals without having to work through the compromises of the public world. Her private experience of violent crime allows her to identify suspects in many cases where the physical evidence is completely missing and traditional leads have gone cold. The pilot episode establishes her uncanny, almost magical, ability to infer the identity of the suspect after interacting with the crime scene. For example, after she agrees to join the task force and re-enter public life, Sam investigates a string of murders of wealthy single women who have been killed by their psychologist. Sam often sees visions of the victims, which unlike Frank Black, provides more context for the way they lived instead of just showing how they died. Her approach to the crime scene is unorthodox and often offends other cops. In what has become typical of representations of the profiler method, she demands to be left alone with the scene and does not employ any forensic evidence gathering equipment, which prompts one frustrated police detective to ask her whether she is a psychic. She responds by saying no she is not and explains that she tends to see in images, attempting to picture the event as it happens, which is like admitting that she (the subject) and the killer (the Other) enjoy murder in the exact same manner and that these two experiences are not separated by an intervening third party. *Profiler's* representation of subjectivity as a closed world of two takes further shape in the way that it exploits the image and its potential as a full and honest expression of the enjoyment of the Other.

Waters's gift for seeing images structurally replicates the concept of enjoyment as something that can be shared between the subject and the Other. Žižek argues that enjoyment always belongs to the Other and operates as a lure that sets the subject's desire

in motion (*Plague* 49). By representing enjoyment as something equally accessible to both the subject and the Other, *Profiler* reorganizes the way we understand enjoyment's grip on our desire by presenting enjoyment as something always-already knowable if we know the right way to look for it. The consistent use of images as bearers of obtainable enjoyment is central to understanding this key reversal of Žižek's description of enjoyment's impact on the mechanics of subjectivity (*Plague* 49). As described earlier, the image's ability to reveal all while avoiding lack is foundational to society of enjoyment. Rather than representing a materialized Nothingness, images connote a total increasing presence, an idea skillfully exploited by *Profiler* in order to show that "[t]oday, what counts as truth is what can be shown, not what can be argued" (McGowan, *The End* 64). Sam's gift for seeing images is the central component of the pilot episode entitled "Insight." As Sam goes through the house of the first victim, we are shown her profiling process and how it connects to the concept of enjoyment. Sam walks into the first victim's lavish dining room and lays crime scene photos on the table—one specific image of the victim's red high heels overturned under the table is specifically emphasized. Sam sits down against the wall and looks intently at the table, which is followed by a series of flashcuts from Sam's perspective, similar to *Millennium*, which shows viewers how those shoes come to be overturned. Whereas the original image of the shoes leave us questioning what they might possibly mean, the profiler's gift for seeing events as they happened forecloses the process of signification and provides full revelation of the events leading up to the shoes being overturned, prompting viewers to fully believe in Sam's skill for seeing from the Other's perspective. In an important sequence that underscores the importance of the image over the word, Sam explains to

the local Atlanta police the killer's motivation for murder, and her description is dismissed as being too complicated and a waste of time.

Waters: Actually, this looks more like jealousy or envy. Look at what he does—tape on the mouth, tape on breasts, cuts up all their hair. These are all aspects of female sexuality, the source of their lure, their power over men. He's jealous of that power, so he destroys it and takes it for his own.

Lead Atlanta detective John Grant (Julian McMahon) responds indignantly to her description of the killer's motive by suggesting that talking about the murderer's state-of-mind is waste of time when he could be doing something to arrest him.

Grant: I don't care why he does it. I just want to stop him. So can we move on?

The conflict between Waters and Grant highlights the fact that verbal interpretation in profiler entertainment is deemed a frustrating excess that obstructs the detective from doing what needs to be done to apprehend a suspect. In order to further clarify the split between Waters and Grant and convince viewers of the significance of images, the director of the pilot employs an homage to *The Silence of the Lambs* by having Grant and a SWAT team go after a false lead while the criminal profiler goes in another direction, leading her to the doorstep of the killer. While Grant and his team are portrayed as wasting time, the criminal profiler solves the case because she can see the killer's motive and uncover the killer's precise location. The success of the profiler's extrasensory gift for seeing images from the Other's perspective converts Grant by the end of the episode, and he, and others, never again question Sam's ability during *Profiler's* remaining episodes. In fact, the series continually exploits the image's perceived power for full



revelation through investigation sequences that show Sam doing little more than looking at a series of mugshots, stopping on one face, and exclaiming “that’s him!” The task force, then, responds to her insight by arresting the suspect she identifies, who always turns out to be guilty. Because the other members of the task force believe that Sam shares the enjoyment of the Other/killer, I argue that *Profiler* demonstrates how enjoyment has been reduced from something outside of the Symbolic that resists symbolization to something equally traded amongst subjects and Others without the third party occluding enjoyment from anyone.

The result of the belief in the equal access to enjoyment marks a shift in the ways we traditionally regard the enjoyment of the Other. *Profiler* assumes that enjoyment no longer resides in the shadows or as an expression of a marginalized person or group that has been portrayed as having excessive amount that always threatens to disrupt the stability of the Symbolic. Instead, *Profiler* depicts the right to enjoy as belonging to everyone, good or bad, and now operates as the *de facto* state of affairs. Not only does *Profiler* depict this through Sam’s gift of insight, but it also illustrates enjoyment’s ascent from the shadows and into the daylight through the meta-story of Jack-of-all-Trades. At the end of almost every episode during its first two seasons, the viewer is provided a peek into Jack’s life. These glimpses of Jack’s life are ambiguous in terms of point-of-view, and audiences are never sure whether they are seeing from Sam’s sixth sense point-of-view or from an objective point-of-view. These peeks into Jack’s life are examples of the ultimate lure of enjoyment that the profiler genre posits as the end goal of the profiling method. The show-ending glimpses employ distorted, fragmented, and blue tinted shots that always conceal Jack’s identity; his face remains hidden until season three. The

partial nature of the shots appear on-screen similarly to Sam's visions, and the implication is that we are seeing the enjoyment of the killer through her point-of-view. In other words, the profiler's academic knowledge combined with a special insight for sharing thoughts and visions with the killer provides an uncanny access to the full enjoyment of Jack. The lure of full or complete enjoyment in the Real represented by the episode-ending peeks into Jack's life, I argue, is a barrier rather than a gateway to the all-encompassing goal of an undisturbed and authentic enjoyment. Rather than showing how all of this access to enjoyment satisfies Sam's career and home life, *Profiler* demonstrates how the lure of full enjoyment creates more anxiety instead of less and takes subjects farther from a Real experience instead of closer. Because *Profiler* depicts criminal detection as going beyond technology, it effectively captures the subject of enjoyment as unduly attached to images that claim to fully reveal that which used to be missing, the key, ultimately to perfect crime fighting. The result of this attachment to the image, as depicted by both *Profiler* and *Millennium*, constantly fails to live up to the lure of its promise, resulting in failure of technology and the profiler's psychic gifts to deliver a neutral world free of violent crime.

## **Conclusion**

As the profiler cycle shifted from the cinema to prime-time television, the process of criminal profiling evolved into a quasi-psychic ability of the main character that identified solving crimes as going beyond technology. The post-high-tech detective, then, might be a signal for the end of the road for the cycle. However, the interest in

magical ways of solving crimes has continued to proliferate, especially on television.<sup>12</sup> The evolution of the FBI agent from the bureaucratic technocrat to isolated psychic visionary reflects the social changes in the manner in which criminal behavior has been traditionally depicted. The emergence of the special investigator as a post-high-tech supplement emphasizes that crime no longer resides outside the culture, waiting for the right opening within which to infect. The failure of Hoover's fantasy of total technological protection reorients crime to a problem inside the culture and inside of its citizens. *Millennium* and *Profiler* both capitalize on this failure, and, whether it is the crime scene photo or private exurban communities, the profiler era of FBI mass entertainment indicates a growing paranoia that arises from each show's dependence on a singular character with special visions as the final buttress against violent crime's assault on society.

---

<sup>12</sup> Recently *Medium* (NBC) and *Ghost Whisperer* (CBS) have eschewed any connection between the reality of criminal profiling and preferred to present criminal investigation from the perspective of avowedly psychic protagonists.

## CONCLUSION

### Legitimizing the Mindhunter

Popular entertainment featuring the FBI has changed significantly over the course of the twentieth century. From *G-Men* to *The Watcher*, films and television shows about the FBI have shifted from an exclusive focus on Hoover approved patriotism to a more complex view of criminal behavior. Consequently, the image of the FBI agent has changed as well. The two-fisted approach of Brick Davis in *G-Men* appears too simple in today's "war on crime." Criminals no longer look and act in the obvious ways they did during rise of the first FBI films. Today's criminal is often described in terms of how easily he blends in with normal society and his appearance is notable only for its unremarkable nature. The Brick Davis era of G-Man fought against criminals who made it a point of pride to publicly display their criminality: gang kingpins employing a series of lieutenants and low-level hoods in displays of muscle and graft. Indeed, the early-to-mid century FBI film viewed criminality as a disease, coming from some kind of outside source and infecting the innocence of people. The shift to the mindhunter era of FBI entertainment reorients this schema. As the popular image of the FBI changes over the course of the century, criminality goes from being a disease in traditional FBI films to a symptom of a decaying culture in profiler entertainment. Criminal behavior, by the end of the twentieth century, thus emerges as an interior problem of the American psyche, requiring a special investigator who can detect the symptom that others cannot. The

mindhunter image of the FBI agent focuses on *becoming* the criminal rather than simply fighting the criminal, and the notion of *becoming* manifests itself in a variety of ways over the course of the profiler cycle of mass entertainment.

To solve the problem of the criminal symptom, the profiler cycle transforms three key components of the popular image of the FBI. First, profiler films posit the idea that the mindhunters of the Bureau's Behavioral Sciences Unit have a special insight into crime scenes. In *Manhunter*, Will Graham identifies the killer's motive by obsessively watching home videos of the slain families until he realizes that he and the killer have watching the same tapes. Clarice Starling in *The Silence of the Lambs* learns to see the complete picture of criminal motive once she learns how the killer sees his victims. Indeed, Starling begins to see clearly only after going blind, killing her pursuer in the complete darkness of his underground lair. The mindhunter era, secondly, contributes to an erosion of power traditionally wielded by Symbolic institutions of authority. The mid-nineties era of profiler film consistently exposes the failure of old ways of police work and celebrates the new methods of eccentric detectives such as Helen Hudson, Alex Cross, Lincoln Rhyme, and Joel Campbell. The new breed of investigator works outside the traditional bureaucracy of law enforcement and employs methods that go beyond proper procedure. *Copycat*, *Kiss the Girls*, *The Bone Collector*, and *The Watcher* portray the legal framework of the country as too complicated (or too generous in some cases) for eliminating the serious threat posed by serial killers. Much like vigilantes, these profilers work outside these constraints in order to execute their prey before the weak justice system can interfere. Third, the profiler cycle undercuts the FBI's claim to technological superiority through a depiction of the quasi-psychic gifts of the mindhunter. Both

*Millennium* and *Profiler* portray profiling as the most comprehensive form criminal investigation, which devalues all other forms and leaves all law enforcement up to a special group of psychics. While each of these components of the profiler cycle suggests that criminal investigation has evolved, the overall result presents a different picture. The evolution of FBI entertainment, from Brick Davis to the mindhunter, suggests that crime prevention can only be handled by a select few, thus exposing the hopelessness of criminal containment.

Nonetheless, the criminal profiler cycle continues unabated into the twenty-first century. While the terrorist attacks of September 11, 2001 should have ushered in a new era of stories about the FBI and terrorism and sidelined the serial killer as the most evil of threats, stories about criminal profilers and serial killers have evolved into a stock form of crime entertainment in a way that has not happened to the Islamic terrorist.<sup>1</sup> The strange thing, however, is that instead of killing off the profiler/serial murderer, the genre exploded in the years following the terrorist attacks. In 2004, *Taking Lives* (D.J. Caruso) and *Suspect Zero* (E. Elias Merhige) were released, and in 2005 *Mindhunters* (Renny Harlin) and the television shows *Criminal Minds* (CBS) and *The Inside* (Fox) introduced new stories about profilers who track the most dangerous serial offenders in our culture. Robert Bianco, the television critic for *USA Today*, criticizes profiler entertainment in his review of the pilot episode of *Criminal Minds*:

There are some minds I don't want to penetrate, crimes I don't want to see  
[...]. You can choose for yourself what's most revolting about *Criminal*

---

<sup>1</sup> The Islamic terrorist is almost wholly the domain of Fox's *24*, which has featured agents of the fictitious Counter Terrorism Unit chasing and stopping Muslim radicals for three of its five seasons. Few shows have dared to depict terrorism in such stark terms for fear of stereotyping all Muslims as terrorists. Fox, however, does not feel compelled to adhere to this belief.

*Minds* [...] Perhaps it's the signature scene: a caged woman, duct tape on her eyes, crying, screaming, struggling as the killer clips her already bloody nails to stop her from scratching at her blindfold. Or perhaps, it's the plot itself, which plays like a how-to-guide for sexual predators [...] This is appropriate prime-time entertainment? And all this so CBS can launch another patently phony " profiler" procedural, one of those shows that turns investigative work into hocus-pocus, mind reading nonsense. Watch the cop lie in the bed and pretend to be the murderer! Yeah, that will work. (D3)

Bianco's negative review of the show captures something essential about the profiler cycle in general: fascination with profiler entertainment depends primarily on how much we want to see crime from the inside. His lament that *Criminal Minds* provides a "how-to-guide for sexual predators" is not a criticism to be dismissed as part of an out-of-touch puritanical world view on the part of the reviewer. Instead, his lament captures precisely the way in which profiler films and television shows orient themselves toward the Lacanian conception of enjoyment. Whereas Bianco would prefer that crime entertainment would disavow the inside view of crime in favor of focusing on the procedure of criminal investigation, the profiler cycle insists on saturating its *mise-en-scene* with those elements which typically go unseen by the public. Bianco would prefer, in other words, some distance between himself and the representation of murder.

The criminal profiler cycle, however, does not appease Bianco's desire for distance. In the previous chapters, I have argued that the films and television shows featuring the methods of criminal profiling seek to remove the barrier between the cop

and the criminal in order to persuade audiences that criminal behavior can be stopped if we know precisely how and why crimes like murder are committed. The removal of the barrier is depicted in many ways. First, directors working within the cycle have sought to reduce the distance between criminality and normal behavior by bringing together the subjective sight lines of the protagonist, antagonist, and viewer. Collapsing these three ways of seeing into one squares, on the one hand, with the profiling method's belief in seeing crime scenes from the criminal's perspective as a means of identifying the type of person who would commit such a crime, and, on the other, with a fantasy that "seeing it all" can eventually satisfy our desire for an end to violent crime. Second, the profiler cycle has fundamentally changed the ways in which authority is constructed in films about law enforcement. More precisely, the profiler cycle has legitimized the reign of the Superego and elevated its brand of justice from its traditional hidden, supplementary role to the legitimate Law to the primary option for executing criminals. Whereas the Superego typically operates as an unseen component of the Law—and while we know its methods are used but prefer not to admit it—the profiler cycle installs the Superego demand for completely satisfied justice as not just the last resort when other options have failed, but as the only good recourse available for complete security. Finally, the profiler cycle reduces distance between the cop and criminal through a demonstration of the modern technology's failure to account for all criminal behavior and perfect security. Similar to the Superego's elevation above the public Law, the profiler supplements the failures of the FBI's technological superiority, suggesting that all the fingerprints and DNA samples in the world are helpful but what is really needed is someone who can



think, act, and see exactly like a murderer in order to prevent crime before it happens.<sup>2</sup>

The Hollywood profiler prioritizes those spaces typically unseen in crime films and reality, bringing them to the surface of the screen in order to suggest that “hocus-pocus, mind reading nonsense” will lead to a complete answer for the Other’s desire.

In his review of the pilot episode of *Criminal Minds*, Bianco recognizes the same cultural shift Todd McGowan does. Both writers recognize that society has changed from being characterized by public sacrifice to being organized around private enjoyment. Bianco’s distaste for the new show identifies a crucial aspect of McGowan’s conception of the society of enjoyment, which is the relationship of the subject and the Other. More specifically, as Žižek argues, the Christian injunction to “love thy neighbor as thyself” has always been problematic for psychoanalysis because it suggests that the distance between the subject and its neighbor, in a kind of utopian projection, can be traversed, thus reducing the subject’s hostility, suspicion, and ignorance of other people (“Cyberspace” 121). The problem with the “love thy neighbor” injunction is that it fails to fully understand the crucial importance distance plays in the normal relations of subjects, objects, and reality. Slavoj Žižek explains

The proximity of the Other which makes a neighbor is that of *jouissance* [enjoyment]: when the presence of the Other becomes unbearable, suffocating, it means that we experience his or her mode of *jouissance* as too intrusive [...] When do I effectively encounter the Other “beyond the wall of language,” in the real of his or her being? Not when I am able to describe her, not even when I learn her values, dreams, etc., but only when

---

<sup>2</sup> Steven Spielberg’s *Minority Report* (2002) is an excellent example of what perfect profiling would look like. In this film, the Department of Pre-Crime uses the psychic abilities of “pre-cogs” who can see the future. Decoding the pre-cogs’ visions allows the police to intercept a crime before it happens.

I encounter the Other in her moment of *jouissance*: which I discern in her a tiny detail—a compulsive gesture, an excessive facial expression, a tic [...] This encounter with the real is always traumatic, there is something at least minimally obscene about it, [...] there is always a gap separating me from it. (“Cyberspace” 121)

The profiler cycle aggressively suggests that the “gap separating me from it” can be eliminated. The profiler cycle, moreover, contends that the gap between the subject and its neighbor is a fiction that needs to be exposed. The profiling method roughly translates the Christian injunction into “know your neighbor as you would know yourself” and contends that doing so can present a type of total knowledge of the Other’s enjoyment. Consequently, exposing the Other’s enjoyment to light of day should liberate it from those places deemed too subversive for public society. Consider, as an example, the earlier description of the unremarkable nature of serial murderers, the so-called “normal guys” who never drew attention to themselves and operated basically unnoticed within the fabric of daily life. Jeffrey Dahmer, Ted Bundy, John Wayne Gacy, Wayne Williams: the list could go on. The profiling injunction to “know your neighbor” is precisely aimed at rooting out the enjoyment of these “normal guys” in order to see criminal behavior before it happens. Profiling posits a world where criminals cannot hide behind the gap that separates the subject from the Other, which, ironically, allows private enjoyment to flood every crevice of reality, thus elevating anxiety rather than diminishing it.

The new profiler films and television shows of the twenty-first century continue to follow the same injunction as their predecessors, taking the belief that one can “know

your neighbor” a few steps farther than the films described in this dissertation. *Taking Lives* features a female profiler (Angelina Jolie) who falls in love, unbeknownst to her, with the serial killer she has been chasing. Upon discovering her misstep, the profiler changes tactics and lets the FBI use her as bait in order to catch serial killer (Ethan Hawke). The profiler executes the killer once he comes out of hiding in the same manner as previous profiler films, further confirming the value of extra-legal justice in the profiler cycle. In fact, executing of the serial killer through extra-legal means becomes a standard motif of the Hollywood portrayal of criminal profilers. Unlike the retreat of the FBI’s influence over the previous profiler films, the FBI plays a more pronounced role in twenty-first century profiler entertainment. *Suspect Zero* follows *Taking Lives* in order of release, and introduces a new concept to the genre. Benjamin O’Ryan (Ben Kingsley) uses the techniques of “remote viewing” taught to him by the FBI and the Defense Department during the Cold War to track down and kill serial killers. In other words, the quasi-psychic O’Ryan serially kills serial killers. FBI profiler Thomas Mackelway (Aaron Eckhart) is tasked with tracking O’Ryan, but his sympathy for O’Ryan’s vigilante brand of justice diminishes his desire to stop the murderous spree. *Suspect Zero* raises questions about the willingness of the public to sacrifice the Law in order to receive some potential security from stopping criminals before they strike. *Mindhunters* further equates the behavior of the profiler with the criminal. Focused primarily upon a training mission, which features seven profilers on a remote island, *Mindhunters* reveals that one of the trainees is actually a serial killer who has infiltrated the FBI and starts murdering agents one at a time. The film is decidedly aware of its predecessors and seems content to poke fun at the “hocus-pocus, mind reading nonsense” that Bianco finds so distasteful.

For example, the film features an early scene of profiler trainees sitting together in a bar playing a drinking game that hinges upon whether or not the players can accurately profile other bar customers and predict their behavior. Their predictions often miss wildly, underscoring the film's low regard for the Hollywood stereotype of the psychic profiler. That said, *Mindhunters* is crucial to the cycle because the film further reduces the distance between profiler and killer to such an extreme that it produces the belief that "everyone is a suspect" until proven otherwise. This most recent film in the profiler cycle demonstrates the ultimate end of the "know your neighbor" injunction, showing the irreducible gap that exists between the subject and the Other. Rather than producing some kind of total, satisfying knowledge of the way the criminal works, the gap that separates the killer and the profiler actually widens with the attempts to reduce it.

Criminal profiling at its core aims to produce a world where people can exist without the undue burden of violent crime. Indeed, criminal profiling intends to eradicate violent crime from our daily existence. The aspects of the cycle detailed in this dissertation—reduction of authority, seeing through the eyes of the Other, Superego justice, the failure of technology to ensure safety—point toward a changing reality for the popular image of law enforcement. The emergence and endurance of the profiler cycle depends on two things in order to fulfill profiling's desire to completely eradicate crime: first, the profiler operates using methods of criminal investigation that expose the failure of traditional law enforcement, and second, rather than being castigated for their methods, criminal profilers are endorsed by the same legal system that it opposes. The mix of opposition and acceptance precisely illustrates the state of the American popular image of law enforcement. In other words, profilers who oppose the very system within

which they work, while fully enjoying its sanction, contributes to the destruction of the very law that it seeks to uphold. The most recent television shows to feature profilers, *Criminal Minds* and *The Inside*, depict agents who use the techniques described in this dissertation under the sanction of the FBI. Both shows are set within the Bureau, implicitly suggesting that the extra-legal, quasi-psychic form of crime fighting has become, by the twenty-first century, the authorized version and not its hidden supplement. Whereas profiling emerged precisely at the limit where official investigations failed, it is no longer the Law's excessive approach to criminal investigation. Therefore, criminal profiling evolves, by the time of *Criminal Minds*, into being both excessive and sanctioned by the Symbolic Law. While criminal profiling has been treated in the early films in the cycle—*Manhunter*, *The Silence of the Lambs*, *Copycat*—as a marginal skill that belongs to a special group of eccentric agents who are willing to “live inside the monster,” the profiling method has become a legitimate aspect of the FBI and state/local law enforcement. The result of such a combination has the effect of ordering subjects to transgress authority and congratulating them for doing so. This dissertation suggests that the combination of commanded disobedience and approval from the culture may well form the core of the American subjective experience of the twenty-first century.

## WORKS CITED

- Bianco, Robert. "Something is criminal about gruesome 'Minds.'" *USA Today* 9 Sept. 2005: D3.
- Butler, Judith. *Bodies that Matter: On the Discursive Limits of Sex*. New York: Routledge, 1993.
- Butler, Judith, Ernesto Laclau, and Slavoj Žižek. *Contingency, Hegemony, Universality: Contemporary Dialogues on the Left*. New York: Verso, 2000.
- Cettl, Robert. *Serial Killer Cinema: An Analytical Filmography with an Introduction*. Jefferson, NC: McFarland & Co., 2003.
- Clarens, Carlos. *Crime Movies: An Illustrated History of the Gangster Genre from D.W. Griffith to Pulp Fiction*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1997.
- Clover, Carol. *Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*. London: BFI, 1992.
- Cooper, Courtney Ryley. *Ten Thousand Public Enemies*. New York: Blue Ribbon Books, 1935.
- Copjec, Joan. *Read My Desire: Lacan Against the Historicists*. Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1994.
- Cowie, Elizabeth. *Representing the Woman: Cinema and Psychoanalysis*. Minneapolis: U of Minnesota P, 1997.
- Douglas, John and Mark Olshaker. *The Anatomy of Motive*. New York: Pocket Books, 1999.

- . *Mindhunter: Inside the FBI's Elite Serial Crime Unit*. New York: Pocket Books, 1995.
- Dubois, Diane. "Seeing the Female Body Differently: Gender Issues in The Silence of the Lambs." *Journal of Gender Studies* 10.3 (2001): 297-310.
- Dyer, Richard. "Kill and Kill Again." *Sight and Sound* 1997 (7.9): 14-17.
- Evans, Dylan. *An Introductory Dictionary of Lacanian Psychoanalysis*. London: Routledge, 1996.
- Fink, Bruce. *The Lacanian Subject: Between Language and Jouissance*. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1995.
- Hirsch, Foster. *The Dark Side of the Screen*. New York: Da Capo Press, 1981.
- Hoover, J. Edgar. *Masters of Deceit*. New York: Holt, Rinehart, and Winston, 1958.
- Jenkins, Philip. *Using Murder: The Social Construction of Serial Homicide*. New York: Aldine De Gruyter, 1994.
- Kay, Sarah. *Žižek: A Critical Introduction*. Cambridge, UK: Polity Press, 2003.
- Krips, Henry. *Fetish: An Erotics of Culture*. Ithaca, NY: Cornell UP, 1999.
- Lacan, Jacques. *Ecrits: A Selection*. New York: W.W. Norton, 2004.
- . *Encore: On Feminine Sexuality, the Limits of Love and Knowledge, 1972-1973*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1998.
- . *The Four Fundamental Concepts of Psychoanalysis: The Seminar of Jacques Lacan Book XI*. New York: W.W. Norton, 1998.
- McCannell, Juliet Flower. "Between Two Fears." *Lacan and Contemporary Film*. Eds. Todd McGowan and Shelia Kunkle. New York: Other Press, 2004.

- McGowan, Todd. *The End of Dissatisfaction?: Jacques Lacan and the Emerging Society of Enjoyment*. Albany: SUNY UP, 2004.
- . "Looking for the Gaze: Lacanian Film Theory and its Vicissitudes." *Cinema Journal* Spring 2003 (42.3): 27-47.
- McGowan, Todd and Sheila Kunkle, eds. *Lacan and Contemporary Film*. New York: Other Press, 2004.
- Metz, Christian. *The Imaginary Signifier: Psychoanalysis and the Cinema*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1982.
- Miers, Earl Schenck. *Answers About the FBI*. New York: Wonder Books, 1965.
- Modleski, Tania. *The Women Who Knew too Much: Hitchcock and Feminist Theory*. New York: Routledge, 1989.
- Mulvey, Laura. *Visual and Other Pleasures*. Bloomington, IN: Indiana UP, 1989.
- Negra, Diane. "Coveting the Feminine: Victor Frankenstein, Norman Bates, and Buffalo Bill." *Literature/Film Quarterly* 24.2 (1996): 193-200.
- Phillips, Kendall R. "Redeeming the Visual: Aesthetic Questions in Michael Mann's *Manhunter*." *Literature/Film Quarterly* 31.1 (2003): 10-16.
- Porter, Bruce. "Mind Hunters." *Psychology Today* April 1983: 44-52.
- Powers, Richard Gid. *G-Men: Hoover's FBI in American Popular Culture*. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois UP, 1983.
- . "The FBI in American Popular Culture." *The FBI: A Comprehensive Reference Guide*. Ed. Athan G. Theoharis. Phoenix: The Oryx Press, 1999. 261-307.
- Ressler, Robert, Ann W. Burgess, and John E. Douglas. *Sexual Homicide: Patterns and Motives*. New York: Lexington Books, 1988.



- Ressler, Robert and Tom Shachtman. *I Have Lived in the Monster*. New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997.
- Salecl, Renata. *On Anxiety*. London: Routledge, 2004.
- Schopp, Andrew. "The Practice and Politics of 'Freeing the Look': Jonathan Demme's *The Silence of the Lambs*." *Camera Obscura* 18.2 (2003): 125-151.
- Scott, A.O. "Stalked by a Serial Killer, He Pursues Therapy." *The New York Times* 8 Sep 2000: E1, 10.
- Seltzer, Mark. *Serial Killers: Death and Life in America's Wound Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1998.
- Simpson, Philip L. "Copycat, Serial Murder, and the (De)Terministic Screen Narrative." *The Terministic Screen*. Ed. David Blakesly. Carbondale and Edwardsville: Southern Illinois UP, 2003.
- . *Psycho Paths: Tracking the Serial Killer Through Contemporary Film and Fiction*. Carbondale: Southern Illinois UP, 2000.
- Smith, Gavin. "Identity Check." *Film Comment* 27.1 (1991): 28-37.
- Tharp, Julie. "The Transvestite as Monster: Gender Horror in *The Silence of the Lambs* and *Psycho*." *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 19.3 (1991): 106-113.
- Tithecott, Richard. *Of Men and Monsters: Jeffrey Dahmer and the Construction of the Serial Killer*. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 1997.
- Turvey, Brent. *Criminal Profiling: An Introduction to Behavioral Evidence Analysis*. Sand Diego: Academic Press, 2002.
- The Weather Underground*. Dirs. Bill Siegel and Sam Green. New Video Group, 2004.

- Žižek, Slavoj. "Cyberspace, or the Unbearable Closure of Being." *Endless Night: Cinema and Psychoanalysis, Parallel Histories*. Berkeley: U of California P, 1999.
- . *Looking Awry: An Introduction to Jacques Lacan Through Popular Culture*. Cambridge, Mass.: MIT Press, 1991.
- . *The Metastases of Enjoyment: Six Essays on Woman and Causality*. New York: Verso, 1994.
- . *The Plague of Fantasies*. New York: Verso, 1997.
- . *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. New York: Verso, 1989.
- . *Welcome to the Desert of the Real*. New York: Verso, 2002.
- Žižek, Slavoj, ed. *Everything You Always Wanted to Know About Lacan But Were Afraid to Ask Hitchcock*. New York: Verso, 1992.

## VITA

Jason Robert Landrum

Candidate for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy

Dissertation: THE CRIME SCENE OF THE MIND: PROHIBITION, ENJOYMENT,  
AND THE CRIMINAL PROFILER IN FILM AND TELEVISION

Major Field: English/Screen Studies

Education: Received Bachelor of Arts degree in History from Texas A&M University in May, 1994; received Master of Arts in English from Texas Tech University in August, 1999. Completed the requirements for the Ph.D. with a major in English/Screen Studies at Oklahoma State University in May, 2007.

Experience: Teaching Associate, Oklahoma State University English Department, 2000-07. Lecturer, Texas Tech University Department of English, 1999-2000. Graduate Part-Time Instructor, Texas Tech University Department of English, 1997-99.

Professional Memberships: Society for Cinema and Media Studies, Modern Language Association, Popular Culture Association.

Name: Jason Robert Landrum

Date of Degree: May 2007

Institution: Oklahoma State University

Location: Stillwater, Oklahoma

Title of Study: THE CRIME SCENE OF THE MIND: PROHIBITION, ENJOYMENT,  
AND THE CRIMINAL PROFILER IN FILM AND TELEVISION

Pages in Study: 236

Candidate for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Major Field: English/Screen Studies

Scope and Method of Study: This dissertation traces the evolution of the FBI agent in American popular culture from the 1930s to the present day. Until the 1950s, the FBI agent's symbolic status as an elite moral crusader was transmitted through the figure of the G-Man, an action-detective hero featured in such films as *G-Men* (1935) and *The House on 92nd Street* (1945). In the 1970s, however, the death of J. Edgar Hoover and the revelation of the FBI's abuse of civil rights changed the image of the FBI agent, often shifting it from the hero to the villain. The fallen status of the FBI agent is redeemed by the emergence of the criminal profiler in the 1980s, and this dissertation shows that the criminal profiler—first seen in *Manhunter* (1986) and *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991)—combined the heroism of the G-Man with the disgraced agent of the 1970s to form an ambiguous character that reflected, on the one hand, the Bureau's attempt to recuperate its image, and, on the other hand, changing attitudes towards the symbolic authority of the FBI. This dissertation theorizes the appeal of the shift from the G-Man's moral clarity to the profiler's ambiguity.

Findings and Conclusions: The shifting image of the FBI depends on the difference between two portrayals of solving crime; whereas the G-Man solves crimes through a physically challenging quest, which leads to the satisfactory apprehension and punishment of the criminal, the profiler replaces the G-Man's quest with the injunction to *become* the criminal, authorizing a fantasy of complete criminal satisfaction, in which the audience is invited to enjoy. Working within the tradition of Jacques Lacan and neo-Lacanian theorists such as Todd McGowan, Slavoj Žižek, and Renata Salecl, this study contends that contemporary culture is in the process of transforming itself from a society based on prohibition to one based on private enjoyment. Ultimately, this dissertation concludes that the appeal of the criminal profiler is a reflection of society's inward turn towards private enjoyment and away from social and communal obligations.

ADVISER'S APPROVAL: Robert Mayer