# Serial Killer in Thomas Harris's Novels

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**Abstract**

This paper analyses the character of a serial killer in Thomas Harris's novels on the example of the cannibal serial killer Hannibal Lecter. The aim is to shed light on the personal characteristics of serial killers pointing to the conclusion that rather than being born as serial killers, they are made that way due to unfavourable circumstances, such as trauma. However, many serial killers suffer from some sort of psychological disorder and are proclaimed psychopaths or sociopaths, which is why many believe that they are born as killers. The main focus of this paper is the life, personality, modus operandi, and psychology of Hannibal Lecter – a successful psychiatrist who became a cannibal and a serial killer. The trauma Hannibal endures as a child plays a significant role in his psychological development, and it is the source of his cannibalistic tendencies. The paper will also show that the strange attraction that such characters hold over massive audiences arises from their ambiguous identity formed (or perceived) at the intersection of the human and the monstrous.

**Keywords:** cannibalism, Hannibal Lecter, serial killer, trauma, Thomas Harris.

## Contents

# Introduction

Thomas Harris's tetralogy about Hannibal Lecter offers an in-depth insight into the criminal mind of a brilliant, yet spooky psychiatrist who, despite his crimes, seems to have enchanted authors, actors, and even regular people to follow in his footsteps. The complexity of Hannibal's character is reflected in his behaviour, thoughts, and actions. To understand Harris's creation Hannibal, one needs to encompass the insights of numerous scientific fields including psychology, psychiatry, pedagogy, sociology, philosophy, cinematography, criminology, anatomy, and even pop culture, where he left a substantial impact.

Such a task being too daunting, this paper narrows its point of view somewhat and aims to analyse Harris's Hannibal Lecter as a brilliant and intelligent scientist on the one hand, and a monstrous killer and cannibal on the other. The analysis of four novels about Hannibal Lecter written by Thomas Harris (*Red Dragon*, 1983; *The Silence of the Lambs*, 1988; *Hannibal*, 1999; *Hannibal Rising*, 2004) will be substantiated by relevant psychological, sociological, and literary theory and research, which will aid in the further dissection of Hannibal's complex character both in the novels and in popular culture.

The opening chapter focuses on the demographics of the serial killer, and is divided into five subchapters. The first subchapter deals with the depiction of some of the most notable examples of serial killers both in real life, like Jack the Ripper or Jeffrey Dahmer, and in fiction, like Bluebeard. This is followed by a discussion of the killers' characteristics, along with the clarification of key concepts, namely the opposition between nature and nurture, psychopathy, and sociopathy.

The second chapter looks into the character of Hannibal Lecter, focusing on the question of artistry of crime, which is discussed through numerous sociological and psychological theories supported by examples from Harris's novels, and also analyses his life and relationships. A multifaceted character such as Hannibal has complex relationships with the two most notable characters through all four novels: the FBI detectives Will Graham, who according to some theories, might be his double, and Clarice Starling, with whom he has intense psychological, and later on a sexual relationship.

The concluding chapter deals with the character of the serial killer in popular culture and includes a discussion on the contemporary on-screen media coverage of serial killers, answering the question of why we are so attracted to notorious serial killers. This is followed by concluding remarks.

# 1. THE PHENOMENON OF A SERIAL KILLER

Before one starts interpreting a topic of this nature, it is necessary to address the terminology behind the various terms related to the act of killing and the killer. The plethora of classifications points to the complexity of both the act and the perpetrator, as every act of murder occurs at a different time, frequency, place, circumstances, manner, and for different reasons (motives). According to Ronald M. Holmes and Stephen T. Holmes, there are six types of serial killers. Their classification includes three types of killers who kill for non-sexual reasons: vision, mission, and comfort killer (qtd. in Silkes 4). The visionary killers hear voices that guide them on what to do. The mission killers act on various egoistical beliefs that are purely subjective (the killer invents a mission for themselves), and, as Bartol and Bartol explain, the comfort killer kills for material gain – to obtain a comfortable lifestyle (197). Three other subtypes of serial killers are driven by sexual motives: lust killers, thrill killers, and power/control killers. The only difference between them is whether the victim is alive, and which role they play in their fantasy (Holmes and Holmes qtd. in Silkes 5).

Silkes introduces another classification related to the topic indicating the number of victims and the time gap between the deaths. Mass murder occurs when three or more people have been killed at the same time. Similar to mass murder is spree murder, but the difference is in the location of the victims. All victims have been killed in different areas in quick succession and within a short period (under 24 hours). The serial killers kill their victims within intervals that exceed 24 hours, which temporarily satisfies the killers' motivation and separates specific sequences of behaviour (Silkes 1). Kenji Lee differentiates several types of serial killers according to their motives. These include profit, passion, hatred, power, domination, revenge, opportunism, fear, contract killing, desperation, compassion, and ritual (qtd. in Abe 33). Dietz identifies five types of serial killers: psychopathic sexual sadists, crime spree killers, organized crime functionaries, custodial poisoners and asphyxiators, and supposed psychotics. Rappaport defines four categories of multicides: pseudo commandos, family annihilators, set-and-run killers, and serial murderers (qtd. in Oleson, “King of Killers” 192).

Zelda G. Knight, in her essay “Some Thoughts on The Psychological Roots of the Behaviour of Serial Killers as Narcissists: An Object Relations Perspective,” explores the general personality of an average serial killer. She concludes that they are often driven by strong sexual instincts (ch. 2.7). The other key concept that she investigates is the early childhood of a serial killer. Mothers are described as controlling, punitive, and rejecting, or on the other hand, overprotective and

seductive. Fathers are mostly absent, either symbolically or literally. Such experiences generate specific types of behaviour that resurface later on in adulthood. The serial killer wants to keep the victim's attention at all times during the torture. It gives him not only the power but also the attention of which he was deprived in his early childhood. The topic of nature and nurture is discussed in more detail in chapter 1.3. of this thesis as one of crucial elements in the formation of a serial killer.

Other authors, such as Kent Kiehl, focus on the biological aspects of the human body and brain perception. Kiehl believes that serial killers suffer from certain disabilities, and their brain does not process information in the same way as is the case with "normal" people. They are deprived of emotions, and, in their own view, they are not doing anything wrong. Such people can be divided into two categories: psychopaths and sociopaths (qtd. in Silkes 2-3). This will be discussed in chapters 1.4. and 1.5. of the thesis.

Norris and Giannangelo compiled a theory according to which serial killers become addicted to both killing and performing the murders ritually to satisfy their urges. Their entire life turns into a killing process, which includes seven phases:

1) Aura Phase – withdrawal from everyday reality, loss of reason, possible hallucinations, inhibition
2) Trolling Phase – begin to actively seek out potential victims, active stalking of victims
3) Wooing Phase – initiating interaction with victims; winning their trust
4) Capture Phase – either very sudden or gradual; exercising dominance over the victim
5) Murder Phase – a phase of intense emotions; may involve pre-mortem sadism or sexual activity
6) Totem Phase – a transformation of the dead body into a symbolic trophy, taking the victim's possessions (also known as memorabilia)
7) Depression Phase – feelings of emptiness and sorrow, triggering desperate fantasies and starting a new cycle with the Aura Phase. (qtd. in Oleson, "King of Killers" 196-97)

The stages of this process include both the phases of development and the suspense typical for narratives, as well as a protagonist that is both highly troubled and shockingly fascinating, so the lives and behaviour (crimes) of serial killers present themselves as pliable material for writers and directors.

### 1.1. The Serial Killer in Literature

According to Phillip L. Simpson, in fiction, film, and television, "the serial killer has quickly become an eminently marketable form of contemporary folk legend" (2). He explains that actual serial killers such as Ted Bundy, Jeffrey Dahmer, Charlie Manson, and Ed Gein are slowly metamorphosing into immortal and profitable cultural icons. Namely, fictional characters such as Leatherface, Michael Myers, Francis Dolarhyde, James Gumb, and Hannibal Lecter all stem from urban folk legends and their real-life predecessors (Simpson 2).

Phillip Jenkins argues that serial killers "provide a means for society to project its worst nightmares and fantasies, images that in other eras or other regions might well be fastened onto supernatural or imaginary folk – devils, vampires, werewolves, witches, evil sorcerers" (112-113). So, why do people tend to identify serial killers as monsters? According to Brian Meehan, equating the serial killer with the monster gives peace of mind to people, as they do not want to believe that someone of their kind is capable of such acts. Often they are not addressed as people but rather as "Other" or the threatening outsider (qtd. in Simpson 7). Moreover, "[o]wing their popularity to 'the incorporation of the monstrous Other into an otherwise homogenous society' they act as catalysts that stimulate our basic fears and anxieties. Coincidentally, they are often attributed 'some unworldly physiology' by the storyteller" (Karasek 4).

In his article "Myth and Murder: The Serial Killer Panic of 1983-5," Jenkins argues that the fictional representation of the contemporary serial killer shares many similarities with Gothic vampire narratives. Characters developed by authors such as S. T. Coleridge, Lord Byron, W. Wordsworth, B. Stoker, O. Wilde, E. A. Poe, Emily and Charlotte Brontë, and D. H. Lawrence, embody either vampires or ordinary humans with vampiric characteristics. Inhuman behaviour such as biting to kill or consuming human flesh is the act that connects the vampire and the monstrosity of a serial killer or cannibal (qtd. in Simpson 5) as does their tormented psyche. Though they might not be immortal like vampires, serial killers live long after their actual or fictional death. Through the folklore tales, serial killers reappear over and over again, in various settings, while the trauma and the fear of the audience are omnipresent as a consequence (Simpson 8). In the sense of depicting them as monsters, the serial killer narrative pertains to the horror genre: "The horror genre can be best defined as that which depicts monsters for the purpose of disturbing, unsettling, and disorienting its consumers, often for the seemingly paradoxical purposes of reinforcing community identity" (Simpson 9).

According to Marcel Danesi, serial killer fiction is a subgenre of the "dark literature genre" that is constituted by Gothic literature and detective story. The plot mostly revolves around the

murder, contains theological or moral sub-context, and a detective's pursuit of solving the mystery behind the case, as well as the identity of the murderer (31). Observing the serial killer genre in literature is far more complex than it seems at first. Simpson suggests that it is plausible to say that the genre reflects American socio-political views of the nineteenth century in combination with folklore stories that project the anxieties and fears of the general public onto fictional characters. It involves a Gothic/romantic villain, literary vampire and werewolf, detective and "pulp" fiction conceits, film noir outsider, frontier outlaw, folkloric threatening figure, and nineteenth-century pseudo-sociological conceptions of criminal (15). In fact, "[t]his fiction takes the chaotic world of gothic and adapts it to the contemporary world through the figure of the serial killer" (Baelo Allué 8).

Simpson identifies four general structural patterns that interweave in almost every serial killer narrative. The neo-Gothic movement places the narrative in haunted, Gothic settings while emphasizing the relationship between the killer and his victim as a taboo topic with romantic/sexual interests. The second movement is the detective procedural movement where one individual, either professional or amateur, sets themselves on a mission of stopping the serial killer. The "psycho" profile puts the killer in the centre but gives the reader a different perspective of events. Sometimes that is the perspective of a killer, sometimes the victim, and sometimes of the third party (detective, lovers, acquaintances...). The last is the mytho-apocalyptic movement which decontextualizes the killer's motives and embodies him as a demonic messenger whose mission is bringing down the "cleansing" fire of apocalypse upon a failed world (25).

In fiction, the murderer of any kind can be presented from four different perspectives: the perspective of a murderer, the witness, the detective, and the victim (see fig.1). According to these perspectives, Joel Black enumerates four types of literary narratives: psychological confession, aesthetics of murder, detective story / murder mystery, and suspense thriller (qtd. in Ziomek 128).

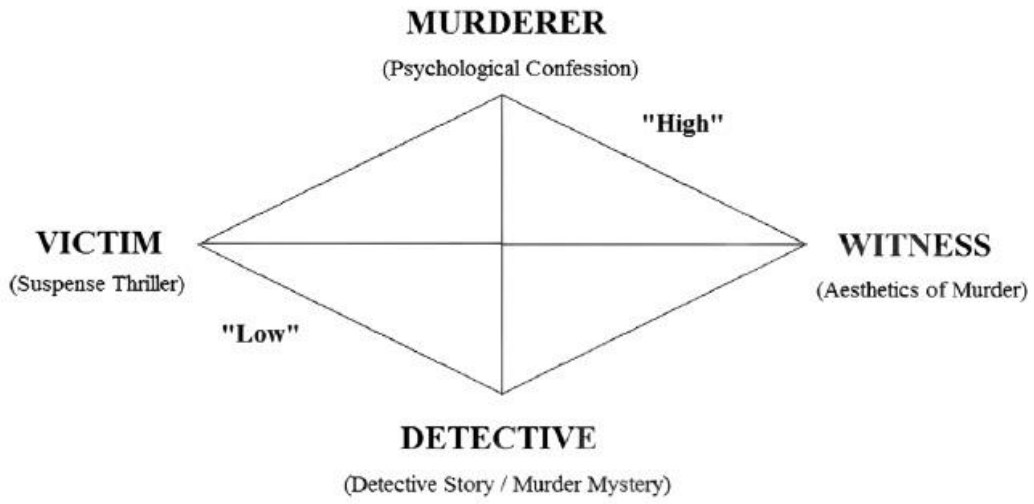


Fig. 1 A general typology of the aesthetics of murder (Black 66).

To better understand the character of the fictional serial killer, the following subchapters will briefly discuss some infamous real-life serial killers who still serve as an inspiration to writers introducing serial killer characters in their fictional work, and whose traits, behaviour or certain life events can be recognized in the character of Hannibal Lecter.

### *1.1.1. Jack The Ripper*

From August to November of 1888 in Whitechapel, London, an unknown person murdered five prostitutes. Hannah Irwin points out that, since the culprit has never been caught, he has been given the name "Jack the Ripper," and the body of fictional and non-fictional texts dedicated to the murders is nowadays referred to as "Ripperature" (1). In the media, Jack was depicted as a manifestation of Death itself, with a grinning skull for his head and clutching a doctor's bag filled with surgical instruments which he used to kill his victims. Several letters were released in the newspapers written by Jack himself ("The Dear Boss" and "From Hell") in which he warned the public of what he was about to do, but nobody recognized the handwriting. Among the letters, he delivered human body parts, mostly entrails of his victims (Irwin 1-2). In addition to these two, London police received hundreds of other letters from people claiming to be the killer, which shows that he became a sort of a celebrity at the time and gained his everlasting fame. He is often regarded as the first modern serial killer (Danesi 4-5).

Some "Ripperologists" claim that Jack's motivation for murdering prostitutes was religion; namely, that he was on the mission to fulfil God's quest imposed on him in his early childhood. Consequently, he was seen as a mentally unstable individual, rather than a supernatural creature

(Irwin 5). His nickname combines general connotations of the name Jack with the folkloric ones: "He was called 'Jack,' a common British name for a random male, the equivalent of American 'John Doe,' and 'the Ripper' because he used a sharp knife to cut his victim's throats and slash their bodies" (Danesi 4). Additionally, "Spring-heeled Jack" was a part of Victorian folklore and was described as a bogeyman who scared children on the streets (Willis 2). His simultaneous notoriety and mysteriousness caused a sort of ambiguous perception of his persona: "Jack was seen by some as a kind of Avenging Angel against Industrialism and Victorian society, an Angel who wanted to shake up his society in a dramatic way" (Danesi 7).

Unsurprisingly, Jack the Ripper has influenced many authors to bring into existence characters similar to him or even introduce him as the serial killer in their work. Samuel E. Hudson in his book *Leather Apron, or, the Horrors of Whitechapel, London* presents Jack as an atavistic human who mirrors late-Victorian fears of crime, poverty, and the destabilization of identity in society (Irwin 3; Matek 71-73). Contemporary works, however, no longer depict Jack as a supernatural creature, but rather as a real human, more horrifying than the monsters from the tales (Irwin 5).

### *1.1.2. Jeffrey Dahmer*

As James Clinton Oleson records in his article "King of Killers," in July 1991, officers from Milwaukee have arrested Jeffrey Dahmer, a serial killer who has been killing his male victims since 1978, and keeping parts of their bodies in his apartment. From an early age, he was interested in chemistry and how animals (and later on humans) react to certain chemicals. He used to leave the bodies inside his apartment, letting them decompose, preserving some of them, and eating others: "In the 1980s' Jeffrey Dahmer murdered and cannibalized 17 young men, consuming parts of their bodies in the belief that they would be brought to life within his body" (199). Kelly Falla states that he was a serial killer and a cannibal for over a decade before being caught. As a child, he had been diagnosed with Asperger's Disorder, and later on, many psychologists and psychiatrists claimed that he had multiple psychological disorders, but that he was sane, which ultimately sent him to life-long prison (1-7). In addition to Dahmer's mental state, his parents played a major role in his development; their marriage was unstable and full of violence. Also, his homosexuality contributed to creating distance between him and women, whom he found threatening since his mother was the dominant person in their household. To regain some of the control that he could not have during his childhood, he started torturing animals and, eventually, other boys and men (Amundson 2-6).

Despite of – or because of – the horrific character of his deeds, Dahmer, like Jack the Ripper, appears as a pop-culture figure. *My Friend Dahmer* is the title of the graphic novel written by Derf Backderf, who, allegedly, was Dahmer's friend and classmate. Backderf creates a surprisingly sympathetic portrait of a disturbed young man struggling against the morbid urges emanating from the deep recesses of his psyche – a shy kid, a teenage alcoholic who never quite fit in with his classmates ("My Friend Dahmer"). Also, the famous pop singer Katy Perry mentions him in her song "Dark Horse." On the surface, the song speaks about love and sex, but on a deeper level, it reflects the toxic relationship between partners, where the woman is depicted as a vicious person who will not take no for an answer: "She eats your heart out / Like Jeffrey Dahmer / Be careful" (Perry).

#### *1.1.3. Bluebeard*

"Bluebeard," written by Charles Perrault, is a fairy tale about a man who is rich, has a blue beard, and has a series of wives, each of whom disappears without a trace. In fact, he kills them all for disobeying his orders not to unlock the floor door behind which he kept the previous wives' corpses.

Sigmund Freud's and Carl Jung's theories of psyche provide a deeper understanding of this story. The key represents a collective consciousness, and his insecurities are responsible for his seemingly formidable persona. His behaviour points to the conclusion that he is controlled by his "id" – his innermost desires (Akçay 1-7). Additionally, it can be claimed that Bluebeard craves control over his wives – they are not only killed for finding the corpses but also (or even more so) for disobeying him. The presence of a serial killer in folk or fairy tales suggests that people used such type of expression both to keep the legends alive and to warn against possible dangers, even though they did not want to truly believe that they are indeed possible.

### 1.2. The Characteristics of Serial Killers

Not much research has been conducted on the general characteristics of serial killers, but rough socio-demographic data has been found. William B. Arndt conducted a research on serial killers, reporting they are mostly in their late twenties or early thirties with the median age of the first kill at age 27 (9). In 1993, Jenkins investigated the ethnicity of serial killers and concluded that African American serial killers represent 13 – 20% of the serial killer population, Caucasians 81%, while Asian or Hispanic serial killers are rarely reported. The number of victims is impossible to

determine precisely since many killers have not admitted the accurate number of their victims nor have all the bodies been found. Having in mind all the unsolved cases as well, the average number of bodies ranges from 3 to 13. The period of activity is estimated between 4 and 5 years (Arndt 9-13). In 2002, Hickey found that 40% of perpetrators killed only women, 22% only men, and 37% killed both. When the sexual activity was involved, 82% of victims were women, while 18% were men (qtd. in Arndt et al. 121-126).

Significantly, an irrefutable fact which connects all serial killers is that all of them had experienced severe trauma, usually in their childhood. According to Arndt et al., the predisposition factors may be biological (genetic, foetal alcoholism, drug exposure, head injury, and brain pathology), psychological, and/or sociological. During the formative period, a future serial killer may be exposed to abuse (either sexual or physical), inappropriate parenting, divorce, or the death of a family member. If more than one of these events happens in quick succession, the individual is at a higher risk of experiencing severe trauma. Some possible consequences are mistrust of others, feelings of being rejected, worthlessness, and inability to cope with stress (120). These types of trauma affect the person's behaviour and way of thinking significantly, and, in extreme cases, the person reacts to it in an aggressive way. More will be said about the topic of trauma in chapter 2.2., whereas the next chapter will look into the continuous debate about the degree of influence of genetics and education on human behaviour, in the context of serial killers.

### 1.3. Nature vs. Nurture

A whole range of scientists research and argue about the causes of serial killers' brutality and monstrosity. Were they born like that, and was their future inevitable, or did their surroundings and possible childhood trauma shape them in that direction? Is the key in the hormonal changes and genetic codes inherited from parents or in the behaviour, upbringing style, and the environment? Kinvin Worth claims that human behaviour appears to be governed by the complicated mix of biological and environmental factors whose influence is visible during a person's lifetime (qtd. in Hansen 21). Significantly, the modus operandi of a contemporary serial killer differs from the one that lived a century or two ago. Kevin D. Haggerty states that the individual should not take full responsibility for the crime: "Serial killing is contextual, and any biological predispositions, individual desires, or personal pathologies that might play a role in motivating killers or shaping their action are conditioned by larger structured factors. Most of the characteristic attributes related to the dynamics of serial killing are unique to modern societies" (171). Thomas Harris speaks in favour of this theory, arguing that "our tendency to murder one

another is biologically predestined through our intellectual hyper-development" (qtd. in Simpson 93). Some researchers claim that serial murders have the XYY syndrome. It is an additional Y chromosome that is responsible for excessive violence, aggression, and impulsivity. People with this syndrome are more sadistic and have homicidal motivation (Arikan 8).

Many behavioural traits are triggered by the activation of specific genes. Scientists have confirmed that carrying a gene does not affect an individual unless the gene becomes active. People are genetically predisposed to display certain behavioural patterns, but negative behaviours require an outside factor. Scientists refer to it as an environmental "second hit," such as inappropriate parenting, trauma, and negative experiences in childhood (Hansen 21). A person can inherit a general vulnerability to the symptoms of psychopathy, and then the environmental factors can shape which of the symptoms will evolve (Fidanboylu et al. 6).

According to Lauren Phegley, people do not choose what they will become; rather their actions are a reflection of the surrounding environment. The "self" is not created through choice but reflects what is around it. According to that theory, the serial killer persona is not naturally created, but rather developed (100). For Hare, sociopaths are forged entirely by social factors. He believes that there is no evidence that psychopathy is the direct result of early social or environmental factors (Federman et al. 49). Joel Norris explains the consequences of childhood trauma by suggesting that it creates a reflex toward violence: "Parents who abuse their children, physically as well as psychologically, instil in them an almost instinctive reliance upon violence as a first resort to any challenge" (qtd. in Danesi 32-33).

Abe conducted qualitative research observing the childhood environments of 52 serial killers. Several categories of probable causes of their behaviour were formed based on the patterns registered during the early lives of the study's overall case (see table 1). It is important to note that many subjects belonged to multiple categories (Abe 32).

Table 1

The types of environments that caused the antisocial behaviour in early life of serial killers (Abe 35-36).

| Category | Trauma / Cause of the Behaviour |
|---|---|
| | Aggression / Domination from mother |

| | |
|---|---|
| Type I | • Stress from anger-prone / overbearing mother<br>• Denial of identity/male sexuality |
| Type II | Abuse / home terrorization by father |
| Type III | Hostilities from both parents |
| Type IV | Bullied at school |
| Type V | Abuse at orphanage / institution |
| Type VI | Neglect / Deprived of basic care after birth |
| Type VIII | Adoption / Deprived of basic care after birth |

The thorough analysis of all subjects yielded that a single traumatic event (Type I trauma) covers only a small margin of the cases. The majority of them endured repetitive trauma (Type II trauma). Single traumatic events happen between ages 1 and 8; 46 out of 52 serial killers experienced type II trauma. Abuse factors were present in all 52 cases. Among 52 subjects, only 5 shared such features (Abe 37), making abuse the clearest and most frequent cause of murderous behaviour. Lauge and DeWitt conducted a worldwide study of 165 serial killers and they point out that only a small percentage become serial killers due to neurological malfunctioning resulting from head injuries, epilepsy, or deep temporal-lobe spiking (qtd. in Abe 37).

Specifically, abuse triggers psychological disorders that lead to aggression. These disorders can, to a certain extent, explain their ways of thinking and behaviour. The following subchapters will thoroughly analyse psychopathy and sociopathy as conditions closely related to the character of serial killers.

### 1.4. Psychopathy

James Williams, in *The Principles of Psychology* defines a psychopath in the following way: "The term *psychopath* fills in the space left open by the inability of late-nineteenth-century alienists and neurologists to locate the seat and trajectory of mental disease and violence in the brain, and moral philosophy's ethical stance regarding the importance of willed behaviour" (qtd. in Federman et al. 46). Robert Hare describes psychopaths as:

> [s]ocial predators who charm, manipulate, and ruthlessly plow their way through life, leaving a broad trail of broken hearts, shattered expectations, and empty wallets. Completely lacking in conscience and in feelings for others, they selfishly take what they want and do as they

please, violating social norms and expectations without the slightest sense of guilt or regret. (qtd. in Federman et al. 48)

Bruce A. Arrigo and Stacy Shipley offer a historical overview of the definitions of psychopathy and psychopaths. According to them, Phillipe Pinel was the first researcher who recognised psychopathy as a mental disorder in France in the early 1800s. He advocated for moral treatment over brutal and inhuman practices (330). In 1812, the American psychiatrist Benjamin Rush started practicing "social condemnation" claiming such individuals were "affected by a genetic defect that required medical treatment rather than staying at psychiatric institutions" (338). In 1835, the physician J. C. Prichard introduced the expression of "moral insanity" which was defined as "a morbid pervasion of the natural feelings, affections, inclinations, temper, habits, moral dispositions, and natural impulses, without any remarkable disorder or defect of the intellect or knowing and reasoning faculties and particularly without any insane illusions or hallucinations" (qtd. in Arrigo and Shipley 330). He claimed morally insane patients can understand the difference between right and wrong, yet they are compelled to engage in deplorable behaviours (Arrigo and Shipley 330). In 1891, a German theorist, Julius Ludwig August Koch coined the term "psychopathic inferiority" describing individuals who "engage in abnormal behaviours due to heredity but who were not insane" (331). In 1904, Richard von Krafft-Ebing described psychopaths as "savages who are involuntarily admitted into asylums indefinitely for their own good and for the safety of society" (332).

In 1915, Emil Kraepelin introduced classification categories for different types of psychopaths. They are:

1) born as criminals, the excitable, shiftless, impulsive types, the liars, swindlers, antisocial and trouble making types (They were described as manipulative, charming, glib, and unconcerned for others.)
2) "criminals by impulse" who were overcome by uncontrollable desires to commit offenses like arson or rape for purposes unrelated to material gain
3) professional criminals who acted out of cold, calculated self-interest
4) moral vagabonds who wandered through life with neither self-confidence nor responsibility. (qtd. in Arrigo and Shipley 333)

Hervey M. Cleckley in 1976 provided a list of features that describe a prototypical psychopath. Those include: egocentricity, deceptiveness, callousness, impulsivity, irresponsibility, shallow emotions, poor behaviour controls, and antisocial behaviours. Also, they are prone to using other people for obtaining personal gain or some sort of satisfaction. When it comes to personal relationships, psychopaths have weak ties with their families, move often, rarely engage in long-

lasting romantic relationships, and often engage in criminal activities. Of course, if a person possesses one or some of these characteristics, that does not mean they are psychopaths per se. Many factors are incorporated in the diagnosis of the psychopathy as a personality disorder (qtd. in Fidanboylu 5-6).

A psychopath's behaviour deviates from the norm. His motives are more obscure than those of an "ordinary" criminal motivated by economic or financial gain. Their crimes are more violent, and the psychopath's response may be colder and more chilling, whereas the victim might be a child or some other underserving person (Federman et al. 40). For Hare and Cleckley, a psychopath chooses to act dangerously while being conscious of his target's weaknesses, and is prone to taking risks. They believe that psychopaths' condition is more determined by their genes rather than their environment: "Psychopathy reveals itself by a sudden eruption of the will that exists in a hybrid mental state between sanity and madness, but not insanity or mental illness" (Federman et al. 40). Such individuals do not suffer from psychoses, for which they need to be hospitalized, and are perfectly aware of their actions. Their awareness coupled with indifference poses a threat to society. The fact is that they choose to kill, manipulate, and destroy; they are sick, diseased, but not psychotic. Their actions make them "morally sick," showing no remorse or guilt whatsoever. When asked about guilt, a convicted serial killer Ted Bundy replied that it was "a concept used for controlling people, a very unhealthy illusion" (Federman et al. 43). Even though psychiatrists have been trying to locate psychopathy within the brain, they still have not found a source of the disease. The modern founder of psychopathic studies, Hervey Cleckley, in his *The Mask of Sanity*, writes that psychopathic personality can be linked with "psychopathic sexuality," "pathologic emotionality," and "amoral or asocial psychopathy" (Federman et al. 48).

In "The Wisdom of Psychopaths," Kevin Dutton refers to research conducted by Belinda Jane Board and Katarina Fritzon. The research included three groups of participants: business managers, psychiatric patients, and hospitalized criminals with psychopathic diagnoses. They compared how they fared on a psychological profiling test. The results displayed that the number of psychopathic attributes is higher in business leaders than in criminals. Among others, prominent attributes were: superficial charm, egocentricity, persuasiveness, lack of empathy, independence, and focus (79). In another research, participants were given a set of personal characteristics and had to decide what profile or occupation corresponds to those attributes. According to participants, attributes such as "ruthless, fearless, charming, amoral, and focused" corresponded to CEOs, spies, surgeons, politicians, the military, serial killers, assassins, and bank robbers (Dutton 79). Although many people use the terms psychopath and sociopath interchangeably, important distinctions exist.

In the next subchapter, the concept of sociopathy will be analysed as it is closely related to the previously mentioned personality disorders.

### 1.5. Sociopathy

Sociopaths indeed share many traits with psychopaths, but the most notable difference between the two is not in their actions, but the perception of their behaviour and their response to the emotions of others. Because their actions are mostly the same, most people cannot see the underlying distinction between the two. In fact, according to Kara Mayer Robinson, contemporary psychiatry does not distinguish between psychopaths and sociopaths, but subsumes both under a joint diagnosis: *antisocial personality disorder*. Both psychopaths and sociopaths have a poor sense of right and wrong, but the key difference is in whether the person has a conscience or not. A sociopath has a weak conscience which will not stop their behaviour, whereas a psychopath has no regard for others ("Sociopath v. Psychopath").

Phillip Alperson, in his book *Diversity and Community: An Interdisciplinary Reader,* provides a detailed description of a prototypical sociopath. Such an individual is extremely perceptive of other people's experiences and feelings. They possess the ability to successfully manipulate others and some people would even describe them as empathetic. Even though they can easily feel others' pain, they do not act from the point of compassion, but they rather see it as a way to get a personal gain. When it comes to emotions, they rarely truly feel anything. That fact correlates with the norm-breaking, which gives them a stimulus severe enough to entice the rush of excitement, as their threshold for feeling anything is significantly higher than in a regular person. They are aware of the events around them, but that awareness is cognitive rather than emotional. According to Alperson, they are too involved with themselves, narcissistic by nature, incapable of creating ties and relationships with other people. When observing behavioural patterns, it is evident that sociopaths continue with their actions despite the fact that they do feel remorse and guilt, to some extent, in contrast to psychopaths who do not care at all. Sociopaths feel guilt, but not strong enough to prevent future actions detrimental to themselves and others. Alperson suggests that one thing that is specific for sociopaths is that they are oriented to the present moment, not worrying about the future or living in the past. They are detached from anything that has happened or will happen. They are focused on the current role they are playing. The trap lies at the moment when they no longer feel satisfied with their current position. At that point, they are ready to disregard who they are and recreate themselves anew. New roles will bring the excitement they are craving for (242-243).

In other words, "[a]lthough sociopaths lack the capacity for human kindness and compassion, they know the socially acceptable way to behave. They are often very skilful at maintaining a caring and sympathetic facade, especially when it is their self-interest to do so" (Fex and Levin 423). Alongside numerous changes within the brain chemistry and structure of a psychopath and/or sociopath compared to a regular person, Jack Pemment mentions the role of the anterior region of the rostral medial frontal cortex (arMFC), which seems to be deficient in both psychopaths and sociopaths: "It is needed for mentalizing (thinking about the intentions, desires, and beliefs of others), self-knowledge (distinguishing yourself from others), and personal knowledge (being aware of the perception and judgments of others)" (460). Such methods of self-reflection establish a sense of morality that the psychopaths and sociopaths lack. According to Pemment, a psychopath is mostly conditioned by the chemical changes in the brain, while sociopathy can be acquired through outside influence, such as brain injury or dementia, which causes antisocial behaviour (460).

How does all this reflect on Hannibal Lecter, who is going to be the focal point of the analysis? Significantly, in several instances he was explicitly described as a sociopath: "Hannibal Lecter does not have emotions like admiration or respect. He feels no warmth or affection" (Harris, *Hannibal* 325). In addition to this, he is also highly intelligent: "A pure sociopath, that's obviously what he is. But he is impenetrable, much too sophisticated for the standard tests" (Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* 13). This combination of intelligence, bordering on brilliance, and his disregard for others, despite his awareness that his actions hurt them, makes him a compelling fictional character.

## 2. THE ANALYSIS OF THE SERIAL KILLER ON THE EXAMPLE OF HANNIBAL LECTER

Out of many serial killers in literature, Hannibal Lecter is one of the most famous and most intriguing killer protagonists due to his both complex and fascinating character. Pramod K. Nayar describes Lecter in his paper "A Matter of Taste: Monstrosity, Consumption, and Hannibal Lecter," pointing out the ways in which he is superior to other people: "Yet, Hannibal is *unlike* one of us for several reasons: he is a cannibal with a serious set of affections, a man of supreme taste in food, clothing, cars, and drink. He is extremely well-read in a wide variety of areas, from

astronomy to pastronomy. He has an enviable knowledge of art and music. And he is, of course, a brilliant psychiatrist" (1).

To be sure, Nayar is not the only one to see Hannibal Lecter both as a monster and a genius of his age. Noel Carroll describes him as "a physically and cognitively threatening creature that cross[es] the boundaries of deep categories of culture's conceptual scheme" (qtd. in Cenciarelli 115). Oleson suggests that: "[h]is intelligence, more than his status as a serial killer, cannibal, or murdering physician, makes him an unusual – and memorable – literary figure. It elevates him into our pantheon of elite villains" (Oleson, *Contemporary Demonology* 31). For Stephen Whitty, "Lecter is not a man who kills because he was a sick little boy. He kills because it is who he is. It's not his fault he tempts the weak and tortures the damned. It's his job, a position permitted him by Heaven itself, and it is a job no man or medicine or moviemaker can ever take away" (1). In fact, Whitty expounds upon the theme adding a metaphysical quality to Lecter's character: "There is something more to Lecter, something that sets him apart, and is the simplest thing of all: The man is Evil itself. Lecter isn't just devilish, he's the Devil" (1).

The fascination with Lecter is not merely a matter of reader response. Namely, within the fictional universe, other literary characters are also fascinated by him, just as the real-life critics are. The former FBI agent Will Graham, a recurring character in the Hannibal-series, frequently ponders on Lecter and his dual nature: "He's a monster. I think of him as one of those pitiful things that are born in hospitals from time to time. They feed it, and keep it warm, but they don't put it on machines and it dies. Lecter is the same way in his head, but he looks normal and nobody could tell" (Harris, *Red Dragon* 47). In fact, the first two novels of the tetralogy define Lecter through oxymoronic expressions: brilliant scientist and a bestial madman; a psychiatric case-study who is a psychiatrist himself; the serial killer who is a consultant to the police (Oleson, "King of Killers" 201).

Harris, in creating Lecter's character, has contributed to this ambiguous perception of Lecter as both ruthlessly violent and utterly sophisticated:

> Lecter's sense of taste is very highly particularized, and divided between material and tastes. When out in the world, he consumes gourmet food and expensive wine, wears fine clothes, and drives a high-end Jaguar. He also reads hard-core academic journals in higher mathematics, astronomy and psychiatry. He can recite Dante in Italian and Latin. He collects church-collapse paintings and loves Bach. He can only cook in special utensils, which he measures before buying. (Harris, *Hannibal* 288-89)

To make him even more equivocal, even his biological and cultural origin is of a mixed nature. Hannibal Lecter was born in Lithuania. His father was a Lithuanian count, his mother a high-born

Italian, a Visconti. Most of his family has been killed during the Nazi invasion in World War II while he and his sister got captured by the soldiers. After the war, his father's brother Robert and his Japanese wife, Lady Murasaki, take him to live with them in France. Additionally, since both of his parents were nobles, he was educated about manners, and he acquired a profound taste for art and music (Kirana 37). In fact, his warden suggests that "Dr. Lecter had perfect manners, not stiff, but easy and elegant" (Harris, *Hannibal* 87), testifying to his noble birth and gentlemanlike education. However shocking it may seem, his brilliant mind and his education will also contribute to the fascinating, although gruesome, ways in which he will kill and consume his victims.

### 2.1. The Aesthetics of the Killing Methods

In novels and films, but also in real life, the serial killers are frequently remembered precisely by their violent and even outrageous methodology of killing. The criss-cross of real-life killers with fictional killers is visible in the media representation of their killing patterns that are becoming more and more alike. Real serial killers might use fictional serial killers as an inspiration for their deeds, just like writers use the stories about the real killers to develop their fictional characters. Serial killers mostly act in specific patterns that are unknown to the viewer. Every new murder serves as a new instalment for the viewer to disclose a pattern and interpret the motivation the killer has (Baelo Allué 8-9), not only in *why* he kills but also in *how* he does it. In this way, the viewer becomes the detective who tries to understand why the killer does what he does, like the detectives or agents in the novels: "You try to reconstruct his thinking. You try to find patterns" (Harris, *The Red Dragon* 6).

Multiple serial killers have used their victims' corpses and treated them as a piece of their art, putting them in specific positions or decorating body parts thinking of themselves as artists (Baelo Allué 10). *Il Mostro*, one of the serial killers mentioned in Harris' novel *Hannibal*, uses corpses as objects that should be admired and expects to be praised for his artistry: "It was his custom to kill the lovers with a small-caliber pistol, arrange them in a careful tableau with flowers and expose the woman's left breast" (Harris, *Hannibal* 129). The aesthetics of murder is not a twentieth century novelty. In line with the Romantic fascination with a beautiful dead woman (Poe "The Philosophy of Composition"; Matek and Pataki 198-203) and with the rising morbid interests of the Victorians (Matek 73-74) as well as the rise of crime fiction (Matek 79), several nineteenth-century writers considered the idea of artistry of crime. For example, "Thomas de Quincey's *Murder Considered as One of the Fine Arts* defended the idea of considering brutal crimes as works of art if viewed from an aesthetic or disinterested amoral perspective" (Baelo Allué 10).

According to Dominique Gracia, victim's bodies provide a space in which the narrative unfolds. They are presented to viewers as raw products transformed into consumables that the audience craves. It is the female body that is often presented as an object of interrogation, dissection, and examination. It is displayed naked, penetrated, or forced by the killer to show herself to the audience (70). David Lehman concludes: "The detective novel, as a condition of its being, took murder out of the ethical realm and put it into that of aesthetics. By analogy, murder in a murder mystery becomes a kind of poetic conceit, often quite a baroque one; the criminal is an artist, the detective an aesthete, and the blundering policeman a philistine" (qtd. in Simpson 73-74).

De Quincey claims that a tragedy such as murder, terrifying and immoral, may be a "meritorious performance" (qtd. in Ziomek 125) when approached from an aesthetic perspective. Joel Black states the murderer can be regarded as an artist who specialized in destruction rather than creation: "If any human act evokes the aesthetic experience of the sublime, certainly it is the act of murder. And if murder can be experienced aesthetically, the murderer can in turn be regarded as a kind of artist – a performance artist or anti-artist whose specialty is not creation but destruction" (qtd. in Ziomek 125). Gracia also introduces a philosophical relation of beauty, killing, and morality. Her starting point is Immanuel Kant and his relation to aesthetics and morality. He links taste and morality, suggesting that appreciating natural beauty is a mark of a good soul. What we perceive as beautiful is connected to our moral standards. As nature is harmonious and perfect, natural beauty is considered moral. Thus, presenting a murder act as a naturally appealing phenomenon justifies its moral aspect (Gracia 73).

Unsurprisingly, the audience is mostly intrigued by the killing patterns and specific methodology that the serial killers use. Some consider themselves to be artists who offer a unique vision of themselves and the world: "He doesn't just put shards in place for the damage they cause. They're set so he can see himself in their eyes" (Harris, *The Red Dragon* 45). Others feel like they are serving justice to society, and some are just deranged. No matter their motivation, serial killers often create unique killing patterns that encapsulate the process of choosing their victims, the manner of killing, and, lastly, what they do with the corpse. Ansevic and Doweiko claim that most serial killers are too careful and overly organised to fall into the impulsive mood and frenzy that characterize the borderline personality type (qtd. in Fex and Levin 421). In fact, "[t]he signature is so individual and elaborate as to resemble a work of art rather than a mindless act of brutality" (Simpson 83). Thus, each serial killer uses a unique killing methodology that serves as a signature mark left on the crime scene. A good example is the serial killer Buffalo Bill from Harris' novel *The Silence of the Lambs* who skinned his female victims: "At least five times, and probably more, over the past ten months he had abducted a woman, killed her and skinned her" (Harris, *The Silence*

*of the Lambs* 81). Some killers leave an object that signifies their presence and involvement in the act, like glass or mirror shards in *The Red Dragon*. Similarly, Buffalo Bill is obsessed with transition and physical change, so he puts a moth into the victim's throat to reflect the victim's transition from the living to the dead: "Klaus had the bug in his throat . . . just like the girl in West Virginia . . . The significance of the chrysalis is change. Worm into butterfly, or moth. Billy thinks he wants to change. He's making himself a girl suit out of real girls" (*The Silence of the Lambs* 146, 187).

However, Lecter does not have a single, specific killing method he applies to his victims, but most of his murders were done in a very specific and shocking way. For example, while being under the influence of traumatic flashbacks, Lecter kills the bowhunter. He repeatedly stabs him, carving a pattern of wounds into his body that replicates the chart of wounds from an old medieval medical textbook (Gregory 104). For him, it is of greater importance what he does with them after their death – he eats them, and does this almost in a ritualistic way which helps him deal with the chaos of the world as he experienced it. The subsequent chapters will look into the character of Hannibal Lecter and his life in more detail, to illustrate that his traumatic experiences had major influence on his behaviour, that is, on his transformation into a murderer.

### 2.2. Early Childhood and Trauma

Johan Andrew De Wet introduces the McDonald triad – three sets of behaviour typical of children having tendencies for a problematic and potentially dangerous behaviour later in life. The first one is enuresis, also known as chronic bedwetting. It is mostly caused by some sort of abuse in early childhood. The second behaviour is pyromania or uncontrollable desire to set things on fire to show domination and deal with negative emotions such as anger and hatred. Lastly, there is animal torturing that mostly includes killing animals again to show dominance (Arikan 5-6). Writers of crime or horror fiction typically do a lot of research before writing the novel, and incorporate actual facts about murderers (psychological, sociological or biographical) into the story in order to make the characters more realistic. In line with this, Harris's serial killer from the novel *The Red Dragon*, Francis Dolarhyde, was beaten due to excessive bedwetting as a child, and, later on, in one of his killing sprees, he killed the Jacobi family's pets before killing them: "He prayed on pets, carefully, with a cool eye to consequences. They were so tame that it was easy. The authorities never linked him with the sad little bloodstains soaked into the dirt floors or garages" (Harris, *The Red Dragon* 147).

How did it all begin for Hannibal? Hannibal was a child during World War II, and his family was hiding in the family lodge for the three and a half years of Hitler's eastern campaign. Hannibal's cannibalistic tendencies stem from one particular event, which occurred during the war. First, he witnesses the death of his father and mother in a bombing: "Hannibal, on the floor of the lodge, Mischa partly under him, saw his mother lying in the yard, bloody and her dress was on fire" (Harris, *Hannibal Rising* 27). The incident leaves him and his younger sister Mischa orphans. Soon after, they are taken hostage by six deserters. Plagued by hunger, the captors take Mischa, allegedly to play, but Hannibal knows that she will never come back and that they have eaten her. Still, he prays to see her again: "Lecter's prayer is answered: he did see a few of Micha's milk teeth in the reeking stool pit his captors used between the hunting lodge where they slept and the barn where they kept the captive children who were their sustenance in 1944 after the Easter Front collapsed" (*Hannibal Rising* 300). Lecter's world collapses at this point, and all his traumas – most of them repressed – come together bringing about his psychological transformation.

The last conscious memory Lecter has of the lodge is one when a captor tells him they had to eat or they would die, blood dripping from his face. In addition to the death of his parents and cannibalization of his sister, he is haunted by another childhood trauma, which manifests regularly in his dreams: the killing of a little deer when he was a child. According to Gregory, disturbing nightmares and aggressive behaviour directed on the outside entities meet the diagnostic criteria for PTSD (107). Posttraumatic stress disorder, once called shell shock or battle fatigue syndrome, is a condition that manifests lasting traumatic ordeals that cause intense fear, helplessness, or horror. If the conditions are intensifying, last longer than a month, and affect one's everyday life, PTSD is diagnosed (Mohanan 8). The symptoms of PTSD, which Hannibal suffers from include nightmares, excessive sweating, stress triggers, and disturbing flashbacks (Kirana 38).

Hannibal represses the horrific memories from the conscious mind: "We were living at the lodge. There was an explosion. I can remember being picked up by soldiers and riding on a tank to the village. In between I don't know. I try to remember. I cannot" (Harris, *Hannibal Rising* 171). He forgot the details of the cannibalization incident, and he only remembers the bloody mouth, while the bigger picture stays unclear and he cannot access it (Kirana 39). This was the first time that Hannibal witnessed cannibalism, but what made him the way he is, that is, what disturbed him completely, was the moment when the captors told him he has been fed with the broth that included the flesh of his sister (Harris, *Hannibal Rising* 226).

Observing the early life of Hannibal, it is possible to notice the mistakes that caused the worsening of Hannibal's mental condition. After the traumatic experience in the lodge, his uncle sends him to therapy once but then stops, believing the boy will not be cured following standard

medical procedures. He believes affection and love are enough for the boy to feel safe again. Yet, it becomes clear that Lecter cannot control his temper and reacts violently to unpleasant or traumatic events. His aunt, Lady Murasaki, helps him cover up his murder of a butcher who insulted her, sending thus a message to Hannibal that the act of murder is not a crime that carries fatal consequences for both the killer and the victim, and that he can get away with it without any responsibilities (Kirana 42), particularly if the crime is "justified," that is, if it functions as a revenge for an insult or some other crime. Thus, in his teen years, Hannibal becomes a threat even to physically bigger children who bully him. He does not hesitate to strike back, but with more force and a concerning dose of brutality. He never talks to anyone and never makes friends. He is emotionless and displays anti-social behavioural patterns that indicate the development of early stages of psychopathic behaviour (Kirana 38).

According to Haritha Mohanan, trauma is the experience of severe psychological distress following a disturbing or life-threatening event. Sufferers experience extreme anxiety, anger, sadness, or PTSD. There are other consequences outside the body, such as problems with sleep, dysfunction in personal and professional relationships, a diminished sense of self-worth (6). Hamilton claims that "there are wounds that never show on the body that are deeper and more hurtful than anything that bleeds" (qtd. in Mohanan 6). Mohanan suggests that children who have experienced trauma have difficulty identifying, managing, and expressing their emotions. Traumatic events trigger deep external issues such as depression, anxiety, or anger. They often react explosively and their behaviour is hard to predict. Triggers may be everywhere in the environment, so treating the child early on is crucial so it does not affect the child's psychological development (8). The connection between the traumatized child and a serial killer is made by Oleson who suggests the following: "According to the FBI, the serial killer's psyche is that of a violent child's inhabiting the physically powerful body of a full-grown male. His development has been stalled because of some primal trauma or traumas that he cannot resolve. While the serial killer develops the intellectual powers of an adult, he also retains the volatile emotions of the unjustly wounded child" ("King of Killers" 192).

Untreated trauma may cause behavioural and emotional problems regardless of whether the traumatized person represses or remembers the traumatic event(s). "The Method of Loci," also known as "The Memory Palace" (Paxton 1), is a method to recall repressed memories. It was introduced by Cicero who has seen images in his head that brought to his lips words and thoughts without him even noticing it (Paxton 1). Yates defines memory palace as a "theory of reminiscence based on order and association" which is somewhat like a filing cabinet for the brain that meticulously sorts memories as they become associated with tangible objects (qtd in. Paxton 1).

From an early age, Hannibal was introduced to the memory palace by his tutor who warned him: "to remember is not always a blessing" (Harris, *Hannibal Rising* 27). Nevertheless, Hannibal pursues the method and a vast number of physical places constituting his memory palace get linked to the core foundation – the memories of his family. He starts building his memory palace from his mother's room. It is the place where he was nurtured and felt safe during his childhood (Paxton 27). Due to the severe trauma of losing his sister Mischa, Hannibal willingly shuts down the access to places of the memory palace related to her. The traumatic events that follow and meeting Clarice Starling trigger the awakening of the unconscious parts of his memory palace. Because of her and their relationship, he starts to explore memories he has suppressed (Paxton 3). Any, even the smallest trigger or physical object, is powerful enough to set in motion the recall of memories stored deep within the memory palace. The resurfacing of such memories can lead to, in Hannibal's case, seriously deranged and dangerous behaviour (Paxton 1-4) because remembering trauma was not followed by adequate treatment. Thus, upon remembering, Hannibal re-enacts the worst trauma of his life on his victims – cannibalism.

For a long time, Hannibal was trying to repress what Freud would have called "the screen memory" (qtd. in Gregory 104), but he could not keep it up. The memory of the dead deer appears in his memory palace often (Gregory 103) as a symbol of the death of an innocent creature, and also as a symbol of killing for food. As Hannibal's psychiatrist explains in *Hannibal Rising*: "He will not say what happened to his sister. I think he knows, whether he realizes it or not, and here is the danger: The mind remembers what it can afford to remember and at its own speed. He will remember when he can stand it" (Harris, *Hannibal Rising* 64). Unfortunately, the memories of his sister's death create in his troubled mind a strong link between killing and eating.

### 2.3. Cannibalism

Eren Samancioglu proposes that there are two types of cannibalism. The first one is cannibalism for survival, which occurs when a person has no other food and no choice but to consume human flesh to survive. The other type of cannibalism indicates some sort of psychological disorder, as the person consumes another willingly, consciously, and because they want it (45). Hannibal Lecter's cannibalism falls into the second group. Being tortured over and over again by the unpleasant flashbacks from his past, Hannibal revives the cannibalistic tragedy by eating only the internal organs of his victims (Gregory 101). He avoids eating the victim's flesh and consumes essential body parts such as thymus glands, pancreases, or brains (107). The

peculiarity of his behaviour has prompted several researchers to develop theories on his cannibalistic habits.

In her paper "Hannibal Lecter: The Honey in the Lion's Mouth," Bettina Gregory refers to Melanie Klein's paper "Criminal Tendencies in Normal Children," in which Klein states that all children go through repressed and unconscious cannibalistic stages. By the age of two, a child passes through the cannibalistic stage of oral aggression that often manifests by biting the mother's breasts. It serves to gratify the child's destructive impulses in childhood. Klein additionally adds that children's oral aggression is frequently directed at their sibling. Nevertheless, Lecter was overly protective of his younger sister Mischa. He even overidealizes her and projects that aggression onto the outside source of his trauma – the bowhunter (Gregory 102 – 106).

Hannibal is an individual who knows his worth and considers himself a member of the aristocracy. He goes above and beyond in everything he does, and that includes the act of cannibalism. To prove his greatness and refinement, motivated by his lineage, he also cares about the way he is consuming the victims. He carefully chooses which body parts he will eat and he puts lots of attention into the preparation of his *food*. The sophisticated, expensive, gourmet approach to preparing the internal organs of his victims sends the message that he is much better than the captors who destroyed his childhood, ate his sister like animals, and caused him severe trauma for life (Oleson, *The Devil* 119). In *The Silence of the Lambs*, Lecter describes cooking the sweetbreads of his victims into a gourmet dish that was served at a formal party to raise money for the symphony; he fed other musicians with their colleague and friend (Harris, *Silence of the Lambs* 31).

Within the whole tetralogy, there is no exact moment or paragraph in which Hannibal is caught in the deed. The reader is only informed about his past cannibalistic escapades, but direct proof of them is mostly concealed: "The doctors managed to save one of her eyes. Lecter was hooked up to the monitors the entire time. He broke her jaw to get at her tongue. His pulse never got over eighty-five, even when he swallowed it" (Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* 14). Ceniarelli finds it interesting that in *The Silence of the Lambs,* only rumours of his crimes appear, such as that he has egged on his fellow prisoner to swallow his tongue, and the description of a disfigured nurse but no concrete proof that he did it (116). This points to his great cunning. Lecter escapes from prison by killing the guard, peeling off his face, and putting it on top of his own. The ambulance crew believes they are transporting the victim from the jail, and that Lecter has gone missing while he is right in front of them (Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* 291).

His first victim was a butcher who insulted his Japanese aunt. He killed the butcher mostly because he was triggered by the butcher's looks and the bloody environment. Namely, the butcher

reminded him of the soldiers from the lodge (Kirana 39). The scene after the butcher's murder points to Lecter's meticulous approach to both murder and cannibalism: "Paul's face is clean and pale, his lips are intact, but his cheeks are missing and a little blood has leaked from his mouth into the flower vessel, where blood stands like the water beneath a flower arrangement" (Harris, *Hannibal Rising* 84). Cenciarelli argues that Hannibal is a monster not just because he violates the taboo of anthropophagy but, more specifically, because he blurs the line between cannibalism and cultural refinement (115).

The ambiguity between his refinement and his brutality is fascinating, and it represents the core of his *appeal* as a literary character. The following subchapter will therefore analyse Hannibal's character as both a natural genius, and a horrific monster in human shape. The complexity and numerous dichotomies within his character and behaviour are challenging and have inspired many academic researchers to tackle this topic.

### 2.4. Hannibal Lecter – An Evil Mastermind

The character of Hannibal Lecter is difficult to *dissect*, to use an apt term. Harris created a character that can be analysed as a mass murderer, a scientist and genius, a victim of severe trauma, and a cold manipulator. This characterization is based upon his representation in the novels: "There is no consensus in the psychiatric community that Dr. Lecter should be termed a man. He has been regarded by his professional peers in psychiatry, many of whom fear his acid pen in the professional journals, as something entirely Other. For convenience, they term him "monster" (Harris, *Hannibal* 136-137). According to Oleson, "Lecter's paradoxical status as a psychiatrist – killer, as well as his extraordinary intellectual gifts, make him an inherently interesting figure and might help explain his crime. Secondly, it is suggested that Hannibal Lecter may be such an attractive character because he is something more than human (or something less): a vampire, a devil, or some infernal combination of the two" (*Contemporary Demonology* 30). Because of this, his character is difficult to categorize. He does conform to some criminological models of serial homicide. Some of those include the fantasy-and-trauma model, but he defies other models: the addiction model, antisocial personality disorder (psychopathy vs. sociopathy), and a homicidal triad of serial murders (the McDonald triad) (Oleson, "King of Killers" 198-99).

So, who is truly Hannibal Lecter? "Grixti identifies two types of monster in Harris's Lecter novels: the psychopathic loner and the evil genius who knows more about the inner depths of those around him than they care to admit to themselves" (Carrol 43), and Hannibal Lecter is certainly the evil genius type. Since childhood, Hannibal showed an impressive and impeccable talent for

science and art. As a boy of eight, Hannibal could determine the height of his castle by measuring its reflection's length using Euclid's formula (Harris, *Hannibal Rising* 17). He is a polyglot as well: "Hannibal said 'hello.' He said it in Lithuanian, German, English, and Polish" (32). Since Mr. Jakov, his childhood tutor, is said to "have been often turning his head to the side and speaking into the air above Hannibal, as though he had forgotten he was talking with a child" it is easy to conclude that Hannibal is mature and knowledgeable for his age (Harris, *The Silence of the* Lambs 31). In his teenage years, while living with his aunt Lady Murasaki, Hannibal shows a profound understanding of art, and draws medical sketches, showcasing an amazing knowledge of human anatomy even before his education in medical school. Hannibal's taste in music is refined and peculiar, as he enjoys listening to Bach's *Goldberg Variations*: "Listening to the music, he leaned sideways on the sink, his chin in his hand, his strange maroon eyes half-closed. The *Goldberg Variations* interested him structurally. Here it came again, the bass progression from the saraband repeated, repeated" (Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* 269). According to Carlo Cenciarelli, Lecter names the music via the performer underlining his profound taste and also points to a cultural identification of Gould and Bach with *Goldberg Variations* (110). John Butt aligns Bach with an aesthetic of "order, precision, timeless constancy, geometric style, streamlining and the equalisation of tensions," (qtd. in Cenciarelli 112) which also roughly fits into Hannibal's personality description.

Even though it is obvious that Hannibal is an exceptional intellectual potential, Harris makes sure that the reader sees him as a complete genius. Lecter's IQ score is "not measurable by any means known to man" (Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* 190). Moreover, "Lecter is so lucid, so perceptive, he is trained in psychiatry . . . and he's a mass murderer. He is impenetrable. Too sophisticated about the tests for them to register anything" (Harris, *Red Dragon* 41). He is beyond any human measure: "His ego, like his intelligence quota, and the degree of his rationality, is not measurable by conventional means" (Harris, *Hannibal* 157). Having such a high IQ must have been tough for Hannibal, especially in his early childhood. Research has shown that children with higher IQs (130-150) make friends easily and achieve notable results with little or no effort. If the IQ exceeds that number, children tend to become easily bored as nothing in their environment challenges their capacity and abilities. As they are "above" others, they feel misunderstood and there is a possibility that some of them start displaying antisocial behaviour. They might willingly reject social norms, embrace taboos, and break the law (Oleson, *Contemporary Demonology* 35). According to Tim King, an example of a genius of such type is William James Sidis whose IQ was in the range of 250 to 300 IQ points. That is just a rough estimation as the instruments to precisely determine his IQ did not exist and still do not exist. When he was six, Sidis learned Russian,

French, German, Hebrew, Turkish, and Armenian. He also invented a language called *Vendergood* and could learn a whole language in a single day. He knew over 200 languages and translated between them on the spot. Sidis wrote two books on anatomy at age of 4 and two on astronomy at the age of 8. He is the youngest person ever that enrolled at Harvard University at the age of 11 where he immediately started lecturing ("William James Sidis"). Sidis shared a passion for languages, all sorts of sciences, including the humanities, and his father was a psychiatrist. It is hard not to notice the resemblance of this genius with the character of Hannibal Lecter, at least when intellectual capacity and interests are concerned.

In 1956, Aldous Huxley wrote his thoughts about geniuses in one of his articles:

> Perhaps men of genius are the only true man. In all the history of the race there have been only a few thousand real men. And the rest of us – what are we? Teachable animals. Without the help of the real man, we should have found out almost nothing at all. Almost all the ideas with which we are familiar could never have occurred to minds like ours. Plant the seeds there and they will grow; but our minds could never spontaneously have generated them. (Huxley 2242)

Again, the notion is expressed that more intelligent people are something more than a regular human, or in Huxley's words, ordinary people are something less than a real man. The killers' Otherness is also highlighted by Richard Tithecott, who explains that the general public wants to perceive serial killers as being different from the ordinary people: "Our construction of the high-IQ killer is a sign of our desire to figure out the serial killer as being above and beyond society, as someone who attempts to assert his freedom" (qtd. in Oleson, *Contemporary Demonology* 30).

Due to his extraordinary intellect, Hannibal tends to be the smartest in the room. He likes to showcase his intelligence and, according to Gregory, has an urge to penetrate other people's minds. His career path as a psychiatrist represents an overreaching desire to get inside the minds of the disturbed. He does that to control them and the rage they evoke in him. He uses them as containers for the displaced anger and rage he feels (110). As a psychiatrist, Lecter can kill easily as he has easy access to weak and trusting people. He is prone to mind manipulation and, even though he swore to help people by signing the Hippocratic Oath, he murders one of his patients saying: "Frankly, I got sick and tired of his whining. Best thing for him, really. Therapy wasn't going nowhere" (Harris, *Silence of the Lambs* 57). Additionally, doctors are well respected due to the nobleness of their profession. For that reason, hardly anyone would suspect a doctor being involved in murder, or even less being a serial killer (Oleson, *Contemporary Demonology* 30-31).

Hannibal is cunning by nature, and, whereas some would call him evil, what he ultimately does is just use his high IQ for personal gain and satisfaction. An example of his manipulation is

apparent at the moment when Hannibal convinces Margot to kill her brother instead of him: "You know you'll have to kill him. You've known it for twenty years. You've known it since he told you to bite the pillow and not make so much noise" (Harris, *Hannibal* 408). He projects his killing instincts onto others through mental manipulation. This is in line with Kernberg's claims that malignant narcissists have antisocial tendencies, projecting onto others sadistic, cruel, punitive attacks (qtd. in Gregory 111-12).

The difficulty in categorizing serial killers like Hannibal and debate about whether they should be considered human in the first place has spawned many theories over the years, about who or what Hannibal really is. Some of those theories venture into the fantastic based on Lecter's superhuman abilities. His most obvious superhuman trait is having overly developed senses, but there are others as well. Oleson sums up his abilities by saying that he is a human lie detector and he can easily tell if someone is being dishonest in his presence. His maroon eyes are said to give him a perfect vision during the night. His olfactory senses are stronger than in an average person. Lecter tests the air while entering the building. He can accurately tell which aftershave or skin crème someone is using. He moves silently and has an impressive sense of hearing. He is resistant to drugs and poisons. His constitution is stoic and he does not feel pain as other people would (*Contemporary Demonology* 40-41). All this points to the conclusion that he is somehow "beyond human," almost a vampire.

Of course, Harris's novels do not belong to the fantastic genre, yet the preternatural qualities of his protagonist demand comparison with the notorious bloodsuckers. Karasek clarifies that "Lecter is not a vampire, but he is vampiric in a way" (32), precisely because of the earlier listed qualities. In fact, he is being compared to Stoker's Dracula as both of their fathers were counts and both consumed their victims:

> Lecter, like Dracula, has superhuman strength; he commands the beasts; and he lives in the night . . . Many of his physical attributes resemble those of Dracula. His cultured voice has a slight metallic rasp beneath it, possibly from disuse . . . Dracula's eyes are red . . . Dr. Lecter's eyes are maroon and they reflect the light in pinpoints in red. (Oleson, *Contemporary Demonology* 42)

In a similar vein, Picart and Greek identify two pertinent traits – hypnotic gaze and cannibalism – both categorizing Hannibal as a vampire. Even though Lecter's gaze lacks the supernatural effect of a vampire, such as instant seduction and mind manipulation, he still psychologically influences people around him, most notably Clarice Starling. Both Hannibal and Dracula consume their victims but for different reasons. Dracula needs blood because of a physical need, while Lecter consumes human flesh because of the psychological defect (qtd. in Jiao Ziheng 2).

Significantly, in addition to his Otherness caused by his intellect and abilities, Hannibal is also numerologically marked as Other, or "corrupt." Namely, number six is omnipresent in all the novels within the tetralogy. According to Oleson, in *Red Dragon,* number six is mentioned 38 times, in *The Silence of the Lambs* 48 times, in *Hannibal* also 48 times, and in *Hannibal Rising* 18 times. In Biblical numerology, the number six denotes imperfection, sin, and evil. Hannibal has six fingers on his left hand with a replicated middle finger indicating he might be unnaturally wicked (Oleson, *Contemporary Demonology* 39). Referring to this duplication, Elizabeth Grosz suggests that it points to Lecter's monstrosity: "Monsters involve some kind of doubling of the human form, a duplication of the body or some of its parts… it is a horror at the possibility of our own imperfect duplication, a horror of submersion in an alien otherness in an incorporation in and by an another" (qtd. in Karasek 33).

In thinking about the duplicity of identity of serial killers, Samancioglu turns to Jung's proposition that all people have good and evil sides inside them. Jung refers to the evil side as the "shadow." The shadow takes its power from primitiveness and sexuality; consequently, selfishness, greed, jealousy, and rage exist within the archetype. It contains emotions and forms of behaviour which are deemed unacceptable in society. This concept can also be associated with evil (Samancioglu 41). Different sciences would view the concept of evil differently, but it seems that each could find arguments to characterize Lecter as such. Oleson's study offers an overview of various scientific approaches and conclusions related to this issue. He points out that sociologists view evil as the result of social forces that shape individuals in society. Psychologists focus on the minds and mental states of individuals who have committed evil deeds. Legal scholars equate evil with a crime. In the end, theologians deal with evil as sin. Thus, according to sociology, Lecter's deeds are the consequence of the broken European aristocracy who could not find solitude in the existing structures that society provided after World War II. His murders are symptomatic of deeper social pathologies. Psychology defines evil as a product of mental illness or personality disorder. Even though he commits those crimes, he is not mentally ill, as he does not meet criteria for antisocial personality disorder or sadistic personality disorder. Through a legal lens, Lecter is evil because he commits the most serious crime within the legal system – he kills. Theologists relate evil to sin. In a way, they disregard biological factors as well as childhood trauma. It is believed the agent is controlled by the Evil Force and serves only as an actor in society (Oleson, *The Devil* 121-23). All these approaches have a certain extent of merit, but, first and foremost, it should not be forgotten that Lecter suffered (from) evil as a child. His actions are a consequence of deep untreated trauma, although – for argument's sake – the same can be said of the deserted soldiers who cannibalized his sister. Everyone involved in the rise of Hannibal as a killer has been,

in one way or another, marked by trauma, death and fear for one's life, showing that all lives are a nexus of various human relationships.

## 2.5. Lecter's Relationships

As mentioned before, Lecter's harmonious relationships with his family members were brutally ended after their murders. In his case, the family life was not the source of trauma, but rather the loss of it. For the most part, he remains a recluse, rarely engaging in close relationships until he comes into contact with Will Graham and Clarice Starling. Significantly, two notable and most important characters relevant to Hannibal's characterization are two FBI agents, Graham and Starling. Their relationship with Lecter is multi-layered and much more complex than that of a regular prisoner and a police agent, adding further to his ambiguous identity.

### *2.5.1. The Lecter – Graham Relationship*

To understand the complexity of the relationship between the FBI agent Will Graham and Lecter, it is important to address theories based on sociology and human psychology. Rene Girard introduces the theory of mimesis or the theory of imitations. According to this theory, a person desires what other people want, or what they believe others desire. This happens because an individual does not know what to desire, so he imitates others. The subject (person A) desires an object that the mediator (person B) desires. The distance between them, also called goal-oriented distance, correlates to an increased likelihood of developing a conflict between subjects. The closer the subjects are, the more they start to imitate each other, and the phenomenon of doubling occurs. Both individuals have attributed the same traits. The collapse of distance and the phenomenon of doubling causes the mediator to become a monstrous double of the subject. That double represents a monstrous imitation of humanity, or a monstrous-human (Girard qtd. in Carroll 43-44).

How does this apply to the relationship between Graham and Lecter? The complexity and symbolism behind their relationship can be explained using the theory above. It is believed that Lecter is the monstrous double of Graham. Namely, Girard and Ingebretsen believe that the differences between humanity and monsters are fluid. Humanity provides the image and likeness for the monster, meaning the monster has human characteristics as well. The second idea is that monsters exist within and outside society. The mechanism of imitation in Girard's doubling means the monster is us, a camouflaged desire, nothing more. Third, looking for a monstrous in

monstrous-human will not result in success. The monster mirrors humanity. The key lies in seeking for the similarities more than differences between the two (Girard qtd. in Carroll 44).

Having the three aspects in mind (fluid boundaries, existence in and outside the community, and searching for likeness) it is easier to break down the Lecter – Graham relationship. Rather than comparing Hannibal to Graham as separate entities on opposite sides of the monster-human spectrum, in the novel *Red Dragon* it is possible to find proof that confirms their mirroring or imitation. Alexandra Carroll suggests that the analysis of the following scenes will shed light on the complexity of their relationship:

1) Graham's discussion with the Atlanta Chief of Detectives on how Graham caught Lecter
2) Graham's conversation with Dr. Frederick Chilton in the hospital for the Criminally Insane
3) Graham's interaction with Lecter at the Chesapeake Hospital. (45)

As Graham meets Crawford to discuss the murder of two families, he notices that Graham imitates his speech: "Crawford heard the rhythm and syntax of his own speech in Graham's voice … often in intense conversation Graham took on the other person's speech patterns" (Harris, *Red Dragon* 3). In the restaurant scene, Graham feels nervous about the quarrelling mother and daughter. Graham is depicted as an empty, sensitive individual capable of feeling, absorbing, and reproducing the emotions of others. His emphatic character shows how easily one individual may merge with another and how the personality boundaries are fluid. This ability to commiserate with and understand others makes him a key investigator in The Tooth Fairy case (Carroll 46).

In the hospital, Springfield directly dehumanizes Lecter indicating that he is crazy and a monster. Graham refuses to do the same and shows an understanding of Lecter's behaviour: "He did it because he liked it. Still does. Dr. Lecter is not crazy, in any common way we think of being crazy. He did some hideous things because he enjoyed them. But he can function perfectly when he wants to" (Harris, *Red Dragon* 46-47). He also refrains from allocating Lecter's personality to any category of mentally deranged. He believes the psychologists address Lecter as a sociopath "because they don't know what else to call him" (Harris, *Red Dragon* 68).

Ingebretsen argues that the monster personifies society's fears and hate, and that it is created by society in its image and likeness, whereas Grixti claims the monster rebels against social rules of control and order (qtd. in Carroll 42). Both of these points can be recognized in Lecter's behaviour. When addressing the monster in society, Lecter would be a very obvious candidate for that title. Although it is tempting to pronounce Lecter insane, there is not even one argument that would support the fact that he is not in control of his actions: "A person is not responsible for criminal conduct, if at the time of such conduct, as a result of mental disease or defect, he lacks substantial capacity to appreciate the criminality of his conduct to the requirements of law" (Finkel

39). Hannibal is responsible for his actions, but, as he is perfectly aware of them, he cannot be pronounced insane.

The moment Graham meets Lecter in Lecter's apartment after looking through an old medical book (the image of the Wound Man) is the same moment Lecter figures out Graham knows his real identity. The instantaneous awareness of both men symbolizes their mirroring. Graham says it is a coincidence that he recognized Lecter and that anyone else could have done it, but the fact remains that nobody else did. He realizes that Lecter does not differ from anyone else on the street, equalling the monster with a regular person; a monster who doubles the humanity in the society. Graham notices the similarities rather than differences between the monster and the human, which leads him in his investigation (Carroll 47-48). Finally, Lecter explains: "The reason you caught me is that we're *just alike*" (Harris *Red Dragon* 85-86). Worrying about their likeness, Carroll poses the question: "If monsters and their pursuers can be mistaken for one another, and monsters double their human counterparts, who should we fear: the monster or his pursuer? Lecter or Graham?" (53). Theoretically, this points to the conclusion that there is a monster in all of us, but, ultimately, the doubling between Graham and Lecter can be seen as a unity of the moral and amoral, or good and evil. However similar, Graham's part in the monstrous is merely his fascination with it and understanding of it, whereas Lecter, compelled by trauma, acts on the monstrous impulses.

### *2.5.2. The Lecter – Starling Relationship*

In further confirming the ambiguity of his identity, Hannibal blurs the line between Good and Evil while helping Graham and Clarice in their quests to apprehend criminals. Hannibal builds a unique relationship with them; one that can be analysed both as professional, but also as personal, if not an intimate relationship (Leigh Gompf 1). The fact that he is willing to help makes him less monstrous. In fact, Simpson claims that his relationship with Clarice humanizes Hannibal (Paxton 3). It is likely that Simpson implies that Hannibal became a monster after Mischa's death, and becomes a human again after he meets Clarice as he creates associations between Clarice and Mischa in his memory palace. After their first encounter, Clarice feels as if "an alien consciousness [is] loose in her head" (Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* 24). She feels Hannibal needs something from her – personal information. Association as an aspect of the memory palace pervades the personal relationship between the two (Paxton 4).

Lecter shows that he cares for Starling by rescuing her from certain death, and nursing her back to health. In this process, she slowly replaces Mischa as the idealized object in his mind

(Gregory 113). The relationship between the two is not only professional (agent – prisoner; psychiatrist – patient) but also private and sexually charged. Over time, Lecter's erotic power influences Clarice profoundly. In *The Silence of the Lambs,* when he returns her the case file, they touch for the first time: "It is the moment when Good touches Evil, . . . but it is also erotically charged, building on the intimate conversation of her memory of the lambs" (Leigh Gompf 1). Clarice vividly fantasizes about Lecter while caressing a mannequin and her actions are overly sexualized. According to Paxton, she associates tangible objects with her sexual desire for Hannibal (5).

These fantasies build on in the third novel of the tetralogy – *Hannibal*. Harris provides explicit proof that Clarice has feelings for Hannibal: "Here she had the most remarkable encounter of her life," and, in thinking about Hannibal, "she came to understand something: Death and danger do not have to come with trappings. They can come to you in the sweet breath of your beloved" (Harris, *Hannibal* 78-79) In the end, their relationship truly becomes romantic and explicitly sexualized. When Clarice handcuffs her hand to Hannibal's, he is ready to cut off his hand instead of hers in case he needs to free himself. At that moment, Clarice frees one of her breasts (Harris, *Hannibal 477*), turning their relationship into an explicitly erotic one. Clarice was seen as a heroine who is fighting Evil, but instead, she succumbs to Evil (Leigh Gompf 2). Here, again the fluid boundaries between monstrous and human are revealed to exist in every individual. Lecter merges cannibalism with his new interest, a heterosexual relationship with Clarice Starling; namely, they eat Paul Krendel's brain together just before consuming the relationship indicating, as Karasek suggests, that he has influenced Clarice on multiple levels (32).

The mirroring between Lecter and Clarice is seen in the fact that she is also haunted by childhood trauma. The first traumatic experience occurred when she was 10. Her father was killed by robbers. That is the moment when her animosity towards criminals begins. Her second traumatic experience is alluded to in the title of the second novel in the series. She heard lambs screaming while being slaughtered, and that sound haunts her in her dreams (Harris, *Silence of the Lambs* 263-264). She believes that apprehending criminals to justice will allow her to escape the trauma and to symbolically silence the lambs. According to Mohanan, in her pursuit of emotional freedom, she kills several people, including criminals such as Buffalo Bill, which also blurs the line between (in)justice, criminal act, and Good/Evil (22). Hannibal is the only person aware of Clarice's childhood trauma. She trusts him enough to share the most sensitive personal information, even though he is dangerous and known for his ability to manipulate people. She describes her memories as "fears breathed on her from close behind her neck; other, recent memories squirmed besides her" (Harris, *Silence of the Lambs* 111). Paxton explains that older

memories described as *fears behind her* represent the past experiences, while more *recent memories* are *beside her*, suggesting that new triggers emerged and past trauma has re-awoken (5). Both Hannibal and Clarice start dealing with the instances of trauma from their childhood when they meet, suggesting that they serve as a kind of mirror or catalyst for one another; as Paxton explains, the other person reminds them of a notable person from their past. Hannibal reminds Clarice of her father, and to him, she is an illusion of his sister Mischa (7).

Hannibal uses his psychiatric abilities to help Clarice deal with her trauma as he has strong feelings for her. He takes her to a place containing the skeletal remains of her father as a means of therapy (Harris, *Hannibal* 447). According to Paxton, Hannibal knows that Clarice has memories of her father trapped inside of her subconscious. To release those memories, Clarice must eliminate the association of her father and associate them with the physical remains Hannibal has placed in the room. He wants to reduce the emotions she feels and transform them into tangible objects which can be destroyed, hence her emotions would regulate and the negative connotation of her father would disappear (7-8). As they become intimate, another sensitive topic that displays the complexity of Hannibal's character emerges. According to Gregory, this is Hannibal's sexuality and his relationship with women. At some point, Hannibal equates Clarice to Mischa, which opens the door to the question of incest and a psychologically caused sexual defect (113).

The profiles of characters in the novels are carefully created, and not many recognize the doubles present among the main characters. Graham risks the safety of his family for the sake of the investigation and he often contemplates murder. As Simpson notes, "[t]hrough a sort of the murder act targeted against a common enemy, Graham and Dolarhyde become thematic doubles whose separate identities become hopelessly compromised, a convention seen in many nineteenth-century vampire and Gothic narratives" (85). On the other hand, Clarice grew up with relatives after her father had been killed and her mother decided she cannot take care of her. There, she endured a severe psychological trauma caused by constant lamb slaughtering. James Gumb, a serial killer in *Hannibal,* was born out of wedlock and sent to a Los Angeles foster home at the age of two. Gumb was taken in by his grandparents at the age of ten, the exact age when Clarice moved to the countryside: "Starling and Gumb each aspire to the traditional social sphere of the other. Both are single-minded, even ruthless, in pursuit of their goal, both defy patriarchal institutions, and both kill" (Simpson 92). It is not a coincidence that detectives and criminals in the novel have so much in common. This further confirms the theories of fluidity and doubling discussed earlier.

## 2.7. Sexuality, the Theory of Sublimation, and Defence Mechanisms

According to available research, psychological development at early ages determines lots of behavioural patterns and personality traits in the adult age (Cherry 1). Sigmund Freud claims that personality develops through a series of childhood stages in which the id becomes focused on certain erogenous areas. He also introduces psychosexual energy, or libido, described as the driving force behind behaviour. Freud's psychoanalytic theory suggests that personality is mostly established by the age of five, when the child completes basic psychosexual stages (oral, anal, and phallic). If those psychosexual stages are completed successfully, it results in a healthy and sexually stable personality. If issues that might emerge persist for a longer period, a person is fixated in the previous stage. That prolongs the length of a specific stage and may manifest later on in life in form of addiction, personality disorder, antisocial or immoral behaviour (Freud 135-59).

Upon closer analysis, it is apparent that all serial killers in the novels, but also many other individuals in real life, suffered from fixation or other problems in their psychosexual development during early childhood. In her paper, Kendra Cherry summarizes Freud's stages of psychosexual development. The first stage is the Oral Stage that lasts until the first year of life. The erogenous zone is the mouth. An infant is dependent on the caretaker's food, so sucking and tasting provide satisfactory stimulation. If fixation occurs, the individual might have issues with dependency or aggression. The second stage is the Anal Stage predicted from ages one to three. The primary focus of the libido is on controlling the bladder and bowel movements. The positive experiences during the toilet training reinforce competent, productive, and creative individuals. If the parental approach is inadequate, destructive personality traits might manifest later in life and the person might be obsessive or rigid. The next stage is the Phallic Stage from ages three to six. The erogenous zone is the genitals. At this point, the Oedipus complex might emerge. The Latent Period ranges from age six to puberty. This is the period of sublimation. The sexual energy is still present but it is inactive and sublimated into intellectual pursuit and social interactions. Fixating at this stage results in immaturity and an inability to form fulfilling relationships as an adult. The Genital Stage lasts until death and it is the stage of a fully developed individual ("Freud's Psychosexual Stages"). In *Hannibal,* Lecter experiences a flashback from his childhood. He sees his baby sister having a bath outdoors in a copper bathtub. He brings her a gleaming purple eggplant which, according to Gregory, signifies a symbolic penis, suggesting he has matured into

the Oedipal stage. This also signifies that his unconscious sexual desire for his mother has been displaced onto his sister (103).

According to the theories of homosexuality, Hannibal may have sublimated his sexual urges for men (if he had any) into art and intellectual work as a psychiatrist, in line with Freud's theory of sublimation wherein the libido is channelled into non-sexual activities such as intellectual work or creation. According to Ken Games, sublimation allows the individual to release excessive sexual energy which would otherwise be discharged in socially unacceptable ways. Significantly, in his essays, Games mentions Leonardo – a patient who has successfully repressed his homosexual urges and sublimated them into the scientific inquisitiveness and his artistic activities. Leonardo sublimated his homosexual urges and feelings into art and created perfect sketches and drawings of a male body (Games 41). Thus, the results of sublimation are regarded as symptoms of the repression of the original drive. To exemplify Leonardo's case, his sketches are positive results or the consequence of the repression of his homosexual urges. Otto Fenichel believes Leonardo has experienced desexualization, which does not imply his urges have disappeared, but that they have transformed (qtd. in Games 43-46). Of course, this does not prove Lecter's homosexuality as it may also refer to his heterosexual urges; namely, apart from Starling, he is not depicted as having an intimate (or physical) relationship with anyone. Moreover, in a non-sexual context, he "successfully" uses sublimation turning his negative emotions into positive actions by becoming a psychiatrist and helping people in a similar position (Krench 41).

Besides sublimation, Hannibal uses other defence mechanisms to cope with the events in his life. "Defence mechanism is an unconscious psychological mechanism that minimizes anxiety which is triggered from unacceptable or even harmful stimuli" (De Lauretis 3). When the process of sublimation is incomplete, the individual experiences repression. Such an individual does not understand the triggers that cause the anxiety and cannot fully recall the traumatic experiences from the past (Kirana 39-40). Another self-defence mechanism that Hannibal uses is known as projection. According to Krench, one obvious way to defend against anxiety arising from failure or guilt is by the projection of the blame onto someone else. The idea behind projection is that someone else is responsible for the sufferer's current condition. Hannibal could not cope with the fact that he also consumed his sister's flesh, so he blames the soldiers, killing five of them as a result (40). The third self-defence mechanism he uses is regression, or more specifically, primitivation (Kirana 40). He disregards all norms and laws, brutally killing all five soldiers who have done him wrong, and also many other people after that. The combination of primitive instinct and refined brilliance – another instance of his ambiguity – have turned Hannibal, and many other serial killers, into iconic pop-culture figures.

## 3. The Serial Killer in Pop Culture

Why is the persona of the serial killer so popular and why are people interested in such characters in the first place? Why would anyone intentionally expose themselves to serial killers, violent scenes, cannibalism, and horrific descriptions and scenes both in writing and in picture? According to Simpson, the main reason for their appeal lies in the fact that serial killers are perceived and act as "more than human": "Serial killers' murder of strangers and the killers' oft-cited ability to seduce victims into their own deaths while simultaneously avoiding police detection render these criminals compellingly supernatural, mythic, and indeed almost godlike in effect" (135). He highlights the ritual brutality of serial murders as having similarities to religious rituals: "The serial killer spectaculars invest horror in the dehumanizingly brutal techniques of the serial killers . . . The narrative focuses on the killer's ritualistic technique or pattern-making accounts for the frequent textual analogies between serial murder, artistic creations, and religious sacrament" (Simpson 175).

For others, the religious-mythical quality of serial killer characters may almost seem as blasphemy. Thus, far less controversially, Ziomek suggests that "the satisfaction derived from this kind of literature and film is multidimensional, including the control over the disorder, the pleasure of pattern-discovering, the identification with a strong representative of the law, and of course the enjoyment, from the reader's secure position, of the murder as art or simply an intellectual game" (123). For Ziomek, then, the appeal is in containing and capturing the killer, particularly if he is so intelligent that "beating" him may seem to give the reader/viewer a sense of empowerment.

Finally, according to director Oliver Stone, "serial killers are popular because they represent evil to us in a modern guise – that is, they are perceived as symptoms of evil forces in the world" (qtd. in Danesi 13). The modern nature of serial killer narratives seems to come from a sort of re-writing of morality plays: Danesi states that "we're still fascinated by serial killers because of the morality play that they imply, but maybe morality play itself has changed significantly and its archetypes and characters have morphed into avatars and memes that have severed their connection to all previous characters of cultural history" (97). So, to shed light on the ways of representation of serial killers in popular culture, the subsequent chapter will look into the depiction of both the instances of violence and the serial killer in mass media.

### 3.1. Violence and the Depiction of the Serial Killer in the Media

According to Ziomek, the viewer can feel safe from the violence on screen as the aestheticization of the graphics is severely manipulated in such a way as to look realistic but be completely safe for the viewer in comparison to the uncontrolled environment in the real life: "Changing camera positions, controlled lighting, montage editing, music, and special effects create significant aesthetic pleasure and emotional distance for viewers, who can use these cues as a means of insulating themselves from the depicted violence" (127). She suggests that the idea of presenting violence as an aesthetically appealing act is either drawing people in or repulsing them if they find it too gruesome or cruel. Sometimes, violence on screen is made attractive or embedded in the righteous scenarios where the seriousness of crime and violence is diminished as the victim has deserved it (Ziomek 127). Moreover, the representations of bloody scenes seem to represent an amalgamation of both voyeurism and of therapeutic, communal reaction to the inflicted wounds: "People's interest in violence resulted in creating a 'wound culture' which is the public fascination with torn and open bodies and torn and open persons, a collective gathering around shock, trauma, and the wound" (Ziomek 131-32).

Robert Conrath claims that "the serial killer is a product of the pervasive penetration of media technology and televised representations into our daily lives… At the same time, violence has lost its cathartic value; it no longer exists as a mediating apparatus for filtering out and deciphering the message" (qtd. in Simpson 174). J. P. Telotte states that "the horror genre typically conjures up monstrous copies that, we would love to think, have no originals, no correspondence in our world. Their anomalous presence, however, fascinates us even while it challenges our lexicon of everyday images. In this pattern, we can discern a subtle desire to remodel the world by projecting into it cinematically, the doubles of our imagination" (qtd. in Simpson 48). It is therefore interesting to observe how villains have been depicted in pop culture in the recent past.

Villains have become more humanized as their backgrounds and reasons for becoming evil are explained. That helps the audience empathize with them. The audience tends to get emotionally involved in the narrative and they base their opinion of the protagonist, if and when they recognize themselves in them. According to Samancioglu, it is not important how much, but it has been proven that people empathize with those who share some traits with them. The audience evaluates the character by judging his or her moral tendencies. Lastly, the audience decides if the deeds of a protagonist are justified or not, if they are evil, and whether they should be judged (31-32).

Due to the idea of (at least partial) identification with the villain, Oleson claims that "we have inverted our villains into strange heroes, commodifying their wickedness for legions of consumers. Merchants and collectors have created a thriving market in crime… true crime trading cards were sold and later collected into a bound volume" ("King of Killers" 187). Memorabilia, often called *murderabilia*, includes paintings, writings, merchandise such as action figures, trading cards, and popular encyclopaedias of actual serial killers (Danesi 32). Wieczorkiewicz points out that even if monsters are removed from our world, we will still see them, if not even look for them, because their nature intrigues and attracts us (qtd. in Karakas 8).

According to Haggerty, exposure to media plays a major role to a modern serial killer. Fame and celebrity status are no longer limited to individuals who have accomplished marvellous feats, but are also gained by well-known persons  who people talk about. Celebrity status in the media allows one not only to escape anonymity but also achieve immortality. Moreover, people are naturally drawn to reading, learning, or looking for more when serial killers and crime are in question (Haggerty 174), so the topic itself tends toward popularity. King analyses the process of establishing the serial killer persona in real life. Serial killers are afraid of becoming a regular person, like everybody else, or becoming "a nobody": "The mass threatens to consume them, sweeping away their individuality as they become part of the anonymous, routinized crowd" (King 112). This is where a major contradiction of the serial killer figure lies. Lauren Phegley explains that while they are trying to escape the routine and seek uniqueness, a vast majority of them seem to seek out the already existing routines of other serial killers, either copying them directly or using them as a framework for their own identity. As they read biographies and fiction, they internalize the ideas and reflect them, thinking they are authentic if they borrow a little from everyone. The act of killing then serves as a form of self-affirmation that they are special (Phegley 101-103).

From Jack the Ripper, the notorious Victorian murderer and probably the first real-life serial killer with media coverage, to contemporary stars of multiple TV shows and movies, serial killers are omnipresent on screens. Danesi suggests that implementing scientific procedures into fiction generated a fascination with crime within the twentieth century. Today, this fascination is visible in the popularity of crime TV shows such as *CSI Miami, Cold Case, Bones, Law & Order, Body of Proof, Dexter,* to name just a few (3). Jung explains that the abundance of serial killer content on screen is a consequence of the fact that each person carries the Shadow within themselves: "The narratives about serial killers – real and fictional – can be interpreted, perhaps, as modern ways in which pop culture has projected the Shadow onto the theatre of the grotesque where it can be tamed and managed" (Jung 12). Danesi agrees that the Jungian Shadow serves as an archetype of a serial killer, firstly depicted through the dime novel and pulp magazine. The Shadow blends in with the

hero, sometimes taking over, and sometimes manifesting itself as a separate entity just like in the example of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (28).

The doubling of identity, so typical for Victorian narratives such as the story of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (Matek 59-60) or the mystery of Jack the Ripper, permeates the representation of serial killers from the nineteenth-century until now. Oscar Wilde, another Victorian, states that "Life imitates Art far more than Art imitates Life" and that "the self-conscious aim of Life is to find the expression" (Wilde 2007). Thus, truth and fiction blend and influence one another until they are indistinguishable. More recently, Jean Baudrillard coined the term simulacrum defining it as an occurrence when life and fantasy are indistinguishable from each other, one imitating the other (Danesi 3). In the same vein, modern crime TV shows create a veritable simulacrum. Real-life cases, or elements of such, are combined with the elements of fiction resulting in a semi-documentary, semi-thriller crime story, both fiction and reality (Danesi 77-78). Hundreds of cases of copycat killers have been reported, imitating both real-life but also fictional serial killers. One such example is Alexander Pichushkin, also known as "The Chessboard Killer" who was inspired by psychopath killer Andrei Chikatilo who murdered fifty people from 1978 to 1990. His goal was to be more famous than his role model and surpass him. He intended to kill sixty-four people to fill all the spaces on the chessboard with his victims. After the forty-eighth victim, he was checkmated and imprisoned (Danesi 9).

### 3.2. Hannibal Lecter in Pop Culture

Dr. Hannibal "The Cannibal" Lecter, a fictional character drawn from the profiles of real-life serial killers has appeared in Harris's four novels, and in four movies (Demme, 1991; Mann, 1986; Ratner, 2002; Scott, 2001). Oleson asserts that the novels have been published in more than 20 languages (*The Devil* 117). The first two novels, *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs*, have made Thomas Harris a prominent author. In 1999, he published *Hannibal* which was printed in 1.2 million copies in its initial print. *Hannibal* sold 1.7 million copies and was a number one bestseller for six weeks after getting published. The movies accumulated almost one billion dollars over the years and pushed Anthony Hopkins into the hall of fame by his convincing embodiment of the iconic psychiatrist (Oleson, "King of Killers" 190-191). The movies won multiple awards including 1992 Oscars: Best Picture, Best Director, Best Actor, Best Actress, and Best Adapted Screenplay. The American Film Institute (AFI) has proclaimed Hannibal the greatest villain of all time (Oleson, *The Devil* 117), making both the films and novels a part of the pop-culture canon.

The Hannibal-story also represents a blend of reality and fiction. Namely, as Simpson explains, the retired FBI agent and author Robert Ressler claims he showed Harris around the offices of Behavioural Science Unit twice during the 1980s'. There, Harris got acquainted with profiles of the most prominent and notable killers such as Edmund Kemper, Ed Gein, and Richard Chase. He also met a female agent who directly inspired him to introduce agent Clarice Starling, a complex and truly important character for the narrative. All this aids in creating a brilliant mastermind Hannibal Lecter and a story that will ultimately become crème-de-la-crème of the serial killer genre (Simpson 71). As Oleson suggests, to prove how iconic the character of Hannibal Lecter is, it is enough to take a look at the list of the most memorable movie quotes by AFI. Oleson compared his famous line with other well-known movie quotes. Lecter's statement: "A census taker once tried to test me. I ate his liver with some fava beans and a nice Chianti" sits in the twenty-first place of best quotes of all times, beating well-known quotes such as, "Bond. James Bond" in the twenty-second, and "Houston, we have a problem" in the fiftieth position ("King of Killers" 190-91).

Arnold and Thompson claim that people have created a celebrity, an iconic and cult hero out of a serial killer (Oleson, "King of Killers" 189). Supposedly, this speaks more about human nature and contemporary audiences, than it does about the character of the killer. Lanchester suggests that Lecter "is attractive because we are repulsive: the more people like Lecter, the worse the news about human nature" (qtd. in Oleson, "King of Killers" 189). Danesi concurs, saying that "[t]here is little doubt that our celebrity culture is a factor (along with others) in the motivation of serial murder. Anyone from any walk of life can become a celebrity, as long as he or she gets airtime across the popular media" (12). People are fascinated with characters that have something inhuman inside them, and Hannibal has plenty. Because of his complexity, Hannibal is a character that speaks to everyone. Oleson describes him as a Rorschach blot. The viewer who looks for a criminal genius will find it in Hannibal, just like they will find the devil, a vampire, a heroic victim, or childhood trauma. He dwells at the intersections of the categories and is both a man and a monster, the devil and the avenging angel, villain, and victim. The public's fascination with Hannibal may have less to do with his undefined origin or his childhood trauma than with the challenges he forces people to confront (Oleson, *The Devil* 127-128). Ultimately, "Criminals allow us to engage with the dark side of the psyche. Crime brings out truths about ourselves through psychic tension" (Danesi 43).

By observing the concept of Harris' mystery, it significantly differs from the traditional approach in crime literature. The killer is known to the reader or viewer, so the mystery is not in the identity, but rather in the question of whether the killer will be caught, and how. The traditional

criminal investigation revolving around suspects and their hidden motives will not yield results. The success of the investigation depends upon intuition and empathy rather than pure logic (Simpson 84). Harris combines the horrible and the sublime in facilitating the creation of characters: “He takes from real-life serial killers, combining gruesome facts from their lives and rendering them into realistic fictitious moral monsters” (Karasek 4).

## CONCLUSION

This paper analyses the character of a serial killer on the example of the marvellous character of Hannibal Lecter. Thomas Harris has created a character that has become an archetype itself. Years and decades will pass, but it seems that the popularity and the greatness of Hannibal Lecter, both in the literary and the cinematography world, will not fade.

The serial killer as a phenomenon has been present in fiction and real life for centuries. Authors draw inspiration from real-life serial killers, some of which became legends, such as Jack the Ripper. Each serial killer has their killing ID, something that sets them apart from regular people. The question of whether they were born that way, or became killers still stands. One thing is certain: the trauma they endured during childhood plays a major role in the shaping of their personality, and indicates the way they will grow as people. In Hannibal’s case, the consequence of the severe childhood trauma is cannibalism that makes him terrifying but also fascinating. The power of his mind, the deceitful tactics, sound reasoning, and lack of emotional stability follow the cannibalistic nature of the fascinating psychiatrist. Sustainable relationships are the grey area for individuals suffering from mental disorders. They cannot function without social interaction, but they do not know how to connect with others, either emotionally or spiritually.

This paper shows that there is still much more to uncover in order to understand the complexity of Hannibal’s character. The topic of the serial killer has been mesmerizing and fascinating audiences of all ages, researchers, scientists, and authors. No matter if one likes him or not, approves of his actions or not, empathizes with him or not, nobody can deny the uniqueness of the horrific, yet magnetic, personality that Hannibal possesses. Fiction allows us to dig deeper into the unknown, to face our fears in the controlled environment and explore the “dark side of humanity.” Hannibal’s example proves the importance of childhood in a person’s psychological development and shows how impactful traumatic experiences can be in the long run. Even though Hannibal is a fictitious character, numerous moral and life lessons can be drawn from Harris’s

novels. As the time goes by, new serial killers will take the spotlight, but chances are they will share at least some characteristics with Hannibal. After all, he is the greatest villain of all times.

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