

Foreword to the Hannibal Lecter Trilogy

This article, *King of Killers: The Criminological Theories of Hannibal Lecter, Part One*, is the first in a trilogy of articles that attempts to explain the crimes of Thomas Harris's successful literary character, Dr. Hannibal "The Cannibal" Lecter. This first article attempts to examine the public's fascination with crime and the serial killer, to document the phenomenal success of the Lecter novels and movies, and to suggest that the character of Hannibal Lecter is so popular because he conforms to some etiological models of serial murder while defying others, establishing a paradox in the minds of readers and viewers.

The second article in the trilogy, *Contemporary Demonology: The Criminological Theories of Hannibal Lecter, Part Two*, is scheduled to appear in the Spring 2006 issue of the *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*. This article suggests that Lecter is such a wildly popular character either because he is a criminal genius, or because he is literally a monster. In particular, this article explores the possibility that Lecter is a vampire, a devil, or some combination of the two.

The third article in the trilogy, *The Devil Made Me Do It: The Criminological Theories of Hannibal Lecter, Part Three*, is scheduled to appear in the Summer 2006 issue of the *Journal of Criminal Justice and Popular Culture*. This article suggests that perhaps Lecter is more sympathetic victim than monster, linking his crimes to a terrible childhood trauma. This article also explores the possibility that Hannibal Lecter's popularity has more to do with the difficult questions of metaphysical evil he poses than with his origins as a serial killer, criminal genius, vampire, devil, or victim. While each of the three articles stands alone as a self-contained essay, they can also be read in combination.

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