

# Vampirism in NBC's Hannibal

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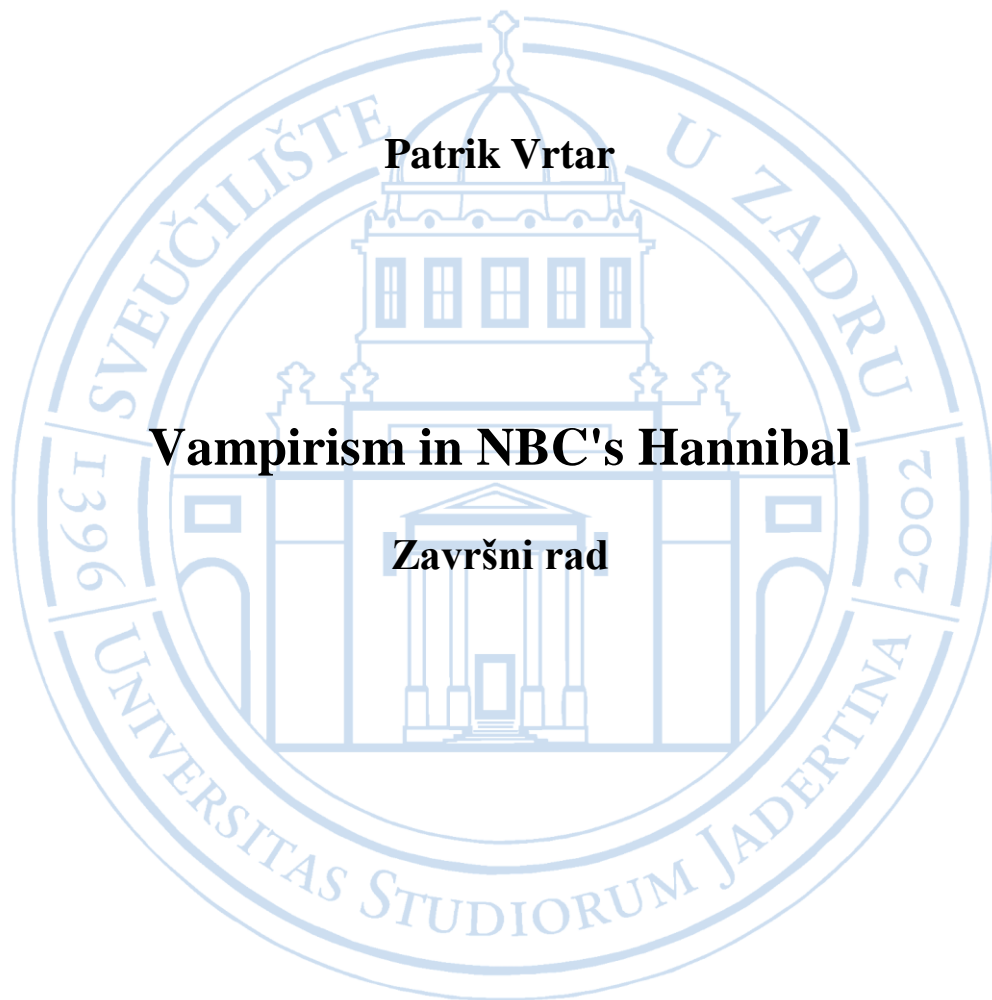
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Sveučilište u Zadru

Odjel za anglistiku

Preddiplomski studij engleskog jezika i književnosti (dvopredmetni)



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Zadar, 2022.



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## 1. Introduction

The character of Hannibal Lecter was first introduced in Thomas Harris' novel *Red Dragon* in 1981. After the success of *Red Dragon*, Harris wrote three more novels (*The Silence of the Lambs*, *Hannibal* and *Hannibal Rising*), creating a tetralogy featuring the character of Hannibal Lecter. Lecter, however, became embedded in today's pop culture through the 1991 film, *The Silence of the Lambs*, starring Anthony Hopkins as Hannibal Lecter. The film portrays Lecter's character as a captivating oxymoron, a savage and cannibalistic serial killer, who yet enjoys high cultural tastes and is exceptionally intelligent.

A similarly antithetic approach toward Lecter's character is also presented in the television series *Hannibal*, developed by Bryan Fuller and first broadcast on NBC in 2013. Although the series is inspired by Harris' tetralogy, it does not follow its plot completely but rather chooses events that fit its own narrative. The first season of the series focuses on Hannibal Lecter as Will Graham's psychiatrist. Will Graham is an FBI special agent, who possesses the ability of pure empathy, with the help of which he catches serial killers. However, this ability also deteriorates Will's psyche and instead of alleviating its effect on Will, Hannibal manipulates him. The second season follows Will's endeavor of exposing Hannibal Lecter as the sought-after serial killer the Chesapeake Ripper, which he tries to achieve by becoming Hannibal's friend. Finally, the third season follows Will embracing the psychopath within, which has been encouraged by Hannibal throughout all three seasons.

Because of its visual and textual approach, as well as its depiction of Lecter as a gothic villain, the series is often analyzed by critics and academics alike as a Gothic adaptation. "The show recrafts Thomas Harris' series of horror-thriller novels (1981–2006) into a wickedly clever study in Gothic aesthetics and psychological interiority that critics and television viewers see as equalling, and often surpassing, the aesthetic, narrative, and thematic scope of its source material." (Elliot 249) The Gothic, however, is a genre that is difficult to define, although,

according to Smith (2013), specific features, such as ruins, castles, monasteries, forms of monstrosity, and depictions of insanity and transgression, establish a particular aesthetic of the form. Also central to the Gothic, according to Kavka (2002), is the Gothic villain, a character who is both mesmerizing and frightening simultaneously and often comes in the form of the undead, such as a ghost, phantom, or a vampire.

Consequently, for the purposes of this paper, it will be most interesting to analyze the phenomenon of the vampire. The creation of the modern vampire is considered to be John Polidori's short work *The Vampyre*, published in 1819. Hallab (2009) considers Polidori's portrayal of the vampire as an elegant rebel against religious and societal conventions to be the model for the modern vampire. Hallab describes the vampire as "both human and demon, torn, like Byron's Manfred, between lofty aspirations undercut by degrading bestial needs" (77). The aim of this undergraduate thesis paper will thus be to analyze vampirism in the narrative and themes of NBC's *Hannibal* since, as mentioned, the series may be interpreted as a Gothic adaptation. Vampirism in the series will be investigated through the analysis of transformation, sexuality, religion, and dreams. The focal point of the investigation, however, is the main antagonist of the series, Hannibal Lecter, whose character will be thoroughly analyzed and compared to Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, as he meets most of the requirements of the gothic vampire villain.

## 2. Hannibal Lecter's portrayal

NBC's *Hannibal* is a character-driven show, primarily focusing on the relationship of Hannibal Lecter and Will Graham and their interaction with other characters in the series. Some of the most crucial moments of the series are interactions or conversations between Hannibal and Will. Since Hannibal is the series' main antagonist, his character is portrayed in detail. Hannibal's appearance, origin, and mannerisms are of crucial importance since they will serve as the most fundamental traits for determining Hannibal as a vampiric character.

### 2.1. Appearance

Picart and Greek (2002) describe Anthony Hopkins' elegant portrayal of Hannibal as blurring the lines between vampire and serial killer, as, despite his savagery, Hannibal Lecter remains an elegant and glamorous character, resembling Bram Stoker's portrayal of Dracula. Although Picart and Greek do not refer to NBC's *Hannibal*, the same characterization could be attributed to Mads Mikkelsen's representation of Hannibal Lecter. In almost all scenes, Hannibal is dressed in a classical manner, most often wearing a suit. Hence, he is illustrated to be of high or even aristocratic social standing. Moreover, because of the camera work and Mads Mikkelsen's facial features, Hannibal's first appearance in season one, episode one (*Aperitif 21:50*) is already established as a threatening and uncanny one. In this scene, his face is dimly lit, and due to the shadows, the eyes seem like empty eye sockets. This is further amplified by Mads Mikkelsen's high cheekbones, which, in some scenes, make Hannibal's face look like a skull or as being already dead. Such portrayals are prevalent throughout the series, especially when Hannibal is talking privately with Will Graham, such as in season two, episode two (*Sakizuke 42:00*). This has the effect of portraying Hannibal as an ambiguous figure, as he is charismatic and witty when interacting with other characters but displays his dark traits in private or when interacting with Will Graham. Furthermore, Picart and Greek also describe Hannibal's vampiric gaze: "The exchanges between Clarice and Lecter in the psychiatric ward



reveal the complex interpenetrations of the vampiric gaze. His first appearance was carefully staged: Clarice finds the doctor, awaiting her approach, standing in the middle of his well-lit, glassed-in cell, staring out at her. Lecter's monstrous gaze, like Dracula's, is uncontained by his cell, penetrates, threatens, and controls the scene." (12). A similar interaction occurred when Will visited Hannibal for the first time after his incarceration. (*...And the Woman Clothed With the Sun s03 e09 00:20 – 03:49*). Hannibal is standing in the middle of his almost empty cell, with his back turned towards Will. As soon as he turns, Hannibal's eyes appear dark and piercing, almost permeating through the glass that separates him from Will. Later in the episode, Will even remarks to Alana Bloom, feeling as if Hannibal was looking through the back of his skull (08:07).

## 2.2. Origin and setting

Botting (1996) elaborates how a crucial factor of Count Dracula's malevolence are not only his metaphysical abilities and demonic eyes but also his heritage. He argues that Dracula's history extends deep into the Gothic past, with the first stories of Dracula being told by warlike tribes of northern Europe. Episode three of season three (*Secondo*) deals with Hannibal's past. In the episode, it is revealed that Hannibal originally comes from an affluent family from Lithuania. In the episode, Hannibal mentions that home is a place he can never return to. When asked by Bedelia Du Maurier what exactly happened to him there, Hannibal gives only a vague and foreboding answer: "Nothing happened to me. I happened" (31:35). To find out more about Hannibal and understand him better, Will visits his family residence. What is then revealed is that the Lecter estate is an abandoned castle. The atmosphere surrounding the castle is very gothic – a full moon, mist, and a dense forest surrounding the estate. There is also a supernatural element since Will seems to be guided by fireflies to the castle's cemetery, where he finds an entrance to the castle's basement (17:55 - 18:50). There, he finds an incarcerated man who is allegedly responsible for murdering Hannibal's sister Mischa. "In the setting of Dracula, stock

features of the Gothic novel make a magnificent reappearance: the castle is mysterious and forbidding, its secret terrors and splendid isolation in a wild and mountainous region form as sublime a prison as any building in which a Gothic heroine was incarcerated.” (Botting 95). Thus, the Lecter estate is very similar to Dracula’s castle and helps illustrate Hannibal as an enigmatic character.

What is more, the manor in Maryland in which Hannibal lives also resembles a castle or a fort. In season one, episode ten (*Buffet Froid 4:17*), Hannibal’s manor is depicted from the outside, and, because of its gothic appearance and the camera having a lower angle, it conveys the same looming threat of a castle. In the same scene, Hannibal has a therapy session with Will. All parts of the office are in complete darkness, with only Will and Hannibal being dimly lit. In most scenes, not only Hannibal’s office but also the other rooms in the manor are depicted in a similar manner, which evokes an atmosphere of mystery and suspense. Furthermore, complementing this atmosphere are the ornamental decorations of the house. For example, in season two, episode six (*Futamono 34:37*), when Hannibal goes to open the door for Jack, a black samurai armor set can be seen displayed in front of a black background painted in golden foliage patterns.

#### 2.4. Abilities and personality

Although Hannibal does not exhibit supernatural traits of vampires such as Dracula’s polymorphism and telepathy, what is emphasized in the series, however, is his keen sense of smell. It has even been the catalyst for season two’s finale since Hannibal could smell Freddie Lounds’ perfume on Will and thus knew that he had been betrayed (*Mizumono s02 e13 13:15*). To a certain degree, it does even resemble a form of telepathy. In season three, episode five (*Contorno 22:50*), after talking to inspector Pazzi, Hannibal explained to Bedelia that he knew he was being suspected of the disappearances of the university’s scholars just by perceiving inspector Pazzi’s scent. This physical trait is further amplified by Hannibal’s sophisticated

cooking skills and profound knowledge in not only psychology but also medicine, philosophy, theology, history, and arts, which has the effect of depicting Hannibal as being highly intelligent and possessing polymathic knowledge only hardly attainable for an ordinary person.

Furthermore, his calm and courteous yet narcissistic demeanor, accompanied by his cannibalism, serves as an ideal synthesis of vampiric traits. Alex Jiao (2015) compares Hannibal with Dracula since Dracula sucks on the blood of the living to sustain himself, and Hannibal consumes his victim's flesh because of a psychological deformity. She argues that cannibalism may be the "real" version of the imaginary horror of vampirism since both involve the sinking of teeth into flesh and evoke images of savagery. In season one, episode eleven (*Roti 01:18*), while Hannibal prepares dinner for himself and Doctor Chilton, he states that he has no intention of understanding sheep, only eating them. Such remarks from Hannibal are common throughout the series, and while he does in this way make a subtle confession about consuming human flesh, they also emphasize his narcissism since he compares people to livestock. This indifference towards human life is also shown in season two, episode four (*Takiawase 34:07 - 38:02*). In this scene, Phyllis Crawford admits she took a high dose of morphine, which will result in her overdosing and prematurely ending her life by her own free will, instead of succumbing to her illness. After Phyllis becomes unconscious on Hannibal's chair, Hannibal remains composed and calm during the first few moments and then tosses a coin to decide whether he should resuscitate Phyllis or let her die. This scene showed Hannibal's complete indifference towards a person that not only trusted him but also viewed him as a friend. It is also interesting to note that he possesses an intense dislike for discourtesy, even having killed people and wanting to kill and eat Mason Verger for being discourteous: "Mason is discourteous. And discourtesy is unspeakably ugly to me." (*s02 e12 Tome-wan 01:49*). Such a character trait appears as an oxymoron since courtesy is a focal point for Hannibal, yet he engages in savage acts such as cannibalism and murder.

### 3. Transgression

Botting (1996) explains how transgression is a critical component of gothic fiction. He describes transgression as a power that does not only inflict horror, loss of sanity and order but also reasserts the values of society through ambivalent figures that disregard physical laws and challenge the natural understanding. "The centrality of usurpation, intrigue, betrayal and murder to Gothic plots appeared to celebrate criminal behaviour, violent executions of selfish ambition and voracious passion and licentious enactments of carnal desire." (Botting 4)

Furthermore, Punter (1996) defines the vampire as a perverse union of passion and death, through which the law of mortality and the Christian motif of sacrifice are transgressed. The vampire is a symbol of taboo and the infection that he spreads is dangerous because the vampire himself is the source of infection. "The Wanderer, the vampire, the seeker, all have desires which are socially insatiable; that is to say, their satiation would involve social disaster, as well as transgression of boundaries between the natural, the human and the divine. They are individualist disruptives - all of them aristocrats of one kind or another - who are not content with the restrictions placed on them by a settled and ordered society." (Punter 105)

This notion of transgression is a fundamental aspect of NBC's *Hannibal*. This paper will analyze transformation, sexuality, and religion, which will be considered the methods of the series' transgression and identification of Hannibal Lecter as a vampire character. Because of his charm and astounding intelligence, Hannibal manages to escape punishment for his crimes and is thus an individualist that disrupts the restrictions placed on him by society. Central to his character's vampirism is the transformation of victims, as well as close acquaintances, especially Will Graham, who by the end of the third season resembles Hannibal almost completely. Furthermore, the series also accentuates sexuality and religion, and these concepts will be discussed in relation to vampirism as well.

#### 3.1. Transformation

From the beginning of NBC's *Hannibal*, transformation is a central theme of the series. Already episode two of season one (*Amuse-Bouche*) is concerned with transformation. In the episode, Will Graham investigates a case where nine people have been buried alive in a forest and overgrown by mushrooms. After the killer is discovered to be a pharmacist named Eldon Stammets, he is chased after and shot by Will before being able to bury Abigail Hobbs in the forest. Stammets then explains that the mycelium is communicating with its victims and is also aware of its surroundings in a perceptive manner like humans (39:40). He is thus transforming his victims into a corrupted union of fungi and people. Similarly, almost all the cases in which Will is involved throughout the series deal with either the transformation of the perpetrator's victims or the transformation of the perpetrator himself. For example, in episode eight of season one (*Fromage*), Will investigates the murder of a musician who had his throat opened and a cello neck inserted into his mouth. It is later discovered that the murderer is a musician named Tobias Budge, who wanted to play his victims like a cello or a violin and thus tried transforming them into an instrument.

Furthermore, there is also a reoccurring theme of transformation into animals or beasts, especially in the case of Francis Dolarhyde, who is to be discussed later in the paper. For instance, season two, episode nine (*Shiizakana*), deals with a former patient of Doctor Lecter, Randall Tier, who seeks to become an animal by engineering a hydraulic exoskeleton with a bear's skull and claws so that he could maul his victims just like an animal. According to Saler and A. Ziegler (2005), such behaviors severely diverge from our ontological expectations and thus violate our cultural and experiential knowledge. "Thus, for instance, while Dracula's great strength exceeds what is usual for entities pertaining to the Person category, it is not an ontological violation, since we normally expect some persons to be stronger than others, whereas Dracula's transformation into a non-human animal clearly is a violation." (3) Consequently, Hannibal transgresses ontological expectations as well since he functions as a

facilitator of Randall Tier's transformation into a beast. Instead of having cured Randall, Hannibal endorsed Randall's transformation: "You are becoming Randall, this is your higher self" (37:40). After being manipulated by Hannibal, Randall attacks Will and is subsequently killed. While killing him, Will saw Hannibal's face instead of Randall's (*Naka-Choko s02 e10 02:15*). This does signify Will already fantasizing about killing Hannibal; it does also, however, signify the extent to which Hannibal had influenced Randall, him being the catalyst of Randall's beastly "becoming".

Moreover, Hannibal does also transform his victims in a literal sense into either morbidly fascinating works of art or theatrically prepared meals. Fuchs and Phillips (2018) describe Hannibal as a liminal character. According to them, Hannibal achieves liminality through ambiguous acts, such as consuming human flesh but enjoying it almost transcendently. This can be seen in season three, episode one (*Antipasto 07:00 – 09:22*), when Hannibal cooks and serves Doctor Gideon's leg enwrapped in clay to Doctor Gideon himself as his last meal. Hannibal is gallantly dressed, and the table is set lavishly. Hannibal even dehumanizes Gideon by saying it would only be cannibalism if they were equals (08:16), which further substantiates Hannibal's narcissism and his seeing people as cattle. The scene then ends with Hannibal acknowledging Doctor Gideon's remark about the dinner being a fairy tale: "Let it be a fairy tale, then. Once upon a time..." (09:20). The scene then immediately transitions to Hannibal dancing at an extravagant ball, illustrating Hannibal's fairy tale remark. According to Fuchs and Phillips (2018), liminality is only temporary, and social structure is again established after the liminal act. Hannibal, however, does not lose this liminality, as there is a multitude of scenes such as the one described from season three, episode one, causing Hannibal not only to transgress social and moral conventions but also normalize them or even display them in an alluring manner. In addition, Hannibal also transforms his victims into art. In season two, episode six (*Futamono*), after having murdered his victim, Hannibal straps him to a blooming

cherry tree, opens the torso up, and replaces the internal organs with colorful flowers. After an investigation, the FBI determined that the tree's roots were threaded through the body, so the flowers would not wither. Hannibal thus unified his victim's body with nature and depicted the gruesome act in an almost pseudo-mystical manner. According to Ewoldt (2019), food and art are crucial aspects of the show and a means of defying categorization. "The show and its title character take a cheerfully macabre view of the intersection of grisly, brutal murder and art. The overall theme of the show is becoming or being true to one's own nature, so Hannibal helps his victims reach whatever potential he believes they possess. With his murder victims, he transforms rude material into beautiful and artistic meals for himself and his guests, and he helps his patients unlock their own darker natures thus far repressed by society." (Ewoldt 241) Ewoldt thus argues that Hannibal uses food and art as a means of promoting "becoming" in his victims and himself as well.

The most crucial display of transformation in the series, however, is Hannibal Lecter's transformation of Will Graham throughout the whole series. Through manipulation, Hannibal is transforming Will into what he believes is Will's true repressed self – a sociopathic killer. This transformation already starts at the beginning of the series (*Amuse-Bouche* s01 e02 41:36) when Hannibal asks Will whether he feels bad because killing Garret Jacob Hobbs felt good. In this way, Hannibal fosters Will's transformation into a killer and ultimately into becoming more like Hannibal himself, which also aligns with the trope of a vampire transforming his victim into a vampire as well. Near the end of the first season (*Roti* s01 e11 13:58), during a therapy session with Hannibal, Will even desperately says: "I don't feel like myself. I feel like I have been gradually becoming different for a while. I just feel like somebody else." This perfectly summarizes the subtle yet effective manipulation that Will endured since becoming Hannibal's patient. In season two, Will's "becoming" is even more intense, and in episode two (*Sakizuke* 14:00), he even tells Lecter: "My inner voice sounds like you." This is made further

evident in episode five (*Mukozuke*) when Will hires someone to kill Hannibal, thus almost indirectly becoming responsible for Hannibal's murder and transforming even more into what Hannibal intends him to be. Eventually, in episode seven (*Yakimono 41:30*), Will tells Hannibal, in a poignant and almost accepting manner: "I've changed; you changed me." Because Hannibal does not transform Will through physical means but mental ones, mainly through manipulation, Hannibal may be deemed a psychic vampire. Beresford (2008) describes psychic vampires as vampires that prey on others through unconventional means, or feed of "pranic" energy, an energy that connects the body and mind. Beresford also suggests that a psychic link between the vampire and victim is needed, similar to how vampires cannot enter one's home unless invited. This psychic link is established between Hannibal and Will since Will is not only being transformed by Lecter but is also intrigued by his darkness and by the darkness that is forming inside of himself as well. This is made most apparent in season three, where Will's "becoming" is almost complete, Will even saying that he and Hannibal are conjoined (*Dolce e6 22:50*). The series ends with Will and Hannibal embracing each other and Will acknowledging his "becoming", saying that it is beautiful, then lunging them both off a cliffside, realizing he is incapable of resisting Hannibal's allure, as well as suppressing the self he has become (*The Wrath of the Lamb e13 40:12 – 41:05*).

### 3.2. Sexuality

Furthermore, it is also essential to analyze the series' approach toward sexuality since, as mentioned, transgression is also the performance of passion or carnal desire. In this context, the focal point of the series is the relationship between Will and Hannibal. Most recent papers published on this topic analyze Will and Hannibal's relationship as a homoerotic one. Logsdon (2017) explores a scene from season two, episode ten (*Naka-Choko 23:00 – 25:30*), where Hannibal is having sex with Alana Bloom and Will with Margot Verger. According to Logsdon, the juxtaposition of the scenes suggests a passion that the two men have for each other, further



supported by a frame where Hannibal and Will appear to be “sharing” Alana Bloom in a polyamorous manner. Such analyses are additionally bolstered by other scenes from the series. In season three, episode twelve (*The Number of the Beast is 666* 2:53 – 3:27), during a therapy session with Bedelia, Will asks whether Hannibal is in love with him, to which Bedelia replies: “Could he daily feel a stab of hunger for you and find nourishment at the very sight of you?”. This conversation seemingly eliminates any ambiguity about Hannibal and Will’s homoerotic relationship. It is thus important to mention such analyses but also challenging to question them since the series offers a plethora of information that ensures their validity. Although this homoerotic relationship may be regarded as a transgression as well, since it transgresses against the norms of heteronormativity, this paper, however, will argue that the focus of the sexuality between Hannibal and Will is “becoming”. Hyun-Jung (2006) elaborates how Le Fanu’s *Carmilla* is not a narrative about Carmilla’s homoerotic desire for Laura but about attaining a state of oneness. “Le Fanu’s “Carmilla” characterizes the drive toward identification not simply as an after-effect of erotic attachment but as the recovery of an original state of oneness and, by extension, as a yearning to achieve union between the self and its split-off parts.” (61). Will and Hannibal’s relationship may similarly be viewed as achieving an original state of oneness. As already exemplified with Abel Gideon, Hannibal is characterized by a high degree of vanity and considers most people not worthy of his acquaintanceship. However, since Will possesses the ability of pure empathy, Hannibal considers him his equal and desires to achieve a state of oneness. The series also displays this state of oneness effectively. For instance, when Will was visiting Hannibal during his incarceration. On the glass that separated them, Will and Hannibal’s faces and bodies seemed to be merging into one (*...And the Woman clothed in Sun s03 e10 38:06*). Ultimately, Will’s “becoming” may not only be regarded as the transformation into his true self but also a method of achieving, through increasing behavioral patterns mimicking those of Hannibal’s, the state of original oneness. Such a view does not

deny the homoerotically charged relationship between Hannibal and Will. Still, it does also not consider its carnal desire to be the focal point but a component of achieving the by Hyun-Jung described original state of oneness.

According to Botting (1996), Stoker's novel subordinates female sexuality to a masculine viewpoint in which women are regarded as objects and competed for by men. NBC's *Hannibal* treats feminine sexuality in a similar manner. Throughout season two of the series, Will accused Hannibal multiple times of being the Chesapeake Ripper. These suspicions were ridiculed every time by Alana Bloom, who not only trusted but also formed a sexual interest in Hannibal. Stevenson (1988) describes Dracula as a man of sexual conquest, taking other men's women and making them his own. The effect of this such a conquest can already be seen before the season's finale, when Alana recounts a dream about lying naked and darkness seeping into her, saying she feels poisoned (*Mizumono s02 e13 13:55 – 14:51*), which represents Hannibal taking advantage of her trust and ignorance. Moreover, before engaging in sexual relations with Hannibal, Alana had been interested in Will throughout season one. However, after Will's incarceration, which had been arranged by Hannibal, her interest shifted toward Hannibal. What is more, when referring to bisexuality in Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, Stevenson identifies the Count as the catalyst for sexual alterations in women. This can be observed in the series as well. Hannibal sleeps with Alana (*Futamono s02 e06*), so he would have an alibi for the kidnapping of Abel Gideon. At the end of the season, when Hannibal is revealed to be the Chesapeake Ripper and injured Jack Crawford, Alana arrives at Hannibal's house to aid Jack but is threatened to be killed by Hannibal (*Mizumono s02 e13 30:16*). Near the end of the episode, she is thrown out from a window (*32:09*), causing her to have a lasting injury. Hannibal thus exploited Alana sexually and violated her trust but also changed her body permanently. In the third season of the series, Alana engages in a sexual relationship with Margot Verger. Interestingly, in season two, Margot had sexual relations with

Will, who, due to being transformed by Hannibal, might also act as a catalyst for sexual alterations. Therefore, both women have been changed sexually after interacting with Hannibal and Will, Hannibal being the primary source of change in others.

Additionally, the series disrupts or destroys the nuclear family, which is most evident in the case of Abigail Hobbs and Francis Dolarhyde. After the death of Garret Jacob Hobbs, Will and Hannibal act as stepfathers for Abigail. Although Hannibal does seem to care for Abigail, his paternal role is a distorted one since he believes Abigail being capable of murder and encourages her murderous tendencies. “The paternal dynamic between Abigail and Hannibal is apparent throughout the series, but Hannibal speaks most explicitly to it in the first-season episode “Savoureaux” (1.13) when he tells Bedelia, “I never considered having a child, but after meeting Abigail, I understood the appeal, the opportunity to guide, and support, and in many ways direct a life.” Hannibal directs Abigail in how to commit and conceal murder.” (A. Rieger 109). The family that Will and Hannibal formed with Abigail may thus be considered an antithesis of the nuclear family, its violation of normativity even further reinforced by Will and Hannibal’s dubious homoromantic relationship. At the end of season two (*Mizumono s02 e13*), Hannibal cuts Abigail’s throat, thus destroying even this distorted form of a family. Correspondingly, an essential prerequisite of Dolarhyde’s “becoming” is his destruction of nuclear families, such as the killing of the Leeds household (*The Great Red Dragon s03 e08*). Lewerenz (2019) notes how Will’s love for his family and Dolarhyde’s love for Reba clashes with their pursuit of self-realization, which is achieved through murder. Nevertheless, both Dolarhyde and Will refuse the opportunity of a normative lifestyle.

### 3.3. Religion

Moreover, the series also approaches religious themes in a similarly transgressive manner as sexuality. The series embraces the dynamic of representing Hannibal as a Lucifer figure and a godlike deity simultaneously. In season two, episode two (*Sakizuke*), a killer sews dozens of

his victims' bodies together to form a human mural, resembling an eye when observed from above. When it is revealed that the bodies are in a silo, Hannibal finds and climbs to the top of it. When Hannibal sees the mural, an opera starts playing. The camera then focuses on Hannibal's eye, with the mural reflected in it and the light from the circular opening of the silo forming a halo around Hannibal's head (22:20 – 22:30). Later in the episode, Hannibal is shown sewing the killer in his own mural, stating that they are finishing his work together. He then subtly identifies himself as God: "God gave you purpose - Not only to create art, but to become it." After the killer asks Hannibal why he is helping him, Hannibal states: "Your eye will now see God reflected back. It will see you. If God is looking down at you, don't you want to be looking back at Him?" (35:34 – 36:07) Hannibal thus establishes himself as God, since he transformed the killer into art, and was also the one, who was looking down at the mural. Such portrayals of Hannibal are frequent throughout the series and accentuated by its dialogues and cinematography. In season one, episode two (*Amuse-Bouche*), for example, when Will expresses his guilt about killing Garret Jacob Hobbs, Hannibal reassures him by saying: "Killing must feel good to God too... he does it all the time. And are we not created in his image?" (41:50) Here, Hannibal appears to be approving his own actions by equating himself as God. The camera is also focused on Hannibal's face, which seems foreboding because of his dark and piercing eyes. Picart and Greek (2002) compare the gothic killer to a cruel primordial god, having complete control over his victim and being an object of dread. Hannibal would, in this view, not only be a cruel God but also distort the Christian concept of a benevolent creator since Hannibal's "creations" are the grotesque products of his violent actions.

However, Hannibal's position in the series is ambivalent since he could be viewed as a lucifer figure as well. In season three, episode two (*Primavera*), Will visits a church in Florence with Abigail. They start talking about God, and Will says that elegance is more important to God than people's suffering. Abigail then asks whether he is talking about God or Hannibal, to

which Will replies: “Hannibal's not God. Wouldn't have any fun being God. Defying God, that's his idea of a good time.” (15:45 – 16:19) The series thus compares Hannibal to the rebellious angel who fell from heaven for denying God. This parallel, however, is not only drawn through dialogues. When Hannibal is holding a presentation about Dante’s inferno, the image of Lucifer is shown on the presentation, and Hannibal’s face merges with that of Lucifer, with the inscription Lucifer in capital letters above Hannibal’s head. (*Antipasto s03 e01 32:20*) Such portrayals yield an interesting dynamic of Hannibal personifying a godlike deity and Lucifer figure simultaneously.

However, religious symbolism is most prevalent in the final episodes of season three. Vogel (2015) analyzes Will and Hannibal’s conflict with Francis Dolarhyde in the second half of season three as a form of religious struggle, adapting the book of Revelation. In Vogel’s view, the inspiration for Dolarhyde’s character is drawn from the book of Revelation since Dolarhyde is obsessed with William Blake’s paintings as well as the book of Revelation and seeks to become The Great Red Dragon. On the other hand, Vogel describes Will as a Christ figure because of his ability of pure empathy and him often being portrayed fishing in a river. According to Vogel, such a portrayal evokes images of baptism and is further emphasized by Will catching serial killers, thus being a catcher of men. The title of the last episode of the series (*The Wrath of the Lamb*) and Will and Hannibal killing Dolarhyde, Vogel argues, symbolizes the righteous punishment executed by Christ during the Apocalypse in the book of Revelation. In this context, Hannibal may represent Lucifer tempting Christ. The result of this temptation is ambiguous since Will ultimately embraces his dark side, which Hannibal is trying to evoke throughout the show, but also resists with the last whit of his conscience and throws them both off a cliff. Finally, the series transgresses against conventional Christian beliefs by depicting Hannibal as two antithetical entities simultaneously, affirmed by him seeing beauty in the world and humanity but being indifferent towards human life itself. The representation of Christian

symbolism is also ambiguous since, as exemplified by the last episode of season three, it is unclear whether good or evil triumphs and whether good is corrupted by evil, resists its influence, or embraces its usually repressed evil nature. Such ambivalence is a core element of the series' religious transgressiveness since religion usually distinctively separates good from evil. Adding to this is the series' malignant depiction of concepts usually related to benevolence, such as God, through Hannibal's character: "Nothing would thrill Hannibal more than to see this roof collapse mid-Mass, packed pews, choir singing... He would just love it. And he thinks God would love it, too." (*Primavera s03 e02 16:27 – 16:50*)

#### 4. Dreams

According to Punter (1996), vampires have a strong connection with dreams since both are a night phenomenon that disappear during the day and promise pleasures that cannot be acquired in reality. Dreams and visions are frequently depicted in the series, especially in the case of Will Graham. At the beginning of episode thirteen from season one (Savoureux), Will has a dream about hunting a black stag in a forest. As he gets close to the stag, it transforms into a black wendigo-like figure (00:45 – 01:53). This is the first time in the series that Will dreams of the wendigo, which later becomes a recurrent apparition in Will's visions and dreams. The wendigo is meant to represent not only Hannibal but also his intrusion into Will's mind. Guiley (2005) defines the wendigo as a dangerous and cannibalistic being, which either bites its victims or haunts their dream and transforms them into a wendigo as well. The victim then craves human flesh and manifests demonic behavior. Such a description is also accurate for Hannibal since he transforms Will throughout all three seasons of the series. During a dinner with Hannibal, Will has a vision of himself becoming the wendigo. A black stag is shown falling to the ground, after which a black figure with antlers emerges from its intestines, screaming and its face slowly altering and becoming that of Will's. The complete process of this transformation is observed by the wendigo figure (Ko No Mono s02 e11 00:30 – 01:05). Will's visions of the wendigo become more dreadful as the series progresses, which illustrates Will progressively resembling Hannibal.

However, the repeated occurrence of the wendigo in Will's dreams and vision may also be a signifier of colonization. According to Arata (1990), in *Dracula*, vampirism denotes a kind of colonization of the body since Dracula does not only change his victims' bodies but, through appropriation, also alters their identities. According to Nadkarni and Pande (2019), such an interpretation is also applicable in NBC's *Hannibal*, especially through the symbolism of the wendigo: "Hannibal's repeated evocation of the Wendigo figure therefore not only

functions within the show's contexts of Will and Hannibal's transgressions and Will's descent into madness but also situates Will's body as a site of colonization and resistance, culminating in the figure of what showrunner Bryan Fuller terms the "Willdigo." (152) Such a reading of Will's dreams would thus indicate his fear of identity loss, bolstered by the identity change Hannibal caused in other characters, such as the change of sexual orientation in Alana Bloom. Ultimately, the wendigo is the anthropomorphic representation of Hannibal's character traits, particularly his desire to cause change in others. Visions of the wendigo are most prominent in Will Graham since Hannibal's manipulations are most purposefully directed towards him.



## 5. Conclusion

Ultimately, this paper's analysis of the series may determine NBC's *Hannibal* to be a work of contemporary vampire fiction, which, according to Chromik (2012), is a subgenre of the Gothic that blends aspects of the Gothic with other genres such as fantasy, horror, or science fiction. Although vampires today, as Beresford (2008) put it, are mostly viewed as a household product, and used for mass marketing purposes, such as cereals (Count Chokula), NBC's *Hannibal*, however, as has been argued throughout the paper, illustrates vampirism in a manner similar to gothic narratives. The series' unique visual and textual approach and its transgressive approach to themes of sexuality, religion, and transformation facilitate the series' analysis as a Gothic adaptation. However, the most crucial aspect of such a reading is the character of Hannibal Lecter, who, in an elegant and glorious but also savage manner, rebels against societal norms while simultaneously relishing culture and art yet remaining indifferent towards the value of human life.

It is also important to acknowledge that an analysis of the series in relation to vampirism is only one of the possible interpretations by virtue of the series' complex themes, detailed character portrayals, and disturbing yet captivating cinematography.

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## 7. Vampirism in NBC's *Hannibal*: Summary and Key Words

The main goal of this paper is to provide an analysis of vampirism in the themes, narrative, and characters of NBC's *Hannibal*. However, the paper focuses mostly on the vampiric traits of the main antagonist of the series, Hannibal Lecter. The paper discusses Hannibal Lecter's portrayal and equates his appearance, heritage, and personality with that of the gothic vampire villain. Furthermore, transgression is argued to be one of the most critical aspects of not only the gothic vampire villain, but also of the gothic genre and is explored in the series through themes of transformation, sexuality, and religion. Since dreams are a recurrent phenomenon in the series, the paper explains dreams as a kind of colonization of the body, similar to that of Dracula. Consequently, because of the mentioned analyses, the paper suggests NBC's *Hannibal* to be a contemporary work of vampire fiction.

Key words: NBC's *Hannibal*, Hannibal Lecter, vampirism, gothic genre, transgression, sexuality, transformation

## 8. Vampirizam u NBC-ovom Hannibalu

Glavni cilj ovoga rada je analizirati vampirizam u tematici, radnji i likovima NBC-ovog *Hannibala*. Međutim, rad je najviše usredotočen na vampirske osobine glavnog antagonista serije, Hannibala Lectera. Rad analizira prikaz Hannibala Lectera i poistovjećuje njegov izgled, podrijetlo i osobnost s gotičkim vampir antagonistom. Nadalje, transgresija je objašnjena kao jedan od ključnih aspekata ne samo gotičkog vampir antagonista, nego i čitavog gotičkog žanra te je u seriji prikazana kroz tematiku preobrazbe, seksualnosti i religije. S obzirom da su snovi učestali fenomen u seriji, rad ih objašnjava kao vrstu kolonizacije tijela, nalik Drakulinoj. Zbog spomenutih analiza, rad sugerira da je NBC-ov *Hannibal* suvremeno djelo vampirske fikcije.

Ključne riječi: NBC-ov *Hannibal*, Hannibal Lecter, vampirizam, gotički žanr, transgresija, seksualnost, preobrazba