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“Have the Lambs Stopped Screaming?": Childhood
Trauma and Gender Identity in *The Silence of the
Lambs*

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ABSTRACT

Since Freud's first publications on psychoanalysis, society has reacted with amazement to his theories. Taking people's childhood as a starting point and a critical phase of development, Freud analyses people's unconscious to understand the human personality. In addition to considering Freudian psychoanalysis as an important point for this undergraduate dissertation, gender identity will also be studied through the characters and the society in which they live. This is because gender identity has always been a taboo concept in many cultures and its study is important to understand the injustices and obstacles that certain communities have suffered. Hence, this paper aims to analyse the connection between childhood trauma and gender identity in the characters of *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988) by Thomas Harris to establish that the trauma that occurred in their past is directly connected to discrimination and gender characterization in their current lives.

Keywords: childhood, trauma, gender identity, *The Silence of the Lambs*, psychoanalysis.

RESUMEN

Desde las primeras publicaciones de Freud sobre el psicoanálisis, la sociedad ha reaccionado con asombro ante sus teorías. Tomando la infancia de las personas como punto de partida y fase crítica del desarrollo, Freud analiza el subconsciente de las personas para comprender la personalidad humana. Además de considerar el psicoanálisis freudiano como punto importante para este Trabajo de fin de Grado, también se estudiará la identidad de género a través de los personajes y la sociedad en la que viven. Esto se debe a que la identidad de género siempre ha sido un concepto tabú en muchas culturas y su estudio es importante para entender las injusticias y obstáculos que han sufrido ciertas comunidades. Por tanto, este trabajo pretende analizar la conexión entre el trauma de la infancia y la identidad de género en los personajes de *El Silencio de los Corderos* (1988), por Thomas Harris, para establecer que el trauma ocurrido en su pasado está directamente conectado con la discriminación y la personificación de género en sus vidas actuales.

Palabras clave: infancia, trauma, identidad de género, *El Silencio de los Corderos*, psicoanálisis.

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Introduction

The Silence of the Lambs (1988) is one of the psychological thrillers that brings to life illustrious characters from the literary and fictional world, such as the famous cannibal Hannibal Lecter, the young FBI agent Clarice Starling, and the mysterious killer Jame Gumb.

The novel is set in American society in the 1980s, characterised in particular by the changing roles of women. Women became more visible in the fields of education, work, and sports (Haines, Deaux, and Lofaro 2016, 1). Not only have women's roles changed, but also the stereotypes for both sexes have changed, so Haines, Deaux, and Lofaro predicts that this change in roles will lead to a consequent change in reality (2016, 3).

In the present paper, I will analyse some of the concepts and parameters dictated by Freud's psychoanalysis, focusing especially on how the unconscious harbours all kinds of trauma and/or problems of the human being's childhood. The unconscious plays a very important role in people's lives, as it is through the unconscious that we can analyse the hidden meanings that appear during dreams or other unconscious moments. Furthermore, I will study how the third feminist wave has given rise to other social and theoretical movements, such as the queer theory. In doing so, I will place special emphasis on differentiating people's sex, gender identity, and sexual orientation (gender identities) because they have been seriously criticised and belittled for centuries, (including within the first wave feminist movement). The study of feminism in literary works is important because it can become an analysis of the reality of the society in which the work was written, in this case during the 1980s.

With this final dissertation I aim to establish a connection between the traumas that occurred during a person's childhood and how those sufferings can affect the present personal lives of the characters in the novel. Moreover, that connection might be related to the gender injustices people suffer, so there will be a study about the gender characteristics in the novel through the characters and social aspects that surround them.

In order to carry out this study, I have divided the paper into two main sections: in the first part, I will explain part of the Freudian psychoanalysis and childhood traumas, and

the gender identities (theoretical framework); in the second part, I will study the characters regarding these two last aspects (analysis part).

The main purpose why I have chosen this topic for my final degree work is mainly because of the emotional charge it has. I decided to analyse it from a psychoanalytical and gender perspective because I am impressed by how the society is reflected on literature, so novels are a mirror of how people can suffer during their lives.

1. Theoretical Framework

1.1. Psychoanalysis and Childhood Trauma

This part of the methodology will focus on Freud's psychoanalytic theory in order to show how people's childhood is key to personality development. In order to study childhood, we will have to focus first on the traumas or painful events that happened during that period of time. In this way, we will be able to see how the origins of trauma and the main elements of trauma, especially in relation to their childhood and in relation to their family, which will affect their adult life. Next, this section will present how the unconscious part of the human being is latent and can show the true traumas and personality of the person. Since the unconscious can manifest itself in several ways, it is important to study the symbolism within dreams or unconscious moments that affect everyday life. Finally, two very important aspects in human childhood and in Freudian theory will be taken into consideration: the meaning of death and sexuality.

With the purpose of creating a connection between trauma and childhood, the first and crucial thing is to define what we understand by the term "trauma", to find its origins and how trauma can develop. According to Caruth.: "Psychic trauma involves intense personal suffering, but it also involves the recognition of realities that most of us have not begun to face" (1995, 7). Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) encompasses people who have had traumatic experiences both on an individual and global level; and here, it can include traumas related to war, sexual abuse, or death experiences among many others (Caruth 1995, 3). Consequently, one has to discover the beginning of the traumatic event in order to connect it with its consequent problems, as we can read in Caruth:

While the precise definition of post-traumatic stress disorder is contested, most descriptions generally agree that there is a response, sometimes delayed, to an overwhelming event or events, which takes the form of repeated, intrusive hallucinations, dreams, thoughts or behaviors stemming from the event, along with numbing that may have begun during or after the experience, and possibly also increased arousal to (and avoidance of) stimuli recalling the event. (1995, 4)

Bearing in mind that the critical moment at which the individual's trauma begins must be ascertained, it is necessary to study the person's past and how this trauma can manifest itself involuntarily, i.e., through the unconscious.

In order to understand where the initial trauma comes from, we first have to study the meaning of the unconscious. According to Tyson, the unconscious is described as “the storehouse of those painful experiences and emotions, those wounds, fears, guilty desires, and unresolved conflicts we do not want to know about because we feel we will be overwhelmed by them” (2006, 12). Considering this definition, we can state that an individual will repress those miserable and traumatic moments in his life in order to isolate and try to forget them. If we think about the beginnings of a person's life, we might consider that as a baby or as a child we have no conscious memories. However, as Freud states "the unconscious, at all events, knows no time limit" (1901, 121). Therefore, if we want to study and/or analyse a person's unconscious, we have to trace back his beginnings, i.e., to his earliest memories, as this will influence his present unconscious moments. Freud's theory states that every psychological story or problem originates from a childhood experience within their family role, which will be directly reflected in their behaviour during the individual's adolescence and adulthood (Tyson 2006, 12).

Hence, the role of the family will have great importance within the theory as it is the one that marks the future personality of a person: “In one sense, the “birth” of the unconscious lies in the way we perceive our place in the family and how we react to this self-definition” (Tyson 2006, 13). Thus, depending on our relationship with family members and our role within the family, our personality will be marked by some conflicts or others. For example, within Freudian theory, we can observe “the *oedipal* conflict, sibling rivalry, penis envy or castration anxiety” (Tyson 2006, 14). Although we may see these examples as family problems or conflicts, they only become dangerous within a being who has not overcome these problems.

As we indicated above, the unconscious moments will indicate the root of all problems or traumas. People reach and understand the unconscious through dreams or imaginative activities since “both our dreams and our creativity, independent of our conscious will or desire, draw directly on the unconscious” (Tyson 2006, 18). Therefore, it is necessary to look at dreams in order to interpret them and find their real meaning since during certain activities, such unconscious moments manifest themselves (Tyson 2006, 18). Because they are a clear image of the unconscious, it is important to look at the different parts of dreams, their symbolism and their possible translation or interpretation. The dream is composed of two parts: the *manifest content*, which is the literal content or the sequence

of images of a dream; and the *latent content*, which is the real meaning hidden in those images and what we have to decode (Tyson 2006, 18). In other words, the *latent content* is the possible symbols or metaphors that we must interpret from the *manifest content*. With these concepts present, we can say that there are undefined images and concepts within dreams that must be analysed in order to understand our psychology. Freud claims that dreams represent a "fulfilled wish", i.e., the satisfaction of the fulfilment of a desire (1913, 25). Consequently, each dream will have a different meaning and origin, since, as we will see below, not all origins and meanings might be pleasant: "Dreams which present the most painful content, and not the least trace of wish-fulfilment, occur frequently enough" (Freud 1913, 33).

To study dreams we must analyse the unconscious, but there is a certain part of the human body that prevents us from knowing all the information of the unconscious. These are the defences which are "the processes by which the contents of our unconscious are kept in the unconscious" (Tyson 2006, 15). These defence mechanisms alter not only dreams but also the human personality, so it is important to highlight them as Tyson describes them in his book (2006, 15-18):

- ⊗ *Displacement*: we use a "safe person, event or object as a connection or relationship to represent a more threatening person, event or object." The manifest content of the dream itself may then represent various psychological desires, experiences or even traumas related to other concepts.
- ⊗ *Projection*, when the main theme is attributed to another person and blamed because we cannot accept it.
- ⊗ *Condensation*, when an image reflects more than one "unconscious wound."
- ⊗ *Regression* which is "the temporary return to an earlier psychological state, which is not only imagined but relived."

Furthermore, we can find another kind of "defensive tendency" that Freud describes as "defensive striving":

One is forced to make such elementary defensive striving [p. 153] against ideas which can awaken painful feelings, a striving which can be put side by side only with the flight-reflex in painful stimuli, as the main pillar of the mechanism which carries the hysterical symptoms. (1901, 56)

Among others, Tyson differentiates the following defensive strivings: “selective perception” when a person chooses what to hear and see because they may not be able to stand it; “selective memory” when a person alters or tries to eliminate a memory in order not to have to live with it; “denial” when a person denies that his or her problem exists or pretends it did not happen; and “avoidance” when a person tries to withdraw from another person or situation that may provoke anxiety by arousing some unconscious, i.e. repressed experience or emotion (2006, 15).

Once a person's defences are exposed, they eventually collapse and that person experiences anxiety, which exposes the person's core problems. (Tyson 2006, 16). As Freud explains “the anxiety which we experience in dreams is only apparently explained by the dream-content” (1913, 47). In other words, there are different psychological problems present and visible in a person's daily life that end up affecting them profoundly, both unconsciously and consciously. The following core issues are some examples of the types of psychological problems a person can experiment, as stated in Tyson’s (2006, 16–17).

- ⊗ *Fear of abandonment* is experienced by a person who is terrified that those close to them will abandon them or cease to matter.
- ⊗ *Fear of intimacy* occurs when a person is unable to relate on a sentimental level to another.
- ⊗ *Fear of betrayal* occurs when a person cannot trust another.
- ⊗ *Oedipal fixation* is “a dysfunctional bond with a parent of the opposite sex that we don’t outgrow in adulthood and that doesn’t allow us to develop mature relationships with our peers.”

All these types of defences indicate a trauma in the personality, but they also define human behaviour, so it is important to know the root and the initial moment of these fears in order to know the initial trauma of the person. However, as has been shown, these psychological problems come to create different fears or insecurities in the human being, so that if the repression of the unconscious continues, it will lead to psychological problems, also called "disorders or dysfunctions" (Tyson 2006, 12). This is to say, repression will be triggered during adulthood by psychological problems that have been affecting human beings throughout their lives. These problems probably stem from a

traumatic childhood experience that will directly affect the personality of the individual. If we consider childhood as a critical moment in the life of the human being, and if these decisive moments are marked by sentimental or physical wounds, the human being will end up projecting this outward.

As mentioned before, dreams are full of secret meaning which have to be decoded so we can understand the manifest content. Hence, for studying the manifest content we have to bear in mind the different symbols and images that can be presented in these unconscious moments. As Freud states: “The symbolic relationship seems to be a residue and reminder of a former identity” (1913, 168). In order to try to identify them and compare them Freud divided them into two different types: typical dreams and dreams about sexuality and death. On one hand, typical dreams are those common dreams that most of humanity have dreamed and probably have the same meaning for all the individuals (Freud 1913, 98). Even though it is impossible to name them all as each person and each dream is unique and can have multiple meanings, some examples are *Dreams of fire*, *Dreams of being chased by wild animals*, or *dreams of being threatened* (184-185). On the other hand, *Dreams about Death* and *Dreams of sexuality* are also present in people's daily lives as it has been pointed out that they are also related to other symbols. Dreams about death are characterised by the relationship a person has with the concept of death. That is, a person may have been traumatised by learning about death at a very early age or may have a good relationship with it; both options are important to analyse in order to understand the person's psychological experience (Tyson 2006, 21). Freud coined the terms *death drive* or *Thanatos* in order to explain that “the goal of all life is death,” therefore a person who has experienced more traumatic events during all his life, will probably be more predestined to re-enact the experience (Tyson 2006, 22).

There is also a relationship or connection between the meaning of death and a person's psychological problems. The *fear of death* might be connected with *fear of intimacy* and *fear of loss in general* since it would explain the anxiety and concern of losing, not only a beloved person, but of losing everything we are connected to (Tyson 2006, 23). Freud also explains how death can be linked to other fears, such as *fear of abandonment* which arises from a fear of the death of a person to whom one is attached; or *Dream about the death of a Beloved Person* which a person may unconsciously mourn the death or feel nothing at all during a dream (1913, 102).

As Freud claims throughout all his analysis, the vast majority of dreams have a sexual content that can be represented through numerous images (1913, 185). Freud's theory suggests that "our sexuality is such an important reflection of our psychological being" (Tyson 2006, 20). The meaning of sexuality has been studied by various psychoanalytic theorists as "the question of a biological pressure that is discharged in the act of sexual intercourse", or what Freud renamed *drive eros*, and as the opposite of *Thanatos* (Tyson 2006, 24). Freud claimed that human beings are sexed beings, so people come to feel sexual pleasure "in ways that are not generally considered sexual" (Tyson 2006, 24).

This makes sexuality a clear symbol of the psychological state of the individual (Tyson 2006, 24). The images inside our dreams will be represented for the most part by *female imagery* (such as maternity images which will be represented by enclosed sites like caves, womb, or cups); and *men imagery* (such as phallic symbols such as rockets, guns, or arrows) (Tyson 2006, 20).

As Tyson explains (2006, 25), Freud differentiated between three sexual manifestations which he coined as *superego*, *id*, and *ego*. "Superego" is defined as those human desires that are considered immoral because they come from a cultural or family tradition, so they make the person who desires them feel guilty. The "id" can be considered as the most real part of the person as it contains the desires he craves the most: the id only seeks for satisfaction without regard for the consequences. In Tyson's words, the "id" is the "psychological reservoir of our instincts, and our libido, or sexual energy" (2006, 25). The "ego" ensures that the id is controlled, so the ego acts outwards from the person by thinking about the consequences of the superego and the id if they were to manifest fully (2006, 25).

While dreaming, a person can represent different moments unconsciously, but if a dream becomes too terrifying (the so-called nightmares), we usually wake up suddenly; but if such nightmares occur while we are awake, "the truth hidden by repression comes out before my conscious self in a manner I can neither disguise nor handle" as Tyson pointed out (2006, 21). Then, the person is in *crisis*, or *trauma*.

To conclude this section, it is important to note that Freud identifies two new terms: "penis envy" and "castration anxiety". The first is the desire, for women in particular, to have a penis; and the second is the fear of losing one's penis. As we will see below, these are

terms that, although they were coined to help psychoanalysis, they are characteristically misogynistic.

1.2 Gender Identities Review: Construction and Manifestation

This section focuses on the third feminist wave which continued to help to fight patriarchal injustices and started to accept not only women, but also people from different types of identity minorities. Feminism has undergone many variations throughout its history, and one of the most important is the inclusion of the Lesbian Gay Transgender Bisexual Queer (LGTBQ) community. Thus, it is important to study all the variations of feminism and the injustices that have been seen within it in order to arrive at a complete analysis of people including women, men, and the Queer community.

As explained in the previous section, humans come from patriarchal societies that have been formed throughout history. It is normal then, that cultural aspects of everyday life are centred on this androcentric image as Dobie (2012, 102) explains. Therefore, it will be shown also that Freud's psychoanalysis was centred around such a phallogocentric image. One could then compare "penis envy" with the part of manifest content within Freudian symbolism. However, although feminism has existed for centuries, several feminists reacted against such statements as they did not accept such envy of men (Dobie 2012, 118). Since Lacan's analysis, some feminists accepted that the "phallus" is a symbol that has its origins in ancient fertility rites and therefore, it is not something that focuses solely on men and how women are envious of them, but, as explained above, it can be interpreted as women being envious of the power and independence that being a man grant (Dobie 2012, 118). As she explained: "From him they take the position that males and females alike lack the wholeness of sexuality of full presence, leaving both with a yearning that can never be filled" (Dobie 2012, 118).

Society and culture have followed an all-male tradition, which has ended up being harmful to both genders. As Heyes explains, tradition has marked the concept of "masculinity" as characterised by a disregard for the feminine; the concept of "femininity," on the other hand, is characterised by the very oppression involved in expressing it (2003, 21). Hence, it is necessary to explain how feminism has helped, and sometimes also harmed, humanity. During the 18th century there were already women advocating for equal rights and critics towards patriarchy, such as Mary Wollstonecraft, author of *A Vindication of the Rights of Woman*, but it was not until the end of the 19th century when the first wave of feminism began. It was in 1848 when at the Seneca Falls

Convention, women demanded the right to vote for them. The *first wave* of feminism began, and the suffragettes began also to succeed in their struggle to achieve some of the same rights as men. After women's participation during the World War I in the United States, they succeeded in getting the 19th amendment abolished, thus gaining the right to vote: the *second wave* of feminism began to take its first steps (HISTORY). However, the feminist movement had so far focused on "middle class, Western, cisgender, white women," so there were still doubly marginalised groups. When the *second wave* started in the 1960's it was characterised by "women of colour and developing nations, where feminists spoke of women as a social class [...] in an effort to demonstrate that race, class, and gender oppression are all related" (Rampton 2008). It was during the 1980s and 1990's when the *third wave* of feminism began and was constructed by post-colonial and post-modern thinking (Rampton 2008). The third wave was characterised by a contemporary mindset and unity in celebrating feminism as a process of achieving equal rights for all people. As Rampton explains: "Third wave women and men are concerned about equal rights but tend to think the genders have achieved parity or that society is well on its way to delivering it to them." Thus, the third feminist wave is especially aimed at the inclusion of all people. In order to put an end to distinctions in terms of a person's gender, identity, or sexual orientation, the third wave of feminism aims especially at the inclusion of all people. As Marinucci declares: "[...] those who believe that a third wave has begun often associate it with pluralism and the celebration of variation among people in general, and among women in particular" (2016, 184).

As Dobie explains "queer theory is interested in a wide range of sexual practices and identities" (2012, 111). Therefore, it is necessary to define and differentiate some specific terms relating to gender, such as "sex," "gender," and "gender identity." The word "sex" refers to the biological differences between a man and a woman and "gender" is defined by the World Health Organization (WHO) as "the characteristics of women, men, girls and boys that are socially constructed." These two terms are related to "gender identity" which according to the WHO, it "refers to a person's deeply felt, internal and individual experience of gender, which may or may not correspond to the person's physiology or designated sex at birth." Consequently, it is clear that queer theorists are interested in "questions regarding sexual identity, queer theorists view individuals not simply as male or female but as a collection of many possible sexualities that may include various degrees

of heterosexuality, homosexuality, or bisexuality” (Dobie 2012, 111). Taking all this into account, we can see the double injustice of certain minority groups as, for example, homosexual women are doubly discriminated against because of their gender and their sexual orientation. In addition to this type of discrimination, we find the "harmful gender norms" that both men and women have been forced to follow and obey (WHO).

As explained, queer communities have suffered injustices not only from society, but from non-inclusive feminism, so it is important to distinguish the types of identities that exist and from which a person can identify, as homosexual, bisexual, transsexual, and transgender communities.

Being homosexual is to be attracted to people of the same sex, so we are talking about a person's orientation; they can be gay if we are talking about attraction between men, or lesbian if we are talking about attraction between women.

We can see this in Heyes' advocacy for women's liberation:

Stressing the realities of violence against women, economic dependence, unequal division of domestic labor, and an ideology of self-sacrifice, feminists denaturalized heterosexual relationships, recommending instead that women become “woman-identified. (2003, 7)

Queer communities, although present in the shadows throughout history, were severely affected, especially during the 19th century, as they came to be characterised with terms such as "perverted," "immoral," or "deviant.” As Heyes explained in Marinucci’s book: “Regardless of its origins, the emergence of homosexuality as an identity category resulted in a contrast between heterosexual desire as normal or natural and homosexual desire as abnormal or unnatural” (2010, 26). Even within the homosexual community we continue to find differences between male and female homosexuality because “when male homosexuality was publicly condemned, the possibility of female homosexuality was often ignored” (Marinucci 2010, 27). This is especially because the image of the lesbian woman has been distorted as having two very different conceptions: firstly, as a "heterosexual male fantasy"; and secondly, as the opposite image, as unattractive and "sexually unappealing" (Marinucci 2010, 31).

A person is considered bisexual if their sexual orientation is based on attraction to people of both sexes (men and women, not necessarily the same percentage of attraction to each

other). Eliason & Cullen discuss an article by Rust in which he explains the following regarding bisexuality: “Bisexuality is perceived as a threat to monosexuals (lesbians, gays, and heterosexuals) because it challenges the gender-based system of sexual identity [...]” (1996, 7).

So far, we have talked about people's gender identity and sexual orientation and how these influence discriminations against certain minorities. However, what happens when a person does not identify with him/herself according to social and cultural constructions? In other words when their body and gender identity do not represent them. We would then be talking about a transexual or a transgender person. Heyes describes the term "transsexual" as a person who has undergone or wishes to undergo certain surgical operations in order to end up looking in accordance with their gender identity (2003, 1-2). Therefore, we need to distinguish between a transsexual man: a person who was assigned female gender at birth but identifies as a man; and a transsexual woman: a person who was assigned male gender at birth but identifies as a woman. On the other hand, the term "transgender", according to Heyes, is used for describing “anyone who lives a gender they were not perinatally assigned or that is not publicly recognizable within Western cultures’ binary gender systems” (2003, 1).

Eliason & Cullen discuss how transgenderism has long been downgraded from studies, even by marginalised groups: “Transsexualism, like bisexuality, has largely been overlooked, misinterpreted, vilified, or actively avoided by lesbian and gay scholars because of the challenges that it poses to gender-based sexual identities” (1996, 7). It is a challenge to research relatively new concepts that have been outside of society until now. Nevertheless, further research is needed to understand the types of discrimination and problems that this community has experienced so far.

Transgender people are more likely to experience aggression, rejection, and discrimination in different areas of their lives than other members of the queer community. One of the injustices that transgender people often experience is gender reassignment surgery. In order for a person to be eligible for gender reassignment surgery, they have to undergo a series of tests, which are considered sexist norms, as Heyes (2003, 10) explains.

As a conclusion to this part of the methodological framework, I would like to use as an example a quote from Heyes which summarises how society is characterised by its diversity in terms of people: "Very different experiences and identities can motivate similar feminist goals, and the political zeitgeist is such that solidarity must, of necessity, start from the deep diversity of agents" (2003, 26).

2. Analysis of the Characters

This undergraduate dissertation shows how literary characters, even if fictional, are attributed with psychological problems and gender injustices, which can become a representation of the society. For this purpose, the three main characters in *The Silence of the Lambs* will be examined: Clarice Starling, Hannibal Lecter and Jame Gumb. For this analysis, two novels by Thomas Harris will be used, primarily *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988) and more secondarily *Hannibal Rising* (1981) as it was the novel that created the character of Hannibal Lecter.

2.1 Hannibal Lecter: *Hannibalism*, a New Way of Cannibalism

Dr Hannibal Lecter is a cunning, intelligent, Machiavellian man who can read your mind and know everything about you. He is a highly reputable, cultured, and elegant psychiatrist, but we can also consider his other personality as his alter ego: a cold, calculating, psychopathic killer who enjoys eating his victims. In *The Silence of the Lambs*, when Crawford describes the case to Starling, he can only say: “I know he’s a monster. Beyond that, nobody can say for sure. Maybe you’ll find out [...]” (Harris 1988, 7). In the same prologue to *Hannibal Rising*, we are described how Lecter's memory is hidden in the darkest part of his being, and in order to try to describe and analyse him, we must get to the bottom of it:

THE DOOR TO DR. HANNIBAL LECTER'S memory palace is in the darkness at the center of his mind and it has a latch that can be found by touch alone [...] Everywhere there are exhibits, well-spaced and lighted, each keyed to memories that lead to other memories in geometric progression. (Harris 2006, 1)

Taking *Hannibal Rising* as a reference, we soon discover that his childhood was not only hard because of the circumstances, but especially traumatic, this indeed being the star factor of his cannibalistic personality.

His family lived and took refuge in Eastern Europe during the Second World War, and except for Lecter, they all meet a tragic end. Lecter and his sister, Mischa, saw their mother die a brutal death and Lecter did everything he could to save and protect his sister:

She was the only corpse not blackened and crisped. Hannibal tugged at her, but her body was frozen to the ground. He pressed his face against her. Her bosom was frozen hard, her heart silent. He put a napkin over her face and piled snow on her. (Harris 2006, 42)

We can consider that being a spectator of the death of so many people, including that of his mother, damaged him severely as he witnessed it first-hand and could not do anything about it.

However, what really traumatised him and the beginning of his life as a cannibal and murderer was Mischa's death at the hands of soldiers, thus, we would be in the presence of his second trauma. Lecter felt he was the figure responsible for his sister's survival and nursed her until it was impossible to protect her: "Hannibal rolled himself and his sister in the blanket and the landing carpet [...] From beneath his coat, he took a crust of stale bread and put it in his mouth. When it was soft, he gave it to her" (Harris 2006, 49). With no food at all, the soldiers were already practising cannibalism, and one of their victims would be Mischa: "We have to eat or die." That was the last conscious memory Hannibal Lecter had of the lodge" (Harris 2006, 53). This is the moment when Lecter stops collecting moments of his life and blocks his mind in such a way that he will never use it again. Later on, we learn that he not only sees his sister die in front of his eyes, but also tastes the food the soldiers make: he eats his own sister.

This is clearly the beginning of his PTSD as he is not only the victim of a war, but witnesses so much violence and death during his childhood that it is clearly going to affect him in his adulthood. Not only he remains mute and does not speak for a good part of his childhood as a repressive element for the death of his sister, but he also begins to have nightmares about his sister's death.

Clearly, Lecter chooses *selective memory* and *denial* in order not to have to deal with and survive such a traumatic burden, so for a long time he will involuntarily remember, through a nightmare, the death of his sister:

- He hangs on to Mischa's arm, the children dragged toward the door [...] thud against his head, terrific blows falling on him, flashes of light behind his eyes, banging, Mischa calling "Anniba!"

- [...] and Hannibal screaming in his sleep, "Mischa! Mischa." (Harris 2006, 71)

He not only experiences these last two defences, but also *avoidance* as he tries to get out of his life completely and refuses all types of contact in order to repress all type of emotion or contact.

We see how Lecter wakes up violently from his dream, or rather nightmare, as he once again feels that danger and fear. If we consider Freud's analysis and his *Thanatos* or *death drive*, we can clearly see how Lecter from his first years of life is traumatised by several nearby deaths, so he is predestined to relive them, through his unconscious. This is also linked to the dreams of being threatened which, as explained above, is linked to people with anxiety or psychological problems. However, it is possible that because he has suffered so many traumatic experiences in a very short period of time, he is not able to have any kind of fear because he cannot feel anything: no attachment, no love, no sympathy.

Suffering so much stress after the trauma of losing her sister, all his dreams are reflections of Mischa's last moments of life, and this is how the reader knows the story. Those nightmares are full of images stored in her unconscious, and even if she tries to deny it, that is how she will keep remembering that moment over and over again. For example, one of the most characteristic dreams is when he dreams of boiling water: the manifest content would correspond to the real image of boiling water; the latent content, however, would indicate the trauma regarding the death of his sister and her subsequent cannibalism: "What was that sound behind Grutas' voice? Boiling water? Hannibal did not know if the sound was real; he heard boiling water in his dreams" (Harris 2006, 336).

Lecter's unconscious that manifests itself through this type of memories is also going to be characterised by violence as most of the time he ends up screaming and fighting against something that is not real, only in his mind: the image of the soldier. As we see in the following scene where they have to wake Lecter up from one of the nightmares with his sister: "He has ripped the pillow with his teeth and feathers are flying, Hannibal growls and screams, thrashing, fighting, gritting his teeth" (Harris 2006, 85).

If we look at Freud's analysis and the words of Cámara-Arenas, we can show that everything experienced during an individual's childhood remains locked up in the unconscious and will have to come to light in different ways. As Cámara-Arenas explains in his article: "The reality of the human mind after Freud characteristically includes a

hidden and elusive unconscious, stuck in the past but exerting its power over our present moods and actions” (2019, 6). It can be seen that Lecter is in crisis or trauma not only because of these nightmares and violent occurrences, but also because he experiences these nightmares while awake, an indication that the "truth hidden by repression" is coming to light and he is unable to come to terms with it or control it (Tyson 2006, 21).

It is during his adolescence that Lecter focuses on his medical studies and commits his first murder. This is because Lecter's aunt, Lady Murasaki, whom he may consider a second image of his mother was harassed by a butcher who despised her for being a Japanese woman: "Hey, Japonnaise, tell me, is it true that your pussy runs crossways? With a little puff of straight hairs like an explosion?" (Harris 2006, 85). This is clearly an instance of *projection* in the character since Lecter blames another person for a crime that he did not commit: he was projecting the image of the soldier towards the butcher.

Right after his first murder, he gets an unconscious memory of his sister, which he recreates: "In his own darkness, Hannibal hears Mischa's voice as the swan was coming, and he says aloud, "Oooh, Anniba!" (Harris 2006, 123). After committing his first murder he begins to have involuntary waking memories of one of the soldiers who killed his sister. The manifest content of this unconscious moment he relives would be the images he remembers about the soldiers and her sick sister; and the latent content would be the *death of a beloved person* which is represented by these continuous pictures of his past.

It is then, when he searches for and finds all the soldiers who were part of his sister's death and makes them suffer in order to try to finish his revenge. He becomes obsessed with Mischa, and the fact that he is not able to remember anything apart from his traumatic experience, is what drives him to commit all the murders and acts of cannibalism throughout his life.

He went into his memory palace and tried to cross the grounds to the dark sheds, past Mr. Jakov's brains on the snow, but he could not. He could endure to see his mother's clothes on fire, his parents and Berndt and Mr. Jakov dead in the yard. He could see the looters moving below him and Mischa in the hunting lodge. But he could not go past Mischa suspended in the air, turning her head to look at him. He could remember nothing after that [...]. (Harris 2006, 213)

One of the premises in Freud's psychoanalysis is that, if a person has had an early contact in large numbers as in the case of Lecter, this person is destined to relive more similar

moments (what we call death drive or Thanatos). This premise is fulfilled in the case of Lecter, since he will not only experience more deaths, but he will be the cause of all of them: his goal of life is definitely death.

It is important to highlight Freud's sexual analysis of Lecter as it is a clear example of the sexual desires repressed by society. In Lecter's case, the superego and id would coincide in a certain part as both are characterised by cannibalism: the immoral desire to practice cannibalism regardless of the consequences. However, the ego fails to control this desire, so the superego and id are fully manifested in Lecter's case.

It is at the end of *Hannibal Rising* that it is confirmed that Lecter was no longer a person, but an evil being in search of suffering. Such was the traumatic experience he suffered when he was only eight years old that it is what will lead to his life as a psychopathic, cannibalistic killer: "The little boy Hannibal died in 1945 out there in the snow trying to save his sister. His heart died with Mischa. What is he now? There's not a word for it yet. For lack of a better word, we'll call him a monster" (Harris 2006, 335).

Lecter was imprisoned and in *The Silence of the Lambs* he is in the Baltimore mental hospital for committing several murders during his life. Now, he is a senior Dr. Hannibal Lecter, with a career as a prestigious psychiatrist as well as a serial killer.

The main relationship Lecter maintains throughout all the history is with Starling. We can compare this relationship between Lecter and Starling to the one Lecter had with his aunt, Lady Murasaki, whom he defended and tried to protect until she abandoned him because of his homicidal tendencies. Just as Lecter treats Starling with courtesy, when she is attacked by Miggs, Lecter makes Miggs commit suicide because he has treated her with little dignity; just as he did with the butcher of his childhood. If we follow the Freudian analysis, we could imagine that Lecter feels some kind of sexual attraction towards Starling as he has not seen any other woman for so long. However, I do not think that their relationship is an affectionate or loving one, but as I have just stated, a kind of familial relationship. Moreover, as Lecter states: "Memory, Officer Starling, is what I have instead of a view" (Harris 1988, 21).

As Cámara-Arenas states in his article, Lecter should feel some sexual desire to see a woman after many years, but his reaction is not as expected: "Any heterosexual person

who has spent eight years in a cell will gladly receive a young and attractive member of the opposite sex [...]” (2019, 13). Indeed, it is Dr Chilton who first alerts her to Crawford's hidden intentions: “A young woman to ‘turn him on,’ I believe you call it. I don’t believe Lecter’s seen a woman in several years” (Harris 1988, 13). However, the fact that his reaction is not sexual when it is expected in a heterosexual man may indicate two premises. The first is that, due to his traumatic experience, he is unable to feel anything for another human being, which could be due to his *fear of intimacy*; the second is that the reader considers him to be a heterosexual man because that is the concept that falls within the normal tradition. However, at no point is his sexual orientation mentioned, therefore, we cannot characterise him with the label "heterosexual.”

This type of relationship he has with both women may be marked by *Oedipal fixation* since the only maternal reference he had died when he was a child, and his second maternal figure, Lady Murasaki, abandoned him because of her murderous instincts. As a result, he never forms a healthy bond with the opposite-sex figure. This could be reflected in the fact that Lecter only kills male victims and only once, as far as we know, harms a woman: “He broke her jaw to get at her tongue. His pulse never got over eighty-five, even when he swallowed it” (Harris 1988, 14).

Lecter helps Starling with the case and treats her as an equal, i.e., he has no comments against her simply because she is a woman, unlike many of the other characters. However, when we relate him to Jame Gumb, or the killer Buffalo Bill, he has tendencies that would nowadays be considered transphobic as it is Lecter who claims that Gumb is just confused, but in truth is not a transsexual woman. We can see this especially in the following scene:

We were talking about transsexuals. You said violence and destructive aberrant behavior are not statistical correlatives of transsexualism. True. Do you remember what we said about anger expressed as lust, and lupus presenting as hives? Billy’s not a transsexual, Clarice, but he thinks he is, he tries to be. He’s tried to be a lot of things, I expect” (Harris 1988,189).

2.2 Clarice Starling: The Silence of the Women

As seen in the case of Lecter's analysis, childhood is the beginning of all psychological problems and traumas. Clarice Starling is a young aspiring Special Agent for the FBI whose past has led her there. Therefore, for Starling's character, the same process must be followed to analyse her past, connections, and relationships.

The closest contact she has throughout the novel is with Lecter as the two have a reciprocal relationship in which they use each other to get what they want. Lecter's cunning leads him to use Starling's past as a misleading method. They start a "quid pro quo" in which they both tell their stories. Therefore, it is thanks to Lecter that we learn about Starling's relationships with her family and all her past.

The first past experience we read on the novel is the fact that Starling lies to Lecter about her father's job. She affirms that her father was a town marshal who died because of a shot, but her father was instead a night watchman. This lie, which accompanies her throughout the novel, may be an indicative of *selective memory* and *denial*, as she does not admit that her father was not a marshal and ends up self-deceiving herself as a method of defence against her traumatic experience: the death of her father. Considering that her relationship with her father was excellent, the moment of his death would be an impasse in her life. That is, she felt abandoned by her father when she was just a child, and this will hide in her unconscious making her take certain decisions for her life, such as becoming a "like-minded policewoman" wanting to save lives. Ultimately, Starling suffers from various psychological problems due to the death of her father. After her father's death, Starling continued to live with her mother, but her mother could not support a family, so she went to live on a farm with part of her family, so this kind of abandonment will also be key to her development. We can consider the *fear of death* and the *fear of loss in general* is very present in her life, not only because of the death and clear abandonment of his father, but also because of the abandonment of his mother. She grew up without either of the two parental figures, which made her acquire various anxieties about the loss of loved ones.

We can see how Lecter gets deeper and deeper into her head and uncovers her inner secrets, which is how he reveals one of Starling's most characteristic dreams, or better said, nightmares: the lambs. It all starts when she has the need to save one of the lambs

from the farm where she lived, however, she did not succeed in the end and the lamb was slaughtered: "I woke up and heard the lambs screaming. I woke up in the dark and the lambs were screaming" (Harris 1988, 271). This is the key moment for another of her past traumas, Starling being older than she was at the time of her father's death. The dream is repeated successively throughout the novel, conveying two very different images to the reader when analysing it. On the one hand, we have the manifest content, which is the sequence of events that are repeated in Starling's unconscious, just as they happened that night. On the other hand, we have the latent content that would correspond to the real metaphor of the dream: *Dream about the death of a Beloved Person*, in this case, about the death of her father, which is repeated when she is in a state of anxiety. This state of anxiety is given by the mission in which she tries to find the serial killer, Buffalo Bill. The latent content can also be interpreted as a connection to the search for the young Catherine Baker, who has been kidnapped and needs to be rescued. In this case the lambs would imply that there is a *condensation* because they reflect two possible problems or "unconscious wounds:" the death of her father and the image of Baker being kidnapped. This nightmare would clearly be an example of *displacement* as the image of the lamb becomes somewhat safe for Starling but reflects a much larger open wound: death (both past and future on Baker's part). Starling's dream of the lambs is what clearly marks her traumas the most, and to avoid encountering feelings that hinder her work, she chooses different defensive striving such as *denial* and *selective memory* in order to avoid her past. However, her aforementioned core issues are the ones that end up coming to light unconsciously through fears and anxiety about certain elements of life.

It is only at the end of the novel that Clarice can feel at peace with herself because she has been able to rescue Baker. This is reflected in the last part of the novel in which Lecter asks Starling about her nightmares: "Well, Clarice, have the lambs stopped screaming?" (Harris 1988, 420). Starling can indeed rest happily, with no lambs in her dreams: "But the face on the pillow, rosy in the firelight, is certainly that of Clarice Starling, and she sleeps deeply, sweetly, in the silence of the lambs" (Harris 1988, 421). Thus, her traumatic experience and unconscious wounds from her past may be healed to some extent, but these may be reawakened in other moments of anxiety, as Lecter also states:

I won't be surprised if the answer is yes and no. The lambs will stop for now. But, Clarice, you judge yourself with all the mercy of the dungeon scales at Threave; you'll have to earn it again and again,

the blessed silence. Because it's the plight that drives you, seeing the plight, and the plight will not end, ever. (Harris 1988, 420)

We have placed special emphasis on Starling's unconscious wounds due to her traumatic past but considering Freudian analysis it is also important to highlight her sexuality within the play. If we focus on the sexual manifestations in Starling, we observe that the *superego* coincides with her desire to save victims. It would be represented by the ability and self-demand to save people, just as she could not save the lambs. Her *id* would be represented by the fulfilment of that desire and becoming an FBI agent to achieve it. However, the *ego* negotiates with both and keeps them from fully manifesting, except in cases where the *superego* and *id* manifest unconsciously, for example, through the recurring dream of the lambs.

If we follow in Freud's footsteps, the most striking object to explain her sexuality would be the gun as an FBI agent. This would be considered a "male imagery" within Freud's psychoanalysis and therefore Starling wears it because of the penis envy on her part. However, as the feminist analysis that this work deserves, we can observe how Starling is definitely not envious of not having a penis, but she is envious of the power of men within the FBI agency. As we are going to see below, Starling, being one of the few women within the academy, receives daily sexist comments due to her job position, simply because of her gender. Therefore, now, having talked about psychoanalysis and Starling's traumatic past, we must analyse her as a woman in a patriarchal society during the 1980s, to see if she is a victim of sexist aggressions in her work environment.

Starling is depicted as an intelligent, strong woman, capable of surpassing all her colleagues, who are mostly men. Throughout the novel, even though she is part of the FBI and entrusted with one of the most important missions, she has to endure and listen to hurtful comments towards women.

As a result, from the very beginning of the novel, we have two male figures who have a misogynist image of Starling. Both of them use Starling for their own good: Crawford chooses her for the mission not because she is intelligent, but because she is a woman, and this will help in talking to Lecter; and later Dr Chilton who remarks that Starling is just a body. Chilton does not care where she comes from or how intelligent she is, he only refers to her body and the fact that she is a woman. As we can see in the following excerpt,

Dr Chilton remarks sexist commentaries: “We’ve had a lot of detectives here, but I can’t remember one so attractive,” Chilton said without getting up;” and, “So the FBI is going to the girls like everything else, ha, ha” (Harris 1988, 9). On a similar level to Dr Chilton's machismo are the comments and subsequent aggression of Miggs, one of Lecter's fellow prisoners. When Starling passes Miggs' cell, Miggs remarks: "I can smell your cunt" (Harris 1988, 16). Not only does he make this comment, but when Starling leaves, Miggs masturbates and ends up smearing Starling with semen. This is not an erotic act or one with sexual connotations, but rather an act of violence towards the woman (Stahl 2014, 25).

The kind of sexist actions we have seen regarding the behaviour of certain men in the story continue during the search for the killer. It is in Charleston that Crawford treats her as inferior to him because she is the only female officer in the room, even though she is responsible for the investigation. We can see this in the following scene in which Crawford tells Starling: “Sheriff, this kind of a sex crime has some aspects that I’d rather say to you just between us men, you understand what I mean?” Crawford said, indicating Starling’s presence with a small movement of his head” (Harris 1988, 90). Stahl argues that Starling eventually realises the abuses she has just suffered for not having the power and authority that the men had at the time (2014, 16).

Lecter is partly the one who helps her to get the lambs to silence by getting Starling to confess and tell her past history; and, although he treats Starling politely, he still treats her as a sex object. However, it is Starling herself who, once again, overcomes this and refuses to be "reduced to her sexuality” (Stahl 2014, 17):

- Do you think Jack Crawford wants you sexually? I’m sure he’s very frustrated now. Do you think he visualizes... scenarios, transactions... fucking with you?”

- “That’s not a matter of curiosity to me, Dr. Lecter, and it’s the sort of thing Miggs would ask.” (Harris 1988, 69-70)

The above excerpt from the novel is just one example that serves to exemplify the discrimination she definitely suffers in her working life: Starling is constantly reduced to being a woman. This fact, being "just a woman", is reflected in her feeling of inferiority and disrespect because of her gender: because she is a woman in a man's world and is treated as an object to please the heterosexual men around her. As mentioned above and

in the novel, Starling together with her friend, Ardelia Mapp, constitute the sparse community of women within the FBI, as until then it was a job run by and for men. Considering the fact that Starling is a white, American, well-to-do woman, she would have no problem finding her place in society, but it is impossible because she is relegated to macho attitudes. Considering also that her true sexual orientation is never mentioned, it is imposed on her that she is heterosexual, which is common and socially acceptable even in the 1980s. As mentioned above, she has always tried to be joined in love and sex with the various male characters in the novel, including Lecter. In stark contrast we find her friend, Mapp, relegated to a second place, even more inferior than Starling herself, probably because she belongs to the African American community. So, not only she is a woman trying to succeed among men, but we see the double injustice in her case because of her race.

It is only at the end of the story, when Starling becomes a heroine for Catherine and for herself by graduating as an FBI agent. It may be, not only the moment when the silence of the lambs becomes present in her life, indicating a stability, but it may indicate that she has finally overcome those gender injustices from the society.

2.3 Jame Gumb: A *He* or a *She*?

Jame Gumb is a normal man who lives in hiding and apart from society because of who he really is: Buffalo Bill, the serial killer who kills and peels off the skin of young women. But, as in the case of Lecter, we have to find out and analyse his past life in order to understand why he has become a killer.

The novel explains how Gumb was abandoned as a child by his alcoholic model mother. He had no father figure other than his grandparents, whom he murdered when he was a teenager. So, we quickly see how his relationship with his family was not only flawed, but that there was a greater hatred on Gumb's part to kill part of his family.

At least two scholarly journals explained that this unhappy childhood was the reason he killed women in his basement for their skins. The words *crazy* and *evil* do not appear in either article. The film of the beauty contest that Jame Gumb watched as an adult was real footage of his mother, but the woman in the swimming pool film was not his mother, comparative measurements revealed. Gumb's grandparents retrieved him from an unsatisfactory foster home when he was ten, and he killed them two years later. (Harris 1988, 411-412)

From the scene we can read how Gumb had idealised his mother even though he had grown up without her, so we can consider that Gumb suffered from *oedipal fixation*. This would be characterised by the fixation he had with his mother and how he tried to be just like her, as he imitates her in different scenes by dressing like a woman. In addition, it is found out that he has *fear of abandonment* due to the main abandonment of his mother and that it will be represented in his love relationships with his partners. The clearest example is the murder of her partner Raspail's lover Klauz: "And when I opened the refrigerator, well, you know what I found. Klauz's head looking out from behind the orange juice. Jame had made himself an apron too, you know, from Klaus, and he put it on and asked me how I liked him now" (Harris 1988, 198). So, it could be interpreted as *projection* as she is transferring and attributing her mother's abandonment to Raspail. The fact that he killed Raspail's lover indicates that he is not only afraid of losing him as a partner, but it can also be considered *fear of betrayal*, as he does not trust him.

Gumb's way of killing is characterised by not only tearing off parts of women's skin to make a suit, but also by leaving a particular element in their throats: a Death's Head moth. His modus operandi is characterised by the selection of strong women so that he can lock

them up without food and kill them. When he kills them, he can remove parts of their skin in order to make a human skin suit and look like a woman physically, as he is not accepted as a candidate for the sex change operation. This becomes a kind of *condensation* as the image of the main human skin suit reflects very deep unconscious wounds, such as his Oedipus complex or his initial trauma of abandonment. The Death's Head moth he intentionally leaves in the throats of his victims is a symbol of his rebirth. Even if they are neither of the two dreams or unconscious moments he experiences, his actions are definitely marked by his unconscious. In his unconscious he relives over and over again the fact that society rejected him as a transsexual, so his psychological problems regarding this trauma are reflected in the murders of women. The symbol of the moth may be an example of *displacement* as he attributes the threatening event of his trauma to a safe object. The moth would exemplify her desire to be a woman, for the moment she achieves this, she would become a beautiful and majestic butterfly: "It was then that Gumb became obsessed with moths and butterflies and the changes they go through" (Harris 1988, 412).

Finally, to talk about his *drive eros*, we have to differentiate between the *id* and the *superego*: the *id* would correspond to the satisfaction he gets from dressing up in human skin to be a woman, regardless of his consequent deaths; and the *superego* would be the sexual desires he has towards men which can be considered immoral. The *ego* would not act in depth as the two above are freely manifested. Furthermore, taking Freud's analysis into account, Gumb would not correspond to either *penis envy* or *castration anxiety*. Since being a man, he is not afraid of losing his penis as he feels he is a woman, however, he will not have a subsequent envy for not having a penis.

His life ends when Starling shoots him repeatedly and it is then that he utters his last words: "How... does... it feel... to be... so beautiful?" (Harris 1988, 400). After his death "at least two scholarly journals explained that this unhappy childhood was the reason he killed women in his basement for their skins" (Harris 1988, 411). Thus, we can consider as corroborated the theory that if the traumatic experience has its basis and onset during a person's childhood, it will severely affect his or her adult behaviour.

Throughout the novel, the character of Jame Gumb leaves several questions open to the reader who does not know how to answer them: What is really Jame Gumb's self-identified identity? or, is she really a transgender woman? The first thing shown in the

novel is his characterisation as a killer of women whose skin he rips off parts of their bodies. Hence his comparison and sensationalist name of "Buffalo Bill" which was a legend in American history. According to Buffalo Bill Center of the West, William F. Cody "hunted buffalo for the Kansas Pacific Railroad work crews, earning his moniker "Buffalo Bill" and his reputation as an expert shot." He was considered "America's ideal man: a courtly, chivalrous, self-made fellow who could shoot a gun and charm a crowd". We can see the irony in part of the nickname given to Gumb as Cody could be considered a masculine man within society's roles and Gumb would be the opposite, not fitting his suit. He is described firstly as a "white male, thirty-four, six feet one inch, 205 pounds, brown and blue, no distinguishing marks" (Harris 1988, 154). In fact, he considers himself a woman, so there are some scenes where he cross-dresses and tries to imitate the body of a woman, for instance:

Gumb used the dishmop to tuck his penis and testicles back between his legs. He whipped the shower curtain aside and stood before the mirror, hitting a hipshot pose despite the grinding it caused in his private parts [...] He used the upper range of his naturally deep voice, and he believed he was getting better at it. The hormones he'd taken—Premarin for a while and then diethylstilbestrol, orally—couldn't do anything for his voice, but they had thinned the hair a little across his slightly budding breasts. A lot of electrolysis had removed Gumb's beard and shaped his hairline into a widow's peak, but he did not look like a woman. He looked like a man inclined to fight with his nails as well as his fists and feet (Harris 1988, 155).

We understand that he is undergoing a sex change process in order to undergo surgery soon, as his gender identity does not correspond to what he really is. He would therefore be a transsexual woman as she has been assigned male gender since birth, but this does not correspond to what Gumb identifies as. Furthermore, if we analyse Gumb's sexual orientation, he is a bisexual man, since in the novel he is shown to have several partners, both male and female.

Therefore, if we were to ask ourselves who Jame Gumb really is, we can discover how society did not accept him and his change of identity, since, as we are going to see below, various characters and clinics specialising in sex change operations reject him. For instance, Lecter and Starling claims that Gumb does not meet the standards set by sex-change clinics, which is why he never undergoes the procedure:

- “Dr. Lecter, there’s no correlation that I ever saw between transsexualism and violence—transsexuals are passive types, usually.”

- “That’s true, Clarice. Sometimes you see a tendency to surgical addiction—cosmetically, transsexuals are hard to satisfy—but that’s about all. Billy’s not a real transsexual (Harris 1988, 187).

These tests associate the person who wants to change sex (in this case from male to female) with feminine and delicate conceptions. Besides, apart from being sexist, they are unrealistic, because just as a heterosexual man and a heterosexual woman have different tastes and characteristics regardless of their identity or orientation, so does a transgender person. The psychological tests he would have to undergo for the sex change operation are misogynistic as they focus on traditional male and female roles. For example, the following scene describes the kinds of responses a transgender woman is expected to have, otherwise she would not be considered a real transsexual:

All right— on House-Tree-Person, look for someone who didn’t draw the female figure first. Male transsexuals almost always draw the female first and, typically, they pay a lot of attention to adornments on the 200 females they draw. Their male figures are simple stereotypes...

“Look for a house drawing without the rosy-future embellishments—no baby carriage outside, no curtains, no flowers in the yard.

“You get two kinds of trees with real transsexuals— flowing, copious willows and castration themes. The trees that are cut off by the edge of the drawing or the edge of the paper, the castration images, are full of life in the drawings of true transsexuals. Flowering and fruitful stumps. That’s an important distinction. They’re very unlike the frightened, dead, mutilated trees you see in drawings by people with mental disturbances [...]. (Harris 1988, 192-193)

The conception within the novel and from the point of view of various characters is that Gumb is not really a transsexual, but that he is confused. According to what we see in Lecter's explanation is that people who want to undergo a sex change operation have to pass psychological tests, which are considered sexist. This is due to the discourse they have about what a real transsexual woman should draw or represent in her test. This conception of "confusion" and the consequent possible societal aversion towards the queer community has been present for years. It is therefore normal that upon the novel's release the queer community reacted against it and how it represented their community: Jame Gumb as a "confused" person and a serial killer who kills women.

3. Conclusion

We can conclude that the three characters, in one way or another, fit Freud's hypothesis and analysis in such a way that they all have a traumatic experience, or several of them, in their childhood and it is what will most characterise their personality in adulthood. Also, it is confirmed how the role of the family takes on a very great importance since, in this case, all the characters have been abandoned by their parents, which leads to different psychological problems and core issues that they will have to face during their adult life.

There is definitely a connection between trauma and gender identity problems. Lecter is the clearest example of how the death drive potentially affects adult life because of the traumas and deaths he has suffered in his past. Furthermore, his possible Oedipal fixation may be an indicator of how Lecter has unresolved internal conflicts, not only with his past life, but also with people of the opposite sex. Clarice is indeed the main character of the story, but we see how throughout the story the men around her look down on her and treat her as if she were just a body. It is not until the end, that she becomes her own heroine and Baker's heroine too. However, depicting Gumb as a bisexual transsexual who kills women to make clothes out of their skins is not the best choice to convey the equality sought by queer communities. So, it could be considered a victory for women as they see how a woman tries to break such sexist stereotypes. However, it could not be considered such a victory for the queer community as the image projected in the novel about them is dreadful. As Stahl explains, the novel "presents no resolution but trauma and death for those who, like Jame Gumb, fail to meet hegemonic standards of identity... Starling has been afforded the opportunity to heal her own psychic wounds through her position of authority" (2013, 28).

All in all, we have a novel that is characteristic of a society that has been mainly patriarchal for centuries, and very traditionalist in terms of new ways of understanding issues such as gender identity.

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