

From Girlhood to Cannibalism: Feminine Abjection and the Monstrous Coming of Age

By

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*Ginger Snaps* (John Fawcett, Canada, 2000), *Jennifer's Body* (Karyn Kusama, USA, 2009), *Raw* (Julia Ducournau, France, 2016), and *Bones and All* (Luca Guadagnino, USA, 2022) represent key moments in the 21st century horror film cycle focusing on teenaged cannibalism. *Ginger Snaps* and *Jennifer's Body* stand out as early entries in this cycle due to their following among young women and queer audiences. The more recent films *Raw* and *Bones and All* have further elaborated on the trope of the teenage cannibal to offer queer framings of the feminine adolescent perspective, in which cannibalism becomes defined in relation to the films' teenaged protagonists' journey of self-exploration, transition into womanhood, and survival as they live within the fringes of society or states of social and physical otherness. The films distinctly interrogate the female's body abject status by exploring the cannibal's investments in maternal, sororal, and queer female relationalities, in many cases including those with the animal world.

I argue that the teenaged cannibal in these films update the monstrous feminine archetype to express anxieties surrounding female sexual agency and gender expression in a highly reflexive fashion. This self-reflexivity is evident in *Ginger Snaps* and *Jennifer's Body* recurring references of the Wolf Man and the "final girl", respectively. As I discuss, the cannibals in both films demonstrate how these tropes have historically invited subversive forms of spectatorship that do not conform to the sex-gender binary of active/male and passive/female. Significantly, they further illustrate how consumption itself becomes figured as abjectly feminine, as the cannibal protagonists' unruly appetites in both films directly address gender and sexual inequalities as well as explore bodily permeability as a mode of queer intersubjectivity. While *Ginger Snaps* and *Jennifer's Body* portrayal of the cannibal offers a critical examination of the representational histories of gender and sexuality in on-screen horror tropes, the portrayals of the cannibal in *Raw* and *Bones and All* bring light to repressed histories of familial abuse and

questions of inheritance and futurity. The abject status of the cannibal in these films directly points to patriarchal institutions—that of the nuclear family and scientific and medical fields in particular—that inhibit sexual and gender expression and establish hierarchy between human and animal. The cannibalist protagonists' appetites in these films serve as a refusal of these institutional constraints, and the monstrous acts of consumption in the films channel distinct forms of intimacy and kinship rooted in queer female friendships, sisterhood, and human-animal partnerships that radically traverse bodily and social boundaries.

Barabara Creed's essay, "Horror and the Monstrous Feminine: An Imaginary Abjection" investigates the concept of the monstrous feminine within the horror genre and its construction as a symptom of a patriarchal and phallogentric ideology within society. Throughout her essay, Creed highlights the concepts central to the construction of the abject, which she defines as "that which does not 'respect borders, positions, rules' ...that which 'disturbs identity, system, order'" (45). In its physical and symbolic representation, the abject has its roots within ancient religious and historical notions of moral and sexual abnormalities which informs classifications of non-humaness such as sexual immorality, perversion, the corpse, human sacrifice, death, incest, and the feminine body itself. These notions of the horrific are essential in the horror genre as images of abjection are manufactured and designed to be confronted by the audience through this deliberate emphasis on the fragility of symbolic order manifested in the mutilation or harm to the human or monstrous body. However, horror film's playful construction of the abject as seductive and fascinating creates a perverse pleasure within this visual confrontation that raises questions surrounding how the relationship between the cinematic experience and spectatorship can inform notions surrounding social constructs. Building off of Creed's assessment of horror films' encoded phallogentric ideology, Carol J. Clover's essay, "*Her Body, Himself; From Men, Women,*

*and Chainsaws*" inspects the relationship between cinematic identification and the unstable categories of gender the audience occupies through this oscillation between oppressor and victim, active and passive perspectives within horror films, specifically the classic slasher films of the 80s. Although slasher films present a direct combative relationship between males and females, Clover argues that the presence of the female victim/hero known as the "final girl" and the monstrous "other" challenge and transcend conventional categories of gender and the cinematic apparatus through this fluid polarity of feminine and masculine poles. This cross gender identification combined with voyeuristic visual language that primarily focuses on the feminine body permits the audience to explore taboo subjects in the relative safety of vicariousness, which engages in the works of Linda Williams. Throughout Linda Williams's essay, "Film Bodies: Gender, Genre, and Excess", expands on this discussion centering audience spectatorship within the classified "body genres", horror, pornography, and melodrama, and how they engage in cultural problem solving through the construction of fantasy and ecstatic excess surrounding the feminine body. These ecstatic excesses, sexual pleasure, fear, terror, and overpowering sadness conjure a symbiotic relationship between the subject producing such reaction and the spectator's mimicry of the sensations they are witnessing on-screen as the success of these genres hinges on this relationship. Through *Ginger Snaps*, *Jennifer's Body*, *Raw*, and *Bones and All*, centering on the collapse of bodily structures through excess and consumption, engages with this construction of fantasy through elevated and grotesque imagery to present a different and transformative pleasure in the taboo as a form of cultural problem-solving.

### Section 1: **Ginger Snaps - The Monstrous Menstruation**

Two death obsessed sisters Ginger (Katharine Isabelle) and her sister Brigitte (Emily Perkins), are outcasts in their small mindless suburban town. After getting her first period, Ginger is viciously attacked in the woods by a werewolf. Although surviving the encounter, Ginger begins to transform which coincides with her transition into womanhood, causing tragic consequences that cause Brigitte to take matters into her own hands and save her sister and herself. *Ginger Snaps* (Dir. John Fawcett, CAN, 2000), written by Karen Walton, evokes the traditionally masculine cinematic iterations of the werewolf that couple puberty and monstrosity to explore the loss of female adolescents but elevates this in its embrace of 'Final Girl' dynamics. Through the adoption of the gothic suburban landscape, *Ginger Snaps* utilizes elements of corporeal excess and the sister's incestuous homoeroticism to manifest the breakdown of bodily boundaries and rejection of nuclear family/spheres. Through the films satirical merging of monstrosity and menstruation which enacts a transgressive spin of woman's connection to nature, Fawcett and Walton examine the social constructions surrounding biological alterations of menstruation and burgeoning restrictions heteronormative femininity places on female adolescent sexuality and gender expression.

For the Fitzgerald sisters, the dead-end, fictional Canadian suburban town of Bailey Downs is the epicenter for the horrors of heteronormative sexuality. Surrounded by "mindless breeders" like their classmate and relentless bully, Trina Sinclair (Danielle Hampton), the sisters' repugnance towards womanhood arises within their desired outsider status, as they refer to their school as a "total hormonal toilet," and combined resistance concerning traditionally feminine behavioral and social norms. The sisters' obsession with morbidity acts as a visual expression of this daunting transition into womanhood, as their photography project consists of bloody

enactments of suicides and tragic deaths. The death project acts as a declaration of the sisters' desire to reject blood's imposition on them. Ginger and Bridgette's cynicism towards their soon-to-be transition into womanhood manifests in their willful delayed menstruation. However, this becomes disrupted by the sudden development of Ginger's period during their exploration of the lycanthrope that is not only disturbing their small suburban town but sisterly bond as well. In a scene that is located (26:31 - 29:16), Fawcett employs expressive shot composition to signal the slow biological and social divide that is arising between the sisters. The camera slowly pans to Bridget walking towards her sister's bathroom stall in the white and sterile-looking girls' restroom. Fawcett subtly uses composition to convey the festering disconnect between Bridgette and Ginger, as her timid frame elongates as she heads toward the camera. Ginger remains hidden from Bridgette and the audience as the once full eye-level shot cuts to a low-angled medium shot. As Bridgette expresses her concern for her sister, she states, "Something's wrong, like more than you just being female." Bridgette gets no response from her sister, which prompts her to barge into the unlocked stall. The camera cuts to an overhead medium close-up while Ginger's back remains towards the camera, then cuts to a shot of Bridgette's disturbed expression as she inspects her sister's shoulder off-frame. The camera tilts down and cuts to a close-up of Ginger's shoulder to reveal the coarse white and gray hair growing from the claw mark wound. The camera oscillates between low-angled, medium close-ups of a distressed Ginger and a visibly disturbed Bridgette as she tries to connect the dots between Ginger's new bodily transformations and being attacked on the full moon. The use of low angles as Ginger's body dominates the frame reflects this increased sense of entrapment and fear of the bodily threat. Ginger dismisses Bridgette's allusions to her transforming into a werewolf and becomes increasingly angry at the nightmarish scenario. Fawcett merges the anxieties surrounding shifting bodily functions with

puberty as Ginger suddenly starts menstruating again, spurring her to question if she is dying. The camera alternates between close-ups of the thick and vibrant red blood on the tile and a medium close-up of the sister's distressed faces as the camera tilts.

The spectacle of Ginger's monstrous transformation in this scene is implicated with her horrified response to menstruating. Becoming-woman is coded as becoming-monstrous, and the gruesome quality of Ginger's metamorphosis is underscored by the abjection of menstruation. As Barbara Creed argues, unlike excrement and bodily states of decay and disease, which "stand for the danger to identity that comes from without: the ego threatened by the non-ego, society threatened by its outside, life by death. Menstrual blood, on the contrary, stands for the danger issuing from within identity (social or sexual); it threatens the relationship between the sexes within a social aggregate and, through internalization, the identity of each sex in the face of sexual difference" (Creed 50). In Ginger's case, both aspects of abjection—bodily disease (via the monster's bite) and menstruation—are written on her body, creating a peculiar moment in which threats to gender and sexual identity from "without" and "within" become manifested. Unlike conventional horror narratives that frame the monstrous as abjectly feminine by recourse to the male gaze, this scene utilizes Brigitte's perspective to explore the possibilities of bodily permeability as a mode of queer intersubjectivity. Through the channels of female intimacy, the film amplifies this through the recurring symbol of the sisters' partnership, their "Out by sixteen" blood oath/death pact. Presented as an affirmation of their desire to escape the restrictive social constructs of femininity and heteronormative sexuality, the sister's mantra, "Out by sixteen or dead on the scene, but together forever. United against life as we know it," is an extension of this willingness to break down their identities to remain unified, even after death. However, with the introduction of Ginger's lycanthropy, this desire to be "out," coupled with the seriousness of her

bond with Bridgette, presents a layered encoding of a non-phallic sexuality. The simultaneous emergence of Ginger as a werewolf while entering womanhood enacts a humorous parallel between the biological metamorphosis of puberty and the liminality of the feminine adolescent body to invest in the breakdown between human and animal, creating a new connection to nature.

Immediately following the bathroom scene described above, we cut to Bridgett and Ginger are shown seated together at a presentation. Medium shots of an energetic nurse describing the symptoms of menstruation as she points to medical diagrams behind her are juxtaposed with close-ups of Ginger's disgusted face. During this scene, the film establishes subtle division between the sisters, establishing Ginger's connection to nature by positioning her in front of the blue-colored office door where a frayed plant resides to her left. The upright Bridget is positioned against the white wall beside a blossoming flower. As the nurse continues to thoroughly describe the texture and color of blood during this period, the girls are shown in close-up becoming more visibly uncomfortable. This discomfort signals how the girls are confronting the transition to womanhood/monster hood, with Bridgette asking Ginger about her bizarre hair growth and pain. The camera cuts to a medium shot as Ginger gets up to leave and grabs Bridgette, prompting the nurse to abruptly hand them condoms and state, "You'll have to protect against both pregnancy and STDs." The nurse is met with a blank stare from both sisters, foreshadowing the sisters' eventual bloody union that ultimately defies this attempt to enforce bodily boundaries via prophylactics.

The film dramatically elaborates on the horror trope of the monstrous "power and potency of a non-phallic sexuality" (Carol Clover)—one that is typically viewed as maternal—by centering discomfiting closeness of Ginger and Bridgett's relationship as sisters. This closeness



is explored in bodily terms, as well as in terms of Bridgett's engagements in Ginger's growing monstrosity as an accomplice. Bridget's helpfulness within the violent encounters is a devotional act to their partnership and reaffirms their desire to remain bonded. However, this bond becomes distressed as Bridget realizes the instability Ginger's wolfism presents. In one key scene, a distressed Bridgett struggles to manage her complicity in Ginger's violence after an attack in Mr. Wayne's (Peter Keleghan) office. Following the attack Bridgette peeks out of the office, and we see the array of Halloween decorations mixed with various missing person posters plastered with Trina's face. Fawcett cuts back to the close-up of Bridgette as she demands her to lock the door while she gets supplies to dispose of the blood and corpse of their counselor. The camera pans down to a bloody and partly transformed Ginger as she sits on the floor. As Bridgette closes the door, the camera cuts to a low-angled medium shot from Ginger's perspective, the audience becoming the creature that needs to be locked in. The camera briefly cuts to a static medium shot as Ginger licks her bloody fingers in glee. While Bridgette wanders the hallways and searches for cleaning supplies, Fawcett intercuts with multiple medium static and tracking shots as Bridgette and the Janitor (Pak-Kwong Ho) slowly make their way to the office. Fawcett alternates between an over-the-shoulder medium tracking shot of the janitor as he grabs his keys to open the office door and a slow push in a medium shot of Ginger as she hears the keys jingle. The camera cuts to a close-up of the doorknob as the janitor unlocks and attempts to enter the door repeatedly and almost playfully shuts. Suddenly, the door opens slightly ajar, and the camera slowly pushes inward before cutting to a medium-tracking shot of Bridgette walking with the cleaning car. The camera slowly pushes in and lingers on her face as she stares offscreen in shock. Fawcett quickly cuts to a medium shot as the janitor crawls on the floor while the audience maintains his eye level as he pants while gripping his bleeding neck. The camera

slowly pushes toward his agonized face while Ginger exits the office, her legs only visible in the background. The flickering fluorescent lights draw out Ginger's monstrous features as the medium turns to a close-up as she walks towards the camera.

The handheld camera cuts to a close-up of Bridgette's fearful face in high key lighting as she inches towards her sister in disbelief before briefly cutting back to a close-up of the janitor as he gasps for air and winces in pain while Ginger creeps up behind him. Suddenly, Ginger grabs the janitor and manipulates his limbs like a puppet while mocking Bridget, making inappropriate and sexual remarks towards her sister implying that the janitor is a pedophile. While Bridget, immobilized by fear, pleads with her sister to stop, the camera alternates between handheld medium and close-ups of Ginger's disturbing and fang filled grin as she throws the janitor repeatedly into the lockers. As the altercation becomes more violent, Fawcett emphasizes the disturbing nature of this interaction as the camera shifts to a Dutch angle displaying this increased loss of humanity and empathy as the janitor's tortured expression center frame while Bridget asserts his innocence. However, Ginger disregards Bridgette's pleas for rationale as she smashes the janitor's head into a glass cabinet which kills him on impact. The camera cuts to a low-angled handheld close-up of his body as it falls to the ground. His corpse sits to the left of the frame as Ginger slowly slides down the wall, staring amazed yet ravished, while the camera briefly cuts back to a close-up of Bridget clutching her head in shock. Fawcett highlights this embrace of depravity as he cuts to a close-up of Ginger as she sits in the center of the frame. The shot showcases her monstrous features as her blood-covered talons tremble in delight. Her heterochromatic eyes stare intently at the corpse to the left of the frame as she slowly inches towards it, smelling and touching the janitor's claw marks on his neck. While Ginger is ready to enact her urges, she catches herself as the camera briefly cuts to a close-up of Bridget

hyperventilating and then back to Ginger as she provides an insincere reason for the killing. Suddenly, the janitor starts convulsing, to which Bridgette explains he is infected. Ginger's expression changes to fear as Fawcett cuts to a close-up of Bridgette as she pleads with her sister to get him help. However, her words go unheard as Ginger instantly kills him by plunging her claws into his heart.

Fawcett expresses how this transgression has placed a stark divide and loss of stability between the sisters through his use of the Dutch angle on Bridget to reflect a heightened loss of reality and low-angled tracking close-ups of Ginger to emphasize her untamed and animalistic behavior. As Bridget calls out Ginger's bloodlust, Fawcett maintains the hand-held close-up of Ginger as she describes the sensation of killing as one akin to sexual self-pleasure as she walks towards her sister. As Ginger describes herself as a force of nature, the audience's proximity to Ginger exercises this uncanny effect as the low-key lighting surrounding her partially monstrous face affirms her sentiments of feeling a loss of connection to her human and familial instincts. Fawcett playfully extends the conversation to the audience as the camera settles over Bridget's shoulder as Ginger threateningly whispers in her ear stating, "You know, we're almost not even related anymore".

Fawcett continues this extension of audience identification as Ginger suddenly throws her sister to the floor and crawls on top of her as the camera cuts to a low-angled medium shot strategically placed behind Bridget's head. Bridget struggles to crawl away from her sister while she tries to convince her to "Swap some juice and be our own pack", in an attempt to establish their previous status quo. Fawcett alternates between handheld close-ups in front and behind Bridgette enacting a predator-and-prey visualization as Bridgette rejects her sister's demands, preferring to be dead than become the creature she is. Bridgette's rejection of their death pact and

desire to remain alike strikes a nerve in Ginger, as she refuses to return to their lack of social status and power. As she becomes more aggravated, the camera cuts to an overhead medium shot as Ginger kicks her sister and abandons her. The camera lingers on a hunched-up Bridget as she winces in pain.

Ginger's invitation for Bridget to "Swap some juice and be our own pack" recalls an earlier turning point in Ginger's transformation, in which her sexual appetites are more explicitly linked to her transgressive desire to "swap juice" and other bodily fluids. The camera slowly pushes towards a parked car on a desolate street, the medium shot capturing Ginger and Jason (Jesse Moss) as they make out. The camera cuts to the inside of the vehicle with a medium close-up of the teenagers sitting in the center frame. As Jason's slightly turned back faces the camera, his head is repeatedly pushed to the edges of the frame as Ginger continues to kiss him, becoming more aggressive as they continue to kiss. The camera cuts to a medium close-up behind Ginger's shoulder as Jason pushes Ginger off, trying to persuade her to slow down to defuse her forceful advances. However, this proves unsuccessful as Ginger offers an apathetic excuse explaining she can't control herself due to how tasty she finds him. As the encounter continues, Ginger's disregard for Jason's frustration and attempts to take the dominant role becomes more apparent when she rejects and inverses his request to relax and allow him to take the lead.

Ginger's reluctance to be submissive prompts Jason to ask who the male/expected dominant is in the situation, the shot cutting to a close-up of his cocky and confused expression, slightly visible in the lowkey lighting that surrounds the interior. The camera suddenly cuts to a medium close-up of the two as Ginger pounces on top of him and pushes his body to the car seat. The camera cuts to a medium shot of the car exterior before cutting back to a close-up of Jason's

face while Ginger mocks him, repeating his question as she pins him down. Jason's demeanor quickly shifts from amused and slight discomfort to screams of agony while Ginger rips open his shirt. The camera quickly cuts to a close-up of her protruding spine. Then back to a close-up of Ginger's emotionless face as he begs her to stop, only pausing for a moment to poke fun at him before digging into his chest. The camera cuts back and forth between Ginger's protruding spine and Jason's distressed face as he continues to scream. Ginger's encounter with Jason speaks to this desire to supernaturally dictate the social dynamics of her heterosexual encounter while satirizing the liminal aspects of her body and sexuality as Fawcett visually performs this partnership between the two. Engaging in this playful merging of the monstrous body with the female. The representation of bodily excess coupled with Fawcett's utilization of shot composition visually performs this partnership between the emerging monstrous feminine body and Ginger's desire to dictate the heterosexual encounter. Ginger's body becomes the sphere that inhabits the familiar and uncanny, normative and transgressive, a figure we distrust but still desire, similar to women's position within patriarchal society. The film's construction of Ginger as a feminine animal examines the division between nature and culture, woman and animal, as her aggressive sexual appetite acts as a commentary on women's sexual autonomy being an active threat to phallogentric society.

The camera cuts to a close-up of Bridgette sleeping, her eyes slowly fluttering awake as the camera pans in and the bedroom door opens. Ginger's silhouette emerges from the right side of the frame. Her figure is engulfed in darkness as she cries on her bed while Bridgette's face is visible in the foreground, illuminated by a night light off-frame. The camera cuts to a medium shot of Bridgette sitting up as she questions her sister about her well-being and if Jason had hurt her. However, Ginger remains silent as her silhouette is engulfed in darkness. The camera

oscillates between a medium close-up of Ginger in darkness and Bridgette in low key lighting while she expresses concern for her sister. Bridgette reaches for her sister's hand when she suddenly flees to the bathroom. The camera pans to a Dutch angle of Bridgette as she turns on the light to see her hand covered in blood. Fawcett maintains this Dutch angle as Bridgette enters the bathroom to see her sister bloody and hunched over the toilet throwing up. The hand-held close-up of Ginger and Bridgette's alarmed and fearful expression and exchange creates a disturbing effect as Ginger explains her desire for violence is masked by her desire for sex. Although the blood is Norman's, the neighbor's dog, the scene conjures connections between her increased transformation and growing claim to abject non-phallic power. The implication that Bridgette's assumption of Ginger's distress is the result of a sexual assault reveals how Ginger as female werewolf "tears at the fragile suburban surfaces, exposing its abject depths, bringing that which should have remained hidden into the light." As Hannah Priest elaborates, *Ginger Snaps* examines the ways in which "as an abject being, the monstrous femme animale is both frightening and sympathetic, particularly as her rebellion involves a complete rejection of the proper feminine role" (188).

While this rejection appears most transgressive in Ginger's domination of Jason, it also importantly informs the queer dimensions of Ginger and Bridgette's codependence and revisioning of familial bonds. The Fitzgerald sisters' refusal to engage in the traditional trappings of social femininity but rather build an intimate utopia that hinges on their devotion to each other enacts this incestuous implication that arises within Ginger's lycanthrope aggression and desire to maintain their sisterhood/erotic partnership through murderous and unearthly means. The carnage Ginger engages in throughout the film reflects her fractured logic of sexual jealousy as her targeting of Sam, whose friendship with Bridgette presents a potential heterosexual threat,

and her killing of the counselor and custodian evokes a same-sex desire through her urge to control Bridgette's interactions with the opposite sex. Although she justifies these murders through the lens of protection, the film's conflation of their desire to be "out" by sixteen and their shared perception of heterosexuality as unsavory coincides with the sexual liberation lycanthropy presents which further enacts this lesbian subjectivity through Ginger's desire to "swap juices" to solidify an indefinite fidelity. Ginger's desire to remain together forever becomes crystalized through this violent intimacy and virus transference/repetition of their oath during the climax, enacting this transcendent incorporation of the other not bound by life or death. *Ginger Snap's* exploration of the female werewolf coupled with its lesbian eroticism through the channels of sisterhood suggests an intense queer intimacy within female relationships that becomes compounded within further iterations of the female cannibal archetype.

## Section 2: **Jennifer's Body - Lez Be Friends**

After being sacrificed by the amateur indie band Low Shoulder and possessed by a succubus, classic teen queen, Jennifer Check (Megan Fox) begins to feed on young men to satisfy her craving for human flesh. As the school's male population slowly gets picked off, Jennifer's nerdy childhood best friend, Anita 'Needy' Lesnicki (Amanda Seyfried) uncovers her secret and vows to put an end to the carnage. *Jennifer's Body* (Karyn Kusama, USA, 2009) conjures the 'Final Girl' dynamic while incorporating elements of the cannibal to examine the heteronormative constructs that exploit/inhibit female sexuality. The adoption of the gothic suburban landscape, coupled with the homosocial bond between the best friends, reverses the

conservative heterosexual matrix that encodes the conflict between the heroine and the monster to present an alternative queer desire that threatens the phallogentric order. Kusama's use of dynamic camera movement, editing, and shot composition to couple the destruction of bodily boundaries with the breakdown of sexual identity, the ego, and the desire for consummation in the all-consuming female friendship.

For Needy and Jennifer, their childhood friendship exists in an anomaly that disrupts their high school's social hierarchy and heterosexual ecosystem. The lusted-after, hyper-feminine, and sexually expressive Jennifer and the dorky, less feminine Needy share an intimate union that is constantly at the epicenter of speculative rumors and off-handed queer jokes from their peers. Particularly Chastity (Valerie Tian), who accuses her of being "totally lesbi-gay" for her best friend, which Needy dismisses and remains stern on the duo's position as friends. However, Needy's declared "Sandbox love" presents an intense romantic intimacy between the girls as Jennifer's desire to remain a partnership arises in elements of possessiveness, and sly jealousy to which Needy's boyfriend Chip (Johnny Simmons) questions the nature of their relationship. This level of companionship between the friends is reminiscent of pop culture blogger Sady Doyle's description of female adolescent friendship and the quasi-erotic intimacy it presents. In her blog, *Tiger Beatdown*, Doyle argues this intimacy presents a melding of identities stating, "I was closer to them than I have been to most of my boyfriends. There's a weird, overwhelming, mind-meld effect that takes place sometimes between girls: you live in each other and through each other, always trying to figure out how you are the same and how you are different, and both loving the differences and the sameness" (Doyle 60). For Jennifer, this exploration of herself through their differences manifests in her relationships with men and how her unrealized desire for Needy



arises. The film presents Jennifer's relationship with heterosexuality as a method to maintain her popular status and grant her materialistic benefits as she uses her position as a desirable object to the male gaze to obtain alcohol to impress the lead singer of Low Shoulder. However, allusions to Jennifer's emotional validation and desire to physically meld with Needy arise through their constant tender glances and handholding. Through expressive camerawork and shot composition, Kusama forefronts Jennifer's urge to enact her carnal desires through supernatural forces after her traumatic encounter with Low Shoulder, in the scene located (21:20 - 25:53). The camera intercuts between medium shots of a startled and crying Needy sitting in her dark bedroom on the phone with her boyfriend Chip (Johnny Simmons), awakening him as Needy recounts the incident at Melody Lane and informs him about Jennifer's disappearance with the band Low Shoulder. The camera maintains a close-up of Needy as she becomes more emotionally distressed while she expresses her worry for Jennifer and her safety. The doorbell rings abruptly as the camera slowly pans to the left as the startled, alone but still curious Needy, heads out of her bedroom to investigate. Kusama adopts subtle slasher visual aesthetics as the hand-held camera tracks Needy's descent down the stairs. As Needy continues her descent, the camera cuts between her frightened and disheveled face and her back as the lighting shifts from warm and full to cold and lowkey. Kusama emphasizes the vulnerability of the feminine subject on screen as the camera hovers slightly over her from behind and slightly under as she faces the audience, reflecting feelings of apprehension and fear through the forced proximity between the audience and the onscreen subject. The film subtly induces a paradoxical identification as the audience becomes partly implicated within the action through observation of the passive/feminine subject on screen as Chip calls out to Needy/the audience. Needy opens the front door to which no one or thing is outside. The camera cuts a full shot from the house's exterior as it slowly pushes in on

Needy in the doorway. The camera then cuts to a close-up panning shot of Needy as a shadow creeps around the house. Kusama continues this playful contrast between horror's voyeuristic tendencies and identification as the camera oscillates between Needy's point of view and tracking shots on her concentrated expression as she navigates her house. As Needy enters the kitchen to close the leaky faucet, the camera closes up on the sink and her face as she turns it off. Suddenly as she turns around, the audience and Needy face a bloody Jennifer. The brief medium shot of the pair appears as Jennifer's body is shrouded in darkness while moonlight shines on Needy. Jennifer's imposing stature traps Needy as her body occupies the majority of the frame, the contrast in lighting frames Jennifer as an oppressive force within the frame but this power dynamic brewing between the two. Kusama enacts a point-of-view shot from Needy's perspective as she examines Jennifer's blood-covered mouth and clothes as the blood leaks from her hand onto the floor. The camera alternates between Needy's point of view and medium tracking shots of her as she questions Jennifer, to which she gets an eerie smile. The long take from Needy's perspective continues as Jennifer lurches towards the fridge and ravenously consumes a rotisserie chicken. The camera maintains Needy's perspective but intercuts with close-ups of her worried expression as Jennifer lets out a wretched scream and throws up morphing black goo.

Returning to Creed's argument concerning excrement and bodily waste as a stand-in for the danger to identity that comes without, Jennifer's vomiting acts as a physical reflection of the instability that her desire to incorporate Needy into her identity presents. This symbolic desire for union between the girls becomes more evident as the scene progresses. As Needy grabs a hysterically laughing Jennifer to comfort her, the hand-held camera closes up on Jen's wrist, where Needy feels no heartbeat. Terrified, Needy runs off-screen and into the hallway to grab her

cell phone but Jennifer immediately pushes her into the wall. The camera closes up on Jennifer's bloody hand as it smears Needy's picture that hangs off the wall. The over-the-shoulder closes up on Jennifer's face while she whispers into Needy's ear and asks if she is scared, while she caresses her chest and face. A crying Needy nods her head as Jennifer places her bloody lips onto her neck. Kusama employs an extreme close-up as Jennifer is ready to bite/penetrate and enact this desire to consume Needy. However, Jennifer violently throws Needy against the wall and escapes as the medium shot lingers on a shaken Needy as she calls out to Jennifer. Kusama's representation of the encounter acts as an investment in establishing the permeability of physical and same-sex boundaries through the mode of cannibalism. In Kristen M. Hadley's essay *Queerness Forbidden Pleasures: Queerness and Cannibalism in Film and Television*, she connects this notion as she argues that the presence of cannibalistic consumption produces a queer desire as both are products of an inseparable attraction and repulsion of the act but offers the ability to transcend physical boundaries stating, "The body is a convenient boundary for the definition of the self. In theory, a sort of social anthropology may rationalize cannibalism or homosexuality, but in practice, the peculiar act violates that boundary. The act offers an ecstatic union; it offers to relieve the self of the burden of selfhood: it offers a chance to surrender the body, to consume or be consumed by another" (Hadley, 3). Jennifer's attempt to break down the bodily boundary between her and Needy through consumption enacts this parallel between homosexual and cannibalistic panic in her urge to solidify their union. This desire to physically incorporate Needy into herself elevates the quasi-erotic intimacy between the girls to materialize the craving to live through each other and conjure this investment in sexual and emotional identification in the parameters of the supernatural.

The film continues to heighten the representation of the girl's desire for integration and

traverse the boundaries of identity within the supernatural via the psychic connection Needy and Jennifer share. Paralleling Doyle's assessment of this urge to "mind-meld" within adolescent female friendships, the best friends are tethered mentally and sensorily. Presented as an existing phenomenon between the girls, Needy's ability to feel Jennifer's presence and channel her physical sensations is a recurring symbol that crystalizes their intense intimacy but functions as a liminal space that blurs the boundary of the body. As Jennifer begins to seduce and feast on her male classmates to satisfy her craving, the desire to integrate Needy within her shifts towards misidentified consumption that extends into the psychic realm. As the side effects of Jennifer's last consumption are starting to fade, Needy's classmate Colin Gray (Kyle Gallner) approaches the duo in the hallway to invite Jennifer on a date later that night. Although she initially declines and makes a joke undermining his masculinity, Jennifer suddenly gains interest and accepts his invitation after Needy speaks highly of him. In the scene located (49:10 - 56:36), Kusama engages in expressive camera work and juxtaposes images of carnal desire and cannibalistic consumption to present a breakdown of gender and sexuality through the shared psychic sphere. There is a close-up of Colin in his car as he drives towards the location Jennifer had sent to meet him for their date. The long take is static, as he sits center frame, his slightly anxious face in the low key lighting, a stark contrast to his demeanor moments before as he pulls into a dark neighborhood showcasing his vulnerability. The cheery music playing from his stereo swiftly stops as he cuts the engine, continuing to stare off-screen, the camera lingering on his worried expression. The camera then cuts to a seemingly desolate house with a candlelight glowing through the window. The camera cuts back to Colin, shrugging his shoulders at the suspiciousness of the meet-up, and instantly checks himself out in the mirror. As he exits the vehicle, the camera tracks him and intercuts to an extreme long shot of him crossing the barren

and dark street, a spec on the screen. Kusama emphasizes Colin's powerlessness and glaring red flags of the scenario as the camera and audience sit detached from him, highlighting the lack of life and security surrounding him. The camera cuts to a long shot making him appear small in the grandness of the house, he tries to enter the house through the front door but it is boarded shut. As stands outside searching for an entrance, the camera pans into his shadow on the window from inside the house. The camera and audience close in on him as he searches into the darkness from the other side, the shadow of the tape on the window boxes him in. The camera cuts showing him standing in complete darkness as he breaks into a window from the side of the house. As Colin jumps into the abandoned house, the camera tilts as it closes in, his growing uneasiness reflected in the use of the Dutch angle. Throughout this sequence, Kusama visually represents and flips the power dynamics and the engraved differences in danger assessment in young men. From a female or non-male audience or perspective, Colin ignores the various red flags when engaging with a new romantic interest as he actively continues to endanger himself in the hopes of hooking up. As Colin continues to wander in the dark and call for Jennifer, the camera tracks him from behind as he approaches a set of stairs, a flock of crows flies down and almost hits him, representing more omens of danger that are ignored by Colin. The camera closes up on his face as "I Wanna Love You" by Akon plays in the background as he walks off the frame. The camera cuts back to Needy and Chip slipping on the condom under the sheets, cutting back to Colin as he explores the area more, a close-up hand-held shot pans showing various power tools and candles. Jennifer appears behind Colin out of focus as Colin stands in the foreground, she looks unrecognizable as her face is obscured, unhuman. As the sequence progresses intercuts between both Needy and Jennifer's sexual experiences juxtaposing through lighting, tone, and mise-en-scene. As Colin becomes more frightened due to rats and other

external factors, Jennifer tries to ease his nerves by unbuckling his pants off-camera, using her sexuality to disarm him she slams the pants on the ground. Jennifer seduces and kills Colin, breaking his bones to frighten him and maximize flavor, Needy begins to hallucinate blood falling from the ceiling. The camera intercuts between Needy witnessing Jennifer's murder and consuming Colin as her boyfriend has sex with her. Needy yells in fear as she watches Jennifer causing Chip to stop, and she exits the house in search of Jennifer.

Kusuma's visual melding of the consumption of the human body with the loss of virginity psychosexually links Needy and Jennifer to present this layered breakdown of sexual identity and desire for ecstatic union. Creed argues that the representation of death within horror films confronts the audience but the character within the text with the loss of the self stating, "Fear of losing oneself and one's boundaries is made more acute in a society which values boundaries over continuity and separateness over sameness. Given that death is represented in the horror film as a threat to the self's boundaries, symbolized by the threat of the monster, death images are most likely to cause the spectator to look away" (Creed, 65). The psychic liminal sphere Needy and Jennifer share within this heterosexual encounter allows them to enact this queer embrace through this generative use of the body as a manifestation of the social boundary of separateness the girls are trying to traverse. Through the presentation of sexual separateness in the differing carnal encounters, Kusuma couples Jennifer's desire to maintain her social and physical status through her consumption of men with Needy's relationship to heterosexuality through her relationship with Chip. Needy's confrontation with psychic images of Jennifer and death while sexually engaging with Chip forces her to address this desire to undergo this union with Jennifer while presenting this loss of normalcy that disrupts sense of self. This desire is compounded as immediately, following their encounters with men, Jennifer initiates a kiss that

Needy avidly reciprocates, to which the film implies this level of intimacy is a natural occurrence for the duo. The interaction reads as Jennifer's craving to taste Needy while Needy questions the nature of their relationship. However, Jennifer's desire to remain in this erotic homosocial bond opts her to break down the heterosexual parameters that inhibit Needy from fully embracing Jennifer.

Following the events in Needy's bedroom, in which Jennifer also recounts the traumatic non-virginal sacrifice by Low Shoulder and the permanency of her possession, Needy's gesturing as a 'Final Girl' is fully foregrounded to introduce a non-heterosexual framework that encodes the conflict between heroine and monster. A concept introduced in J. Clover's essay, *Her Body, Himself; From Men, Women, and Chainsaws*, the female victim/hero is the virginal arbiter of morality that returns the status quo in her elimination of the socially transgressive figure. Creed argues that this figure fits a particular criteria and gains this armor through the feminine and masculine poles she inhabits through her gender and sexual expression stating, "The gender of the Final Girl is likewise compromised from the outside by her masculine interests, her inevitable sexual reluctance, her apartment is from other girls, sometimes her name" (Clover 520). The film initially alludes to this archetypal framing in the juxtaposition of her femininity with Jennifer and her more guarded attitude surrounding sex, but subverts this through the loss of her virginity. However, the subtle pun in her name informs this queer sexual reluctance and apartness from her peers as Anita 'Needy' Lesnicki can be shortened to a needy les/lesbian. Unlike the typical motivation of self preservation, Needy's transformation into the 'Final Girl' comes to fruition after Jennifer kills Chip to sever Needy's connection to heterosexuality and ensure the maintenance of their union.

This embedding of same-sex desire within her characterization, coupled with her intense

psychic intimacy with Jennifer, in the scene located (1:34:25 - 1:38:26), Kusama's use of camera movement and composition, presents an embrace of this union that is central showdown between the two. Soft, warm lighting surrounds Jennifer's feet as she lies on the bed, the lighting illuminating the pink preppy curtain and wallpaper. The close-up camera slowly pans to the left and trails up her body. As the shot continues, it reveals a sickly appearing Jennifer drawing in her high school yearbook as a fitness commercial plays in the background. The camera closes up on the yearbook to reveal numerous boys with red drawn circles around their faces while Jennifer writes "YUM" beside one photo. The camera quickly cuts to her tired, pale face before cutting to a close-up of a fitness infomercial playing on the television. A muscular man on the machine converses with a woman as the words Butt Squeeze appear on the bottom of the television screen as she tries to touch him as he protests stating, "No touching on this show!". Kusama engages in this playful transmission of Jennifer's carnal desires through this parallel between media and human consumption as Jennifer tries to quell her hunger through fantasy. The camera cuts back to a static overhead medium shot of Jennifer lying in the center frame as she turns off her bedside lamp. As low key lighting surrounds her, Kusama emphasizes this means of escapism through consumption as the typical pillars of teenage girlhood are around her bedroom, and various boy bands posters hang above her head. Her large bed frames mimic a cage, reflecting this sense of entrapment. The camera cuts to a close-up of her profile as she rolls over on her side, her bloodshot eyes and pale face visible to the audience as the camera pushes in. As Jennifer stares at the window off-screen, suddenly, the camera cuts to a medium shot of Needy breaking through the window. Kusuma cuts to Jennifer's perspective as Needy swings her blade but hits the wall. The camera briefly cuts to a close-up of Jennifer's pissed-off face, then to a medium shot of Needy as she mounts Jennifer, moving the altercation to her bed. As Needy chokes Jennifer,



cursing her out for killing Chip and being a horrible best friend, the camera alternates between various handheld close-ups of their faces and Jennifer's squirming legs. Kusama enacts this slasher identification while visually flirting with this concept of bodily communion, as the audience becomes lost in the struggle and briefly takes Needy's perspective in the dominant high angle than Jennifer's in the passive low angle as she looks up at her. Suddenly, the camera cuts to a brief over-the-shoulder close-up as Jennifer grabs Needy's neck and bites. Kusama revisits this concept of the bite as a symbol of penetration as Jennifer hums and licks her lips in delight while Needy counters with her box cutter. Through visual language, Kusuma engages in this reversal of masculine and feminine dynamics within the slasher genre sub genre as the girls fight to penetrate the other. As Needy is about to strike, she makes a crude joke alluding to the knife's coding as a phallus and states, "Do you know what this is for? It's for cutting boxes". As Needy tries to stab Jennifer, the camera closes up on the profile of her face as she catches the blade and takes a jab at Needy's sexuality stating, "Do you buy all your murder weapons at Home Depot? God, you're butch." The comment strikes a nerve in Needy as she slashes Jennifer in the stomach but to no effect. The camera cuts to a handheld close up from Needy's perspective and pans up from the red x on Jen's stomach to her pissed-off face. Suddenly, Jennifer levitates above the bed as the girls struggle to dominate each other. Kusuma elevates the sexual dimension of the slasher sub genre and sexual tension between girls through the use of hand-held close-ups and medium shots of the girls choking each other and moaning as they take turns on top. As the fight reaches its climax, the camera cuts between an extreme close-up of Needy's angry face and Jennifer's bloody heart-shaped BFF necklace before Needy rips it off her neck. The camera quickly cuts a close-up of the necklace hitting the ground, then cuts an over-the-shoulder medium shot as Jennifer hovers in disbelief. As the girls descend onto the bed, the camera alternates between the

close-ups of their perspectives as time slows as they stare back at each other. Kusama employs an over-the-shoulder medium shot of Needy as the box cutter punctures Jennifer's heart, the static shot lingers as the audience watches the demon flee Jen's body. Suddenly, Jennifer's mother enters the room and switches on the light to reveal Needy on top of Jennifer's corpse. The camera cuts to a long shot of the mother's perspective as she approaches the bed. The camera quickly pushes toward Needy while she takes out the blade. Kusama briefly cuts to an overhead close-up of Needy's bloody face as she sighs in relief as the camera alternates between close-ups of Jennifer's lifeless body while her mother holds her sobbing.

The showdown between Needy and Jennifer enacts this reversal of the heterosexual matrix encoded within the "final girl" trope as Needy's "submission" of the phallogentric threat and death of Jennifer presents a tragic rather triumphant close to her demonic terror. However, within the demonic transference presented in Jennifer's bite, Kusama frames this penetrative force as the consolidation of their consummation through the disintegration of bodily boundaries that constricted their union, as Jennifer and Needy are bound within life and death. Kusama's utilization of this edible framework engages in this celebration of unruly bodies and feminine bonds as the demonic spirit becomes procreated and thrives within her. Needy's embrace of this transgressive liberation can be read as an acceptance of her queer subjectivity and desire to maintain a sense of loyalty to Jennifer, evident in the film's epilogue when she embraces this power to enact revenge on Low Shoulder. Kusama's representation of the homosocial bond between Needy and Jennifer presents this alternative trauma within the loss of this female friendship but mends this as Jennifer's consumption of Needy becomes the ultimate form of devotion, a symbol that arises in future iterations of the female cannibal.

### Section 3: **Raw - You Are What You Eat**

Justine (Garance Marillier), a strict vegetarian, becomes seduced into a world of dark desire within the first week of her merciless veterinarian school. Desperate to detach her younger sister from her outcast status, Justine's older sister Alexia (Ella Rumpf) forces her to stray from her principles and begins to consume raw meat. However as unexpected urges emerge the young woman soon uncovers the true nature of her family's lineage. *Raw* (Dir. Julia Ducournau, France, 2016) adopts the cannibalism trope to expand on its relation to the female body's physical subjectivity while engaging in the dynamics of ancestry as a form of rebellion towards social and commercialized associations. With the adoption of an anarchic medical sphere and sisterhood, *Raw* combines the medical gaze and notions of human and non-human to introduce concepts of inherited consumption practices and trauma. Ducournau's use of subtle camera work and visual composition of gore generates a mirror of the bodily and identity collapse with the audience via Justine.

The socially inept and sheltered Justine has been a lifelong vegetarian at the hands of her mother's unrelenting authority. In our first introduction to Justine, Ducournau forefronts how Justine's adolescence is tethered to her relationship with her imposed vegetarianism while presenting food as a catalyst to social and physical transgression. As Justine finds a piece of sausage in her mashed potatoes, Justine's cannibalistic tendencies are foreshadowed as her overbearing mother repeatedly questions if she consumed it and expresses concern over her alleged allergy to meat. However, as the legacy student starts her first semester at veterinary school, her introduction to the socially anarchic and architecturally hostile environment forces her to sever this parental status quo to embrace a maturation into animality that couples carnal and carnivorous desires. This initiation into animality occurs on her first night when

upper-classmen force the incoming students to crawl on their hands and feet in parallel lines, generating this association between the human body and livestock. The poking and prodding of the freshman as cattle acts as a symbol of the animal and human bodily subjectivity as equal through this anatomical infringement and forced domestication in preparation for habitual consumption. This connection becomes more evident in Justine's disoriented demeanor as she navigates the energetic, chaotic, and sexually indulgent welcoming party moments after the hazing. As she searches for her more socially assimilated and sexually expressive older sister Alexia, Justine's striking social disposition as she navigates those engaging in their carnal desires constructs her vegetarianism as this innocence that marks her as an outsider. However, the isolated and carnally untainted Justine is unable to escape this imposed severance of adolescence, as the culmination of the week-long hazing results in the new class being splattered with blood and obligated to consume a raw rabbit kidney. Her reluctance to discard her vegetarianism, iterating it is a familial practice, places her at a social and sisterly divergence from Alex, Ducournau establishing their combative relationship and intimacy as she forces Justine to eat the kidney to save her from social exile. Following her ingestion of meat, Justine's body forcibly ejects it. In a scene located (22:49 - 25:09), Ducournau uses invasive shot composition to enact a transgressive maturation while evoking the horrors of bodily instability through Justine's imposed consumption. A medium, static shot displays a restless Justine under the covers as her room and silhouette lie in low key lighting. The long take continues as she throws her comforter off of her, scratching her exposed legs harshly and repeatedly. Justine reaches over to her nightstand, causing her to yell in shock, lifting her shirt as the light exposes an enormous rash on her legs and stomach. The camera cuts to a handheld close-up as Justine traces her hand over the red blisters on her abdomen. The camera cuts to a medium close-up as she observes the red

blisters on the side of her thighs. Adrien expresses concern for her and asks if she is okay offscreen to which she immediately tells him to stay out. As the scene progresses, Ducournau employs various handheld close-ups of Justine's face and sores across her body as she scratches them ravenously while breathing harshly in pain. Justine falls over as the camera showcases her tired and defeated face as she lies hunched in a ball. The camera reverts to a static medium shot, her shadow visible on the wall foreshadowing this transgressive nature that is brewing beneath the surface.

Ducournau's representation of Justine's body in this nauseating state signals the disintegration of her adolescence through this forced severance of her relationship with her vegetarianism and this bodily corruption that ensues. In Louise Flockhart's essay *Postfeminist Consumption in Female Cannibal Texts*, she examines how the symbolic construction and embodiment of food within horror generates a relation to the female body's subjectivity. In her essay, she states, "Women and food share liminal positions as at once good and proper, and threatening and polluting, both are figured as particularly related to the body. Often women are figured as foodstuff/livestock as part of both celebratory and objectifying discourse" (Flockhart, 47). The manner in which Justine's rash consumes her body transforms her into a polluted entity while conjuring this image of mutation as the notions of her physical normality are stripped from her. Justine's transition into womanhood is marked by this irreversible consumption of meat and bodily reaction as her previous "whole and proper" body has become tainted. Ducournau's representation of Justine and her ravenous itching conjures this image of an animal trying to remove or tear at the parasitic qualities to revisit this concept of anatomical infringement as her body revolts against her. Ducournau visually returns to this coupling of human subjectivity with the animal immediately following the bedroom scene. The camera cuts to a static close-up of

hooves running on a fixed track as low-key lighting engulfs most of the frame. The backlight illuminates the black horse suspended by a harness as it runs. Ducournau utilizes rhythm through the camera's continuous cuts to full and close-up shots of the horse's coat and restricted limbs from various angles. Through this invasive emphasis on the feminine human and animal body, Ducournau plays into this objectifying visual language to cinematically construct Justine within a liminal/monstrous physicality to express this first progression into womanhood. The combination of images of the body in peril with this contained but beastly force engages in this vulgar representation of the biological alterations within the female adolescent step into maturity to symbolically metamorphize Justine into a physical and social "other" or animal. Through this visually metaphoric gesturing, Justine's unrelenting evolution into a creature that desires habitual consumption has begun.

As the film progresses, Ducournau amplifies this transformation from child/vegetarian to woman/cannibal through this continuation of forefronting raw female body materialism to challenge aspects of femininity through Justine's growing inhumanness and negotiation of her identity in her embrace of carnivorous urges. Although Justine's vegetarianism initially placed her as an outsider, her detachment from traditional femininity compromises her ability to successfully socially integrate and becomes another source of transgressive maturation. Following Justine's allergic reaction, Ducournau forefronts the institutional and social pressures of remaining a physically and sexually unassimilated feminine body in a scene where Justine visits her university health services. The female nurse inspects and carefully peels the irritated and dry skin from her abdomen as she inquires about Justine's sexual activity and contraceptive use, to which Justine clarifies she is a virgin. The outgrowth of her former adolescent self generates this cultural expectation of sexuality and conformity to traditional notions of feminine

expression that become imposed on her. Justine's entrance into womanhood now places her body at the center of the authoritative patriarchal gaze. Ducournau emphasizes this when Justine doesn't abide by the "club" dress code enforced by the upperclassmen, as she is forced to wear a diaper over her comfortable and contained wardrobe, essentially desexualizing her through infantilization. This disturbing and overt sexist ritualized subordination serves to model the socially situated treatment of adult women within society as Justine is categorized within this non-person/inhuman treatment through her reluctance to perform femininity. As Justine tries to navigate this hostile projection of gender conformity, Ducournau begins to exercise this psychological progression into animality/inhuman identification, as Justine's indulgence in her craving for meat informs and coincides with the negotiation of her gender identity. After a failed attempt to steal a burger from the cafeteria, traveling outside of school grounds to devour a kabob and steak sandwich, her compulsion drives her to sneakily eat raw chicken breast in the middle of the night. In the same manner, Alexia had imposed this severance of adolescence through consumption, Alexia encourages Justine to allow herself to embrace this false hyper-feminine gendered expression, one that Alexia doesn't abide by. Although she lends Justine a pair of heels and a cocktail dress, unbeknownst to Justine, Alexia's acceptance and emergence as a cannibal places her within semi androgynous but predominantly masculine gender expression. However, Ducournau begins to form Justine's inability to conform to societal feminine expectations and her marginal sexuality as a source of contention between the sisters. In a scene located (42:29 - 47:31), Ducournau combines invasive shot composition with the disintegration of bodily boundaries to explore the violence within this compulsory femininity while completing this transgressive maturation of woman/cannibal to express a queer sexual and bodily subjectivity. After Alexia discovers body hair on Justine's body, Alexia attempts to give

her sister a bikini wax. An extra long shot slowly pushes toward Justine as she lies on her sister's bed in her underwear, her exposed legs strategically placed in the center of the frame, shielding her face. Warm, lowkey lighting surrounds the bed. As the camera pushes toward Justine, Alexia's dog briefly places his head between her legs before Alexia pushes him away and takes that position as she spreads open Justine's legs. Ducournau creates this visual illustration that references this concept between woman and animal through precise composition. The camera alternates between medium shots from eye-level and low-angled positions, showcasing an apprehensive Justine and a determined Alexia as she begins to wax her sister's pubic hairs. While Alexia applies the wax, the camera closes up on her underwear, creating this sense of personal/bodily invasion in the hands of the audience. The shot raises feelings of discomfort rather than soliciting desire. As Alexia gleefully rips off the wax, Ducournau engages in this playful refraction of Justine's body jerking and screaming in pain. Through the mixture of handheld close-ups and medium shots Ducournau frames this experience akin to torture, a sentiment Justine expresses to her sister while she applies more wax. As Alexia continues to wax Justine, the wax gets stuck to her body, which causes Alexia to grab a pair of scissors to cut it off. Justine objects stating, "You'll circumcise me". As her sister is about to cut, she kicks her in protest, the camera lingers on a close-up of Justine's concerned face as she looks at her sister offscreen. The camera cuts to a medium shot of Alexia's severed finger as she holds it up to the audience/Justine, her body placed center frame between Justine's spread-open legs before passing out in shock. Instantly, the camera cuts to a handheld medium shot of Justine trying to wake her up as she bleeds on the floor. Ducournau visually reflects Justine's franticness as the camera oscillates between a static long shot of a passed-out Alexia and a handheld tracking shot of a concerned Justine as she calls the ambulance and picks up her sister's severed finger. The



low-angled behind-the-body tracking shot evokes an ominous feeling as she opens the fridge to place the finger inside; however, after a few beats, Justine drops to the ground as she stares at her sister offscreen. The camera cuts to a medium shot of Justine's profile, Ducournau utilizing this depth of field as Alexia's dog licks her blood off the ground before walking off. The composition enacts this visual callback and foreshadowing of Justine's transgressive act she will enact. The camera oscillates between various medium static and overhead handheld shots of Justine as she inspects her sister's finger, squeezing the blood and licking it off her hands. Justine's eyes light up at the taste as blood trails down her mouth. The camera reverses to a medium shot of Justine's profile as she scarfs down the finger, blood trickling down her hands and legs as her blissful face takes up the majority of the frame. Slowly, Alexia rises, and the camera cuts to her point of view as Justine whips her head to make eye contact with Alexia. The camera cuts back and forth between Alexia's face laced with a realization of their shared practice as her eyes well up with tears, and Justine's guilt-ridden bloody face.

Ducournau's representation of Justine's first cannibalistic consumption as one that emerges from the inherent violence of feminine beautification enacts this double entendre of objectification to perform a defiant expression of feminine consumption and reclamation of the body that detaches it from the false gender binary. Within Flockhart's discussion surrounding female body subjectivity and its relation to objectifying visual and social discourse, she expands on how women's self-image is reflected within the cognitive structure of self-consumption practices that patriarchy enforces. In her essay, she states, "Consequently, the way we look, act, behave and the things we consume must generate a self which is marketable. For women, this is especially important in order to be seen as competent and attractive, able to consume the right things in the right ways in order to perform the role of "woman" (Flockhart, 11). Justine

ingesting Alexia's finger enacts this double-coded consumption of the feminine body as a source of identity negotiation and a literal object to consume. Although performing femininity is deemed valuable and socially empowering within a patriarchal society, Justine's instinctual rejection of these feminine practices indicates an empowerment that diverges from the glamorized associations of the body and acceptance of one's monstrosity. Following her first consumption, Justine develops an appreciation for her body, a slightly rebellious streak, and a sexual appetite, specifically for her self-proclaimed homosexual roommate Adrian (Rabah Nait Oufella). Similar to Alexia, the completion of Justine's cannibalistic maturation elevates her into an inherently transgressive figure that embodies an a-gender/not-woman subjectivity. This becomes expressed in a scene where she loses her virginity to Adrian, in which he initiates sexual contact. Although the encounter seems heterosexual on the surface, the intentional lack of sexual organs displayed coupled with the erratic animality Justine exudes emphasizes this queer bodily subjectivity as she is not bound to existing categories that repel such an encounter.

However, another critical element that informs Justine's queer subjectivity is the emergence of her sexual awakening and completion of her cannibalistic maturation as one that erupted from the violent, erotic rivalry and intimacy between her and her sister. With the emergence of this violent intimacy between the sisters, Ducournau forefronts this biological mirror between Justine and Alexia to examine how they grapple with their cannibal/queer subjectivities, desire for fusion, and present an active negotiation of their identities through their blood relation and shared practice. Following Justine's consumption of her sister's finger, Alexia tries to absorb Justine into her inhuman subjectivity by teaching her a method of satiating her hunger through intentional car crashes, which disturbs Justine deeply. However, as her hunger grows, Ducournau establishes Alexia as this id-like figure that has embraced her monstrosity as

Justine tries to repel her sister's amoral indulgence of flesh and find a more sustainable and humanistic solution. Nevertheless, Alexia's jealousy towards her sister's unwillingness to fully delve into and accept her inhumanness forces Justine out of her cannibal closet. In the disturbing interaction which was filmed and circulated amongst university students, Alexia teases an extremely intoxicated Justine with the arm of a cadaver, telling her to "go fetch" essentially reducing her to the animal she is as the sickly appearing Justine crawls on all fours and snaps at the arm. It is interesting to return to the notion of Justine's cannibalistic compulsion as one tied to her sexuality because it presents this interaction as an extension of same-sex desire through this twisted conflation of sexual and cannibalistic appetite Alexia takes advantage of, essentially arousing her through this unfulfilled hunger. Ducournau continues to emphasize this erotic rivalry and violent intimacy through Alexia's desire to own/consume her sister through their shared animality, by extension sexuality, which becomes forefronted when Justine confronts Alexia. The confrontation devolves into a chaotic and animalistic fight in which the sisters tear into and bite each other's flesh until they are separated by surrounding students, simultaneously forcing them to recognize their shared subjectivity and desire for a symbolic fusion. In a scene located (1:23:39 - 1:29:31), Ducournau utilizes jarring camerawork and shot composition to complete this desire for fusion through Alexia's severance of Justine's symbolic tether to humanity to claim sexual ownership while presenting this common understanding of generational dysfunction. A medium shot slowly pushes towards two bodies sleeping on the bed as the sunlight begins to wake one of them up, the camera movement evoking an eerie stillness. The camera cuts to a close up to reveal Justine's profile, her freshly bandaged face is displayed center frame as Adrian sleeps peacefully beside her. The camera cuts to a close-up to reveal Justine's profile. Her freshly bandaged and bloody cheek is displayed in the center of the frame as Adrian sleeps peacefully

beside her. As she takes off the gauze, the camera lingers on the dried blood around her wound and mouth as she stares at a resting Adrian in admiration. The camera oscillates between over-the-shoulder close-ups behind Justine and Adrian as Justine caresses his face and hip; however, the tender moment comes to a bitter halt when Justine lifts her hand to discover blood. Suddenly, Justine jumps up, appalled, as the camera briefly cuts to a handheld close-up of her horrified face reflecting her frantic demeanor as she rips off the blanket. The camera cuts to a static medium shot to reveal Adrian's half-consumed thigh, his leg devoured to the bone as various muscle tendons are visible. Ducournau strategically places the exposed and blood-soaked limb in the center of the frame as Justine frantically tries to wipe the blood off of her body in the background, which visibly gestures to the audience Justine's possible responsibility for the carnage. The camera alternates between close-ups of Justine's panic-stricken demeanor and Adrian's undisturbed face as she shakes him awake but to no avail as blood spews out of his mouth. Suddenly, Justine stares at an object offscreen, to which the camera cuts to an over-the-shoulder medium shot as she stares at her bloody mouth in bewilderment in the mirror, Ducournau enacting this implication of the audience's participation in the carnage through the shared identification with Justine. The camera cuts to a close up of Justine as she grieves over Adrian's body, repeatedly hitting his corpse while she questions why he didn't retaliate to her consumption of him. As Justine holds his body, the camera slowly pans down to reveal the fresh, round gash on his back. While Justine inspects the wound, Ducournau employs a slow panning medium shot as her eyes stare off-screen, her pain-ridden expression shifting towards one of anger as she animalistically crawls off the bed. As Justine sits on the edge of her bed, panting in relief, the camera suddenly cuts to a close-up of a bloody ski pole beside her feet as an obscured figure sits in the kitchen in the background. Ducournau maintains this low-angled close-up as the

camera tracks her blood-covered legs as she drags the ski pole toward the kitchen, revealing a catatonic and bloody Alexia sitting on the floor in front of the fridge. As the shot lingers, Ducournau enacts this symbolic signaling of Alexia as the perpetrator as the murder weapon is positioned in the center frame, appearing to obstruct Alexia's body while Justine's legs trap her. The camera alternates between low-angled close-ups of Justine and eye-level close-ups of Alexia's bloody face while her eyes stare icily up at her sister. As Justine looks down on her sister in silence, placing the tip on her forehead, she contemplates ending her life. Ducournau accomplishes this figurative mirror between the sisters as the shot subtly references Justine's first consumption as Alexia is the manifestation of the abject nature she can't escape. As the camera lingers on their faces, Justine's repulsion shifts to one of acceptance as her hardened expression softens when she realizes they are two sides of the same coin of genetic monstrosity. Justine lifts her sister, and as they walk off the frame, the camera cuts to a long panning shot of confused students gathered outdoors in their pajamas. The camera cuts back to a medium shot of Justine removing her and her sister's bloody clothes before stepping into the shower. The camera then cuts to a close-up as Justine washes the dried blood from her sister's face and body. As the blood slides off their bodies, Ducournau reiterates this biological mirror/kinship between the sisters as the camera slowly pans down to their feet submerged within the opaque mixture of blood and water. As the camera closes- up into the blood, the shot transitions into a static close of Justine and Alexia's faces blended in as they stare at each other's reflection through a prison visitation window.

Ducournau's grisly representation of this sisterly dynamic/erotic rivalry as one that emerges from the isolated negotiation of their cannibalistic and queer subjectivities through each other enacts this deconstruction of identity, familial love, and unrealized generational trauma.

Within Alexia's fit of animality and desire to solidify their union, in which she severs Justine's primary humanistic connection, arises this tender acceptance of monstrosity and completion of this communion. This twisted expression of intimacy and affection in which the permanency of bonds becomes expressed through severed limbs and facial cavities elevates this form of devotion through consumption as their love for each other cannibalizes everything around them, even each other. Justine's compulsion devolves from the mother's transfer of her pathological consumption practices, which is both a source of dysfunction that engages in a sense of freedom but also vulnerability becomes a theme that crosses over to the next iteration of the female cannibal.

#### Section 4: **Bones and All - Queering Cannibalism**

Maren (Taylor Russell) a young woman on the fringes of society embarks on a journey across America in hopes of finding her mother. Love blossoms as she meets Lee (Timothée Chalamet), a young drifter that shares the same 'instinct' as her. However, terrifying pasts and encounters catch up with them in their effort to survive despite their predispositions. *Bones and All* (Dir. Luca Gaudagnino, USA, 2022) engages in the cannibalistic tropes connection to queer sexuality while merging aspects of inheritance to inspect the cultural institution of the family. Through the fostering of the midwestern landscape with a queer-coded love story, *Bones and All* engages in the horror of the Americana to magnify structures of sexual otherness that inflict generational dysfunction and detachment from traditional spheres of socialization. Gaudagnino's subtle camera work and expressive shot composition express Maren's negotiation with her identity and bodily consumption to reflect this desire for acceptance through bodily communion.

For Maren Yearly, her unnatural cravings place her in a marginal social and physical

subjectivity that estranges her from the traditional spheres of adolescent socialization and milestones. The introverted and soft-spoken teenager exists within the confines of her outsider status as her first on-screen appearance forefronts this social displacement as Guadagnino visually contrasts the bustling courtyard filled with groups of teenagers conversing while she plays the piano in the desolate auditorium. Maren's lack of social inclusion within this social institution during her formative adolescence years foreshadows this dual transgressive identity while radiating this sense of loss and invisibility. Guadagnino represents her desire to affirm her normalcy, form emotional connection, and inability to comfortably engage in biological and non-biological kinship within her friendship with Shelly (Kendle Coffey) and relationship with her father, Frank Yearly (André Holland). As the bubbly and feminine teen notifies Maren of her absence from their high school yearbook, Maren's reluctance to appear in it foreshadows her untraditional and alienated upbringing as she is not tethered to this symbolic permanency and recollection of community. However, when Shelly invites Maren to her sleepover, offering her the opportunity to form rich interpersonal connections, Maren decides to engage with the stereotypical and gender-based pillars of feminine socialization to escape her father's forced seclusion of her. Frank's guarded and provisional style of parenting affirms this lack of emotional connectivity, Guadagnino visually reflecting this through use of long shots within their interactions. This was emphasized in their nightly routine as he locks her bedroom door from the outside before falling asleep in the living room. However, with Sherry's convincing, Maren's desire for emotional connectivity causes her to stray from her father's authority, deciding to sneak out after he falls asleep. In a scene located at (5:32 - 8:25), Guadagnino utilizes expressive shot composition to combine Maren's craving for community with the disintegration of biological structures to center non-normative sexuality and a transgressive desire for intimacy.

After successfully sneaking out of her bedroom window, Maren runs off into the moonlit suburban streets to her friend Sherry's house. Guadagnino employs a behind-the-shoulder medium-tracking shot of Maren as she approaches the warm-lit front door. Darkness surrounds her as she watches from behind the barred window frame. Her monochromatic, grayish sweater blends in with her dull surroundings, reflecting her sullen and meek demeanor as she continues to watch from outside as the depth of focus shifts to the happy-go-lucky and preppy girls. Maren knocks on the door to which Shelly greets her with a warm embrace, the camera remains in a static position outside of the doorway as she enters the house. The composition and lighting in the scene subtly foreshadow Maren's apartness from young women her age while representing this desire to conform and experience the typical pillars of female adolescent socialization. As the door shuts behind her the camera transitions to a brief push-in towards a mirror hanging on the wall, its image reflecting the girls in the living room. Guadagnino briefly indicates to the audience Maren's attempt to mirror the behaviors of peers within this seemingly lax social setting. The camera then cuts to a full shot as Maren converses with Kim (Madeleine Hall) lying underneath a table while Shelly and another girl sit on the couch painting each other's nails, the table creating a barrier between both parties. As Kim continues to ask Maren personal questions regarding her previous schools, home life, and connection to her mother, the camera oscillates between a low-angled close-up of the girl's vulnerable conversation and a medium shot of Sherry observing the pair from above. However, this exchange becomes briefly interrupted by Sherry showcasing her friend's freshly painted nails, the polish titled "Cinnamon Glaze". The camera cuts to an overhead medium shot of Maren and Kim observing from behind the glass countertop. Various brands of lipstick and nail polish clutter the borders of the frame while a plate of leftover pizza conveniently sits above Kim's body. As Sherry's friend waves her hand over Maren's face



above the glass, she becomes visibly aroused, her gaze remaining intent on the finger as her breathing becomes heavier. Guadagnino slowly draws the association of the body as a desirable and edible object as the camera maintains its overhead position while Sherry paints Kim's hands-off frame. As Maren becomes more vulnerable while she discusses her lack of connection to or memory of her mother, she inches closer to Kim, sniffing her clavicle. The camera briefly cuts to a medium shot of Sherry as she interrupts the conversation once more to show off the nail polish on Kim's fingers titled "Copper Fever". The camera cuts back to the static overhead shot of the pair as Kim complains about the color of the polish. As she slowly places her hand over Maren's face to hear her opinion, Maren tenderly grabs the finger before she places it in her mouth and takes a bite. As Kim screams in pain, the camera oscillates between full shots of the young girls trying to intervene and pull Maren off with close-ups of Maren's blissful expression as blood drips down her mouth. The action on screen slows as the camera lingers on Kim's detached finger, the girls pulling Maren off as she tries to take another bite. The camera then quickly cuts to a full shot of the outside of the house, the camera panning to the left as a frantic Maren runs off into the darkness off-frame. Maren arrives at her house, to which her father greets her with disappointment and commands her to pack her bags as they must flee before the cops arrive. The camera cuts to a medium behind-the-shoulder shot of Maren as she observes and admires her blood-covered mouth in the cracked mirror in her room. Warm lighting surrounds her as she views her split reflection in the mirror before walking off the frame.

The utilization of the all-girls sleepover as a sphere in which sexuality is not typically explored or expressed within heteronormative society conjures this cannibalistic encounter as a dual coming-out as the shallow facade of normalcy/heteronormativity is severed while presenting this desire for assimilation. In Maggie Kilgour's book *From Communion to*

*Cannibalism: An Anatomy of Metaphors of Incorporation*, she examines how metaphors of communion and cannibalism express a tension between incorporation and transcending separate identities, stating, “The body itself can be imagined (though it does not have to be) as a corporation of its members, which together form a unified and clearly defined structure whose boundaries separate the self from others and so mark off individual identity. But bodily needs also indicate that the appearance of autonomy is an illusion, for the body must incorporate elements from outside itself in order to survive” (Kilgour 6). Maren's craving to penetrate this sphere of stability through this transgressive expression of communion forefronts her internal tension between identification with or destruction of heteronormative structures. However, in this pursuit of acceptance, Maren must satiate her cannibalistic and sexual appetite. Guadagnino's homoerotic portrayal of her first onscreen cannibalistic consumption as one that emerges during a state of vulnerability coupled with his erotic coding of the feminine hand as an illicit object, tethers her cannibalism to romantic and sexual desires. Guadagnino's intentional historical framework contributes to this perception of this transgressive act as it is confronted with shame, guilt, danger, and parental rejection, as her identity as a cannibal forces her to sacrifice authenticity to maintain a semblance of a normal life. Shortly after the encounter at the sleepover, this becomes forefronted as Maren's inability to remain faithful to her father's authority and control/conceal her urges parallels the stigma surrounding the ability to conform to heteronormativity as Frank perceives her disposition as a morally corrupt burden that forces them to consistently relocate to avoid systematic harm.

Guadagnino continues to draw associations of queerness within Maren's identity as a cannibal through her desire for matrilineal kinship and her confrontation with symbolic extensions of institutional oppression through the centering of generational dynamics. As Maren

tries to detach herself from her impaired self-image, her marginalized status becomes even more prominent as she becomes increasingly estranged from society, economically and socially, when her father abandons her shortly after their escape, deciding to live a regular life rather than continue to support her misdeeds. This collapse of her familial unit due to her inability to repress her urges becomes reflected when Maren tracks down Janelle's (Chloe Sevigny) adoptive mother in Minnesota, who informs her of her mother's willful psychiatric institutionalization.

Guadagnino begins to construct the haunting secrecy that manifests within generational trauma and its inheritance as Maren's inquiries surrounding her mother's adolescent history and unnatural compulsion are confronted with defensiveness, mystery, and shame from the adoptive mother. In a scene located (1:19:42 - 1:23:49), Guadagnino combines expressive shot composition and camerawork to establish a biological mirror that expresses the disintegration of the familial institution through a disturbing and overwhelming confrontation with intergenerational trauma. In an attempt to connect with her mother, Maren decides to visit her mother in the psychiatric hospital. An extra long shot zooms in on Maren as approaches the Fergus Falls Infirmary, the audience in Lee's perspective as he watches her timid frame from the truck. The camera cuts to a medium-tracking shot as the lead nurse for her mother escorts Maren to her mother's room, passing by the sterile brown and beige tiled walls. The audience follows from behind, observing her anxious and startled demeanor as she overhears women screaming in pain, the camera movement mimicking Maren's apprehension as it lags slightly. As Maren inquires about her mother's condition and threat level, the camera alternates between various medium shots that mirror the confinement of the women she is observing in the ward as the walls physically box her in. The nurse goes on to disclose her mother's history of aggression towards staff and her proficiency for self-harm however, the nurse assures her she is more stable now but

heavily medicated as she opens the door. The camera cuts to Maren's perspective as the audience watches from outside the room before the nurse invites the audience/Maren inside. The handheld camera tracks Maren's face as she slowly enters the room. Her eyes search for her mother as the camera cuts to her perspective, maintaining its steady advance as it slowly peers behind a wall to reveal a heavily medicated and amputated Janelle. As Maren announces herself to her mom the camera cuts back to a medium shot of Maren as she peers at her mom offscreen, her body clinging to the beige empty walls as she tries to converse with her mother. As the scene progresses, the nurse hands Maren a letter that her mother had written for her after admitting herself to the hospital, detailing why she had to abandon their family although it gratefully pained her. Janelle's heartbroken and shaky voice narrates the letter as Maren reads, the camera continuously alternating between their perspectives as the two women mirror each other's expressions of fear and disbelief as they gaze at one another. As Maren inches closer to her mother, Guadagnino employs a medium-profile shot of the two in-frame positioned across each other. The imagery intensifies how these women mirror each other as her mother expresses her desire to be loved even though she is deemed monstrous. As the narration progresses, her mother shatters this concept of love's ability to trump their ingrained monstrosity stating, "All we can have is a little space with bars or a door that locks...the world of love wants no monsters in it". As Maren's pained expression falls onto her mother offscreen, Guadagnino continues this visual and metaphorical reflection as her mother's distorted reflection is visible to the right of the frame. Suddenly, the camera cuts back to Maren's perspective as her mother unsuccessfully tries to bite into her neck in an attempt to save her from a life of misery like herself by killing her. The handheld camera shakes violently as Maren tries to escape her grasp while the nurse intervenes, the audience placed in this frantic and traumatic interaction as she exits the building.

In the same manner, in which homosexuality and cannibalism are marked by the collapse of hierarchical structures and regarded as taboo, Guadagnino continues to emphasize Maren's queerness through his dual coding of this interaction in which transgenerational trauma and their shared biological disposition as “eaters” present a fractured space in which language is a barrier in their shared pain and suffering. In Laura Westengard's book *Gothic Queer Culture: Marginalized Communities and the Ghosts of Insidious Trauma*, she explains how notions of monstrosity and cannibalism reflect the taboo and insidious nature of trauma stating, "Like trauma, cannibalism is incomprehensible and uncanny because it creates a fractured space in which one encounters a failure of language—perhaps why the term unspeakable is frequently applied to both cannibalism and trauma" (Westengard 138). As Maren continues to grapple with her inherited pathological consumption practices and relieve herself from her perception of her subjectivity as inherently morally corrupt, Janelle's deep repression and self-mutilation in an attempt to terminate her urges confirms this monstrous perception while symbolizing this internalized and violent homophobia. Guadagnino emphasizes this during Janelle's horrified realization that her daughter has inherited this perceived curse, causing her to externalize this hatred and physically lash out, preferring her daughter to be dead rather than be like her. However, Maren is equally horrified by her pursuit of a positive affirmation of her identity through biological kin as she is further confronted with institutional oppression and vulnerability.

The systemic vulnerability Guadagnino presents within Maren's interaction with her mother recalls this dual dangerous but vulnerable subjectivity surrounding her cannibalism/queerness and how her racial and gender identity informs her ability to be comfortable within her navigation of other "eaters" as she tries to survive and satiate her hunger ethically and sustainably. In Maren's pursuit to affirm her self-worth and humanity, she

encounters a fellow eater, Sully (Mark Rylance), an older, caucasian, and unsettling man who recognizes her based on her scent. Although Maren is unsettled by his obvious interest in her, Sully teaches her how to identify their kind and warns her of the potential threat other eaters can present to each other. Guadagnino begins to establish the potential danger of white hyper masculine violence. Maren's femininity presents this danger around other, older male eaters; however, Lee (Timothée Chalamet) is a stark outlier due to their shared age, feminine/gender non-conforming qualities, exhibits traits of being bisexual in a scene where he essentially cruises to provide food for himself and Maren. As the two embark on a journey and start to become romantically involved, the two encounter another pair of eaters, as one of them describes consuming a victim "bones and all" as a euphoric and spiritually life-changing experience. Although Maren is disturbed by this as she perceives her cannibalism as a destructive force, Guadagnino constructs this as a motif that becomes forefronted in the culmination of her romance with Lee in their acceptance of each other despite their flaws as they try to live a normal life. In a scene located (1:51:44 - 2:04:51), Guadagnino combines graphic shot composition and dynamic camerawork to present a provocative and triumphant declaration of committing to love through cannibalistic consumption and bodily communion in the face of white hyper-masculine violence. Maren enters the apartment as the camera oscillates between various static medium shots behind and in front of her as she observes the bedroom, noticing an open bag on the bed. As Maren searches for Lee, Guadagnino briefly cuts to a perspective shot of the camera approaching the bed before cutting back to her in the same position outside the bedroom doorway. The camera alternates between static medium shots from behind and in front of Maren creating a sense of uneasiness through the audience's gaze of Maren and her surroundings. The camera creates a symbiotic relationship between the audience's observations and Maren's to

reflect a sense of unwanted and disoriented voyeurism. As Maren enters the bedroom, the camera cuts to a medium-tracking shot of her curious and slightly concerned face as she approaches the bed. As she sniffs the air, the camera swiftly cuts to a shaky hand-held close-up of a hand reaching for Maren's face off-screen before revealing Sully's face. The camera continues to alternate between full overhead shots of Sully forcibly throwing Maren onto the bed and close up's of Maren's shaken demeanor as he holds her at knifepoint. The camera cuts to Maren's perspective as she peers up at an aggressive Sully, alternating from their perspectives through overhead and low angled shots as he orders her not to scream when he takes his hand away. Sully traces his knife against her cheek as he confesses his love for her and threatens her believing she will reveal to other eaters of his rituals and identity. His drool slipping from his mouth onto the camera as he refers to himself in third person in his soft yet stern voice, his body consumes the screen entrapping the audience. The interaction continues to escalate as Maren slowly and calmly tries to bargain with Sully while he physically overpowers her, trying to use her racial and gender identity to weave doubt in her ability to disclose his crimes, stating "who will believe me?". The camera cuts to a close-up of Sully's face in center frame as he lays on Maren's chest; the composition reflects Maren's physical and emotional confinement during this interaction. As the scene progresses, Lee attacks Sully from behind suffocating him with a plastic bag, the camera alternating between overhead and perspective shots from Maren and Sully as the trio fall to the ground. The camera's depth of focus combined with various hand held perspectives and close ups of Maren, Lee, and Sully that briefly alternate reflects a chaotic and cathartic climax as Maren repeatedly and forcibly punctures Sully. As blood continues to splatter on her mouth and face, the audience becomes lost in the violence and bloodshed on screen, this once blissful domestic sphere turning into a house of horrors. The camera abruptly cuts to a static, full shot of

the apartment's quiet and unassuming exterior as tree branches creep into the frame. Guadagnino visually sows the seeds of nature breaching this faux self-contained structure as the camera cuts closer to the trees beside the house. Nature slowly invades the frame with each cut until it overtakes its entirety. The camera cuts back to the gory scene unfolding inside the house, Guadagnino employing an overhead tracking shot of Maren and Lee dragging Sully's body to the bathroom, leaving a blood-soaked trail on the floor. In a turn of events, Maren digs into Sully's open wounds, the camera maintaining a close-up of her ravenous blood-covered face as he whimpers in agony. Maren, now baptized in blood, the camera tracks her as she exits the bathroom, Lee following shortly behind before collapsing due to loss of blood and a puncture wound to his lung. As Maren tries to tend to his wound she finds out that Sully had consumed his sister Kayla (Anna Cob) however a dying Lee dismisses her concern and tells her to eat his bones and all as their final act of love. The camera intercuts with various static medium shots of the house in its mixture of semblances of normal domestic life contrasted with blood-splattered walls. The film breaks down the fallacy of their attempt at normalcy as the camera cuts back to a close-up of the pair covered in blood as she tenderly kisses him before consuming him. This act of violence becomes one of bodily communion reflected in their visual proximity to the audience as their bodies are conjoined as Maren lays on top of him. Suddenly, various long static shots of the now spotless and vacant apartment cycle on screen. The camera fades into an extra-long shot of a topless Maren and Lee intertwined in each other's arms in an open field, the camera zooming in on them as they sit peacefully staring off into the sunset.

Maren's consumption of Lee, "bones and all", enacts this triumphant and grotesque commitment to love and divisive action to live authentically and not by the hetero/homonormative rituals. This complete indulgence of the body enacts this symbolic



representation of loving someone down to their fundamental core. Guadagnino's representation of Maren's navigation of her identity as an eater within the white and male-dominated sphere of cannibalism acts as a channel to contend with the previous iterations of cinematic cannibals while transforming this destructive symbol into a valuable reflection of unwavering acceptance.

The multifaceted, grotesque representation and exploration of girlhood within *Ginger Snaps* (John Fawcett, Canada, 2000), *Jennifer's Body* (Karyn Kusama, USA, 2009), *Raw* (Julia Ducournau, France, 2016), and *Bones and All* (Luca Guadagnino, USA, 2022), center the teenage female cannibal perspective to explore journeys of identity negotiation, transition into womanhood, and survival as they live within the fringes of society or states of social and physical otherness. *Ginger Snaps* and *Jennifer's Body*, campy, stylized, and satirical nature, interrogate the traditional heterosexual trappings of the Wolfman and the "final girl" tropes, to generate a new sphere of expression that examines the nuances of queer female relationships and the ridiculousness of sex-gender binaries through their unruly appetites and bodily excesses. While new and more grounded iterations of the female cannibal in *Raw* and *Bones and All*, further elevate this queer subjectivity in their portrayal of cannibalism, it becomes another facet to unearth repressed histories within generational dynamics and personified structures of oppression to present questions of inheritance and futurity. This cinematic evolution of the female cannibal's subjectivity as one that emerges from its origin as phallogentric threat that must be destroyed to a malleable figure that becomes humanized through their navigation of sexuality, love, and acceptance through their cannibalistic compulsions speaks to a newfound a perception and connectivity to the monstrous feminine figure.

This emphasis on the materiality of the body conjures a productive space in which elements of pain and perverse pleasure become political and aesthetic resources of empowerment

that speak to and foreground a spectrum of patriarchal abuses. Through the various embodiments of the feminine monstrous form experienced by the spectator, either through proximity to the abject in the case of *Ginger Snaps* and *Jennifer's Body* or cinematic identification with the abject perspective in *Raw* and *Bones and All*, present illicit and taboo images to support subversive sexualities and kinship structures. Through the channels of horror, these films present a reflexive and heightened reality to deconstruct constricting practices and social standards surrounding sex-gender binary to produce a relatable queer intersubjectivity. This newfound relatability of the feminine cannibal has become a prominent figure within film and media with the recently popular television show *Yellowjackets* (Showtime, 2021) and *The Horrors of Dolores Roach* (Amazon Prime, 2023). These new iterations incorporate a more mature, middle-aged female perspective to comment on one's ability to navigate trauma, unsatisfactory lifestyles, and destructive consumption practices within hyper capitalist societies. The female cannibal trope has become a familiar figure that will soon solidify its position within popular media for queer feminine audiences.

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