

UNIVERZITA PALACKÉHO V OLOMOUCI  
FILOZOFICKÁ FAKULTA  
KATEDRA ANGLISTIKY A AMERIKANISTIKY

**Passing the Threshold:  
Liminality in Thomas Harris’  
*Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs***

(Bakalářská práce)

2022

Miroslav Janeček

Prohlašuji, že jsem tuto bakalářskou práci vypracoval samostatně a uvedl jsem veškeré použité podklady a literaturu.

V Olomouci dne 3. května 2022

Miroslav Janeček

## **Acknowledgements**

I would like to thank my supervisor Mgr. Tomáš Roztočil for the great amount of time he invested into my work, for our interesting discussions and – most importantly – for his kindness with which he led me through this struggle.

Further, I would like to thank my family for supporting me in my studies and for teaching me to read and love literature.

**Passing the Threshold: Liminality in Thomas Harris' *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs***

**(Bakalářská práce)**

Autor: Miroslav Janeček

Studijní obor: Anglická filologie

Vedoucí práce: Mgr. Tomáš Roztočil

Počet normostran: 61

Počet znaků: 110 547

Přílohy: 0

Olomouc 2022

**Klíčová slova**

Liminalita, sériový vrah, gender, Thomas Harris, Červený drak, Mlčení jehňátek

**Key words**

Liminality, serial killer, gender, Thomas Harris, Red Dragon, The Silence of the Lambs

## **Abstract**

This thesis explores the concept of liminality in the novels *Red Dragon* (1981) and *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988) by Thomas Harris. The novels are analysed on the levels of their characters and plot. While gender is an important element of the analysis, liminality is the central topic of the work. The conclusions of the analysis are the main aim of the thesis, although it also aims to show how such an analysis of liminality in a literary work can be done. The analysis of the two novels allows their comparison on several levels, which is another aim of the thesis.

## **Anotace**

Tato práce zkoumá koncept liminality v románech *Červený drak* (1981) a *Mlčení Jehňátek* (1988) Thomase Harrise. Romány jsou analyzovány na úrovni postav a děje. Gender je důležitým prvkem analýzy, ale ústředním tématem práce je liminalita. Cílem práce jsou závěry analýzy románů, ale zároveň se práce snaží ukázat, jak analýza liminality v literárním díle může vypadat. Analýza románů umožňuje jejich porovnání na několika rovinách, což je dalším cílem této práce.

## Table of Contents

<b>Introduction .....</b>	<b>8</b>
THEORETICAL PART	
<b>1. The Author .....</b>	<b>11</b>
<b>2. Works Selected for Analysis .....</b>	<b>11</b>
2.1. Red Dragon.....	11
2.2. The Silence of the Lambs .....	13
2.3. About Hannibal and Hannibal Rising.....	14
2.4. Conclusion on Selected Works.....	15
<b>3. Genre Classification.....</b>	<b>15</b>
3.1. Crime Fiction.....	16
3.2. Thriller .....	16
3.3. Horror .....	17
3.3.1. Discussion on Horror in the Lecter Novels.....	17
3.3.2. Psychological Horror .....	19
3.4. Serial Killer Fiction .....	20
3.5. Conclusion on Genres.....	21
<b>4. Conceptual Background.....</b>	<b>21</b>
4.1. Liminality .....	21
4.2. Liminality and Characters .....	24
4.3. Liminality and Plot .....	25
4.4. Liminality and Gender.....	25
4.4.1. Defining Gender.....	26
4.5. Conclusion on Conceptual Background .....	27
<b>5. Methodology .....</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>6. Conclusion on the Theoretical Part.....</b>	<b>28</b>
PRACTICAL PART	
<b>7. Introduction to the Practical Part .....</b>	<b>31</b>
<b>8. Liminality and Characters.....</b>	<b>31</b>
8.1. Hannibal Lecter as the Liminal Heart of the Novels .....	31
8.1.1. Lecter's Role in the Plot .....	33
8.2. The Becoming of Francis Dolarhyde.....	35
8.3. Jame Gumb – a Transsexual? .....	37
8.4. The Comparison of the Protagonists .....	40

8.5. External and Internal Liminality .....	44
8.6. Conclusion on the Liminality and Characters .....	45
<b>9. Liminality and Plot .....</b>	<b>45</b>
9.1. Modus Operandi of Francis Dolarhyde .....	45
9.2. The Relationship of Clarice Starling and Hannibal Lecter .....	47
9.3. The Endings.....	50
9.4. Final Notes on Liminality and Plot .....	51
<b>10. Conclusion on the Practical Part.....</b>	<b>52</b>
<b>Conclusion.....</b>	<b>53</b>
<b>Resumé .....</b>	<b>55</b>
<b>Bibliography .....</b>	<b>57</b>

## Introduction

This thesis aims at examining the concept of liminality in two novels written by an American author Thomas Harris – *Red Dragon* (1981) and *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988). These are the first two of four novels in total that are included in what is often labelled as the Hannibal Lecter franchise.

Harris' novels (and perhaps even more the film adaptation of *The Silence of the Lambs*) have been a subject of scholarly attention for three decades, yet there is little to no academic work connecting them with the concept of liminality. Liminality, first introduced by an anthropologist Arnold van Gennep more than a hundred years ago, is an increasingly important concept within contemporary studies in the fields concerning human culture, such as anthropology, sociology and the broad area of interdisciplinary cultural studies. This fact is illustrated by the amount of scholarly work concerning liminality in recent times, including major monographs.

This thesis will attempt to show how the concept of liminality can be employed in literary analysis. On the example of *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs*, the thesis will attempt to demonstrate at which levels can liminality inscribe into a literary work. As a literary work is a piece of art and art is always subjective, I have no intention to claim that my reading of the novels is the only possible, nevertheless I hope that this thesis will prove that liminality is contained in the novels of Harris and thus contribute to the study of liminality in literature.

Analysis of two novels from the same author and the same franchise provides an interesting subject for comparison. This thesis will therefore compare *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs* to each other as well as to the other novels of the franchise in terms of genre, plot structure, roles of characters in the plot, and inevitably of the way they use liminality.

The thesis is divided into theoretical and practical part. The theoretical part provides a conceptual background containing methodology, context and further relevant information concerning the subject of my thesis and research, while the practical part employs the previously outlined approach in the analysis of the novels.

Theoretical part opens with a brief introduction of the author and synopses of the plots and themes of *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs* followed by the explanation of the method used for selection of the respective novels. Two arguments will be presented for their selection, namely their plot structure and their genre



classification, which will be simultaneously serving as their comparison to each other and to the other novels of the series. Then the concept of liminality will be finally delineated and it will be explained how it shall be applied in the critical practice of close reading. Alongside liminality, the chapter will also outline the concept of gender, which will be thoroughly discussed in this thesis in relation to liminality. The theoretical part will conclude with the description of my methodology employed in the thesis at hand.

Practical part will consist of an analysis of liminality on the level of characters and plot. Importantly, regarding the character analysis, I will argue for the need of introducing the dichotomy of external and internal liminality.

The study of liminality follows the current trend in several fields. The world of today is evolving ever more rapidly and is so complex that it looks entirely different than a hundred years ago, when van Gennep introduced his *preliminal*, *liminal* and *postliminal* rites. The progress in technology and education, the access to information, the globalization – the world has changed much in the last century. The transformation is a process, as is the phenomenon of liminality.

Therefore, I consider liminality a timely and relevant concept to study. It can be explored through the lens of many different disciplines and yet always reflect the times we live in; as Thomassen writes in an introduction to his monograph: “Hence, this book is about liminality; it is about how human beings experience and react to change.”<sup>1</sup> As literature is a part of human culture, studying liminality in literature can lead us to interesting and important observations about our world and its many changes.

---

<sup>1</sup> Bjørn Thomassen, *Liminality and the Modern: Living Through the In-Between* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 1.

# **Theoretical part**

## 1. The Author

This bachelor thesis will examine selected works of the best-selling American author Thomas Harris (1940). For the sake of providing context, let me first introduce the author alongside his writing career. Before he became a full-time writer, Harris wrote for newspapers about crime, so he had the opportunity to acquire knowledge about police procedures, criminals and other things connected with the topic. That has helped him in his writing career, as all of his novels deal with crime. He has written six novels in his writing career; his debut, *Black Sunday*, came out in 1975 and his last one so far, *Cari Mora*, in 2019. These two are concurrently the only two out of his six novels, that are not part of what can be labelled as the Hannibal Lecter franchise.

The series is what Harris has built his writing career on. It started in 1981 when *Red Dragon* came out and the character of Hannibal Lecter was first introduced. Seven years later, his most famous book *The Silence of the Lambs* was published and the franchise received world-wide attention. The third instalment, *Hannibal*, came out in 1999 and the prequel to the series called *Hannibal Rising*, in 2006. All of his novels except *Cari Mora* have been adapted into movies, *The Silence of the Lambs* (Jonathan Demme, 1991) being the most successful and having acquired a classic status.

## 2. Works Selected for Analysis

This thesis deals only with the Hannibal Lecter franchise, as the other two of the author's books are completely unrelated to the franchise and to each other. The main focus will be on the first two instalments in the series, *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs*. These two novels were chosen because it can be argued they are similar in terms of plot structure and genre, thus they are more suitable for comparison. Also, to analyse the whole franchise would require more space than a bachelor thesis provides.

To further elaborate my motivation for selection of the two novels, I will summarize their plots in this chapter, and classify them in terms of genre in the next chapter.

### 2.1. Red Dragon

For the sake of providing context and the clarity of the selection, the following subchapter will summarize the plot and central themes of *Red Dragon*.

*Red Dragon* follows the former FBI agent, Will Graham, pursuing the killer of two entire families from recent time. Murders occurred on the full moon with one month between them, so he knows he has limited time to catch the killer before he strikes again on the full moon. Graham was already retired from the bureau and he was brought back specially for this case by his mentor Jack Crawford, who is the head of the Behavioral Science Unit. Graham was brought back because he already successfully hunted down two psychopathic serial killers and was considered an expert on them; “the keenest hound ever to run in Crawford’s pack”.<sup>2</sup> During the investigation, he pays visits to the second of the two killers he has caught, in a hospital for the criminally insane. This character, Hannibal Lecter, was a forensic psychiatrist and before he was revealed to be a serial killer, Graham used to consult his cases with him. And the shortage of time remaining to the next full moon forces him to do so again.

The killer is a man called Francis Dolarhyde, who works in a film laboratory. He believes that he is changing from his human form into The Great Red Dragon from the painting of William Blake, which he has tattooed on his back. The killing of people is supposed to help him to become the Dragon. As the plot reaches its climax, Graham finds out how the killer chooses the families, which leads him directly to Dolarhyde. At the end the killer is shot to death and Graham severely injured.

This novel exploits several themes. In the character of the killer, there are themes of mental illness, split personality, child abuse, trauma and physical handicap. This last theme is exploited not only on the character of the killer, who was born with cleft lip and palate, but also on the character of his love interest Reba McClane, who is blind. Other themes present are for example the one of family, as Graham’s case makes him leave and miss his family and at the end even put it in great danger; or the one of fear and overcoming it. Graham fears Lecter and he has to consult him, he fears the killer he seeks, but he still seeks him. One theme that both novels share is the one of evil and its many faces.

I have summarized the plot and themes of the first of the two novels that I am going to analyse, and now I will proceed with the second novel.

---

<sup>2</sup> Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 83.

## 2.2. The Silence of the Lambs

For the same reasons as those stated in the previous subchapter, the following one will summarize the plot and central themes of *The Silence of the Lambs*.

*The Silence of the Lambs* is set few years after the events of *Red Dragon*. A new serial killer is on spree – one that is known to the public as Buffalo Bill. He abducts young overweight women, keeps them alive for a few days, then kills them and skins some body parts, until he finally throws the bodies in a river. The hero of the novel is an FBI trainee, Clarice Starling. Crawford chooses her to interview Dr. Lecter and give him a questionnaire, which is intended for serial killers in captivity. His real intention though, is to make Lecter help him with the Buffalo Bill case, and he thinks that Starling could make Lecter do it. His plan is successful as Lecter reveals he has some information about Buffalo Bill that would lead to his capture and he offers to exchange it for more comfortable conditions under which he is held in captivity. Meanwhile, Buffalo Bill abducts Catherine Martin, the daughter of USA senator Ruth Martin. Time is ticking and Starling needs to get the information from Lecter as quickly as possible. Then, Lecter is transported to Memphis, where he meets senator Martin and gives her some information about the killer. Later, in a dramatic sequence of events, he manages to escape and disappear.

The Buffalo Bill is revealed to be Jame Gumb, who wants to change his sex, but his application for a gender reassignment surgery had been rejected. Therefore, he makes a suit from women's skin for himself. In the novel's climax, Starling inadvertently knocks on his door, just when he prepares to kill Catherine Martin. She realises who he is and kills him in a shoutout.

Gender and sexism are strong themes in the novel, as Starling is often viewed as someone not as capable as her male colleagues in the force, she hates indications about her attractiveness; she wants everyone to behave to her the same way as they behave to other officers. The novel exploits a theme of transgender in the character of Buffalo Bill. Another theme is psychopathy, when the reader can see similarities and differences between Lecter (who now has much more space in the plot than in *Red Dragon*) and Buffalo Bill, the two serial killers, but each very different. And as stated before, *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs* both deal with depicting evil of various kinds.

I have summarized the plot and themes of the second of the two novels that I am going to analyse, and now I will move on to describe their difference from the other two novels of the series.

### **2.3. About Hannibal and Hannibal Rising**

Earlier it was stated that *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs* have similar plot structure. What was meant was the following. There is a serial killer operating and the reader, unlike the protagonist, gets to know him as the plot progresses. Each of the two killers has his own different psychosis which drives them to commit the murders. Moreover, in both novels, there is an FBI agent who hunts the killer under the lead of Jack Crawford – it is either Graham or Starling. They both consult another serial killer – forensic psychiatrist Hannibal Lecter – who is held in captivity. Graham has already some history with Lecter so they do have a certain relationship already, while the relationship between Lecter and Starling develops throughout the plot. At the end, the sought serial killer is killed.

This plot structure does not repeat in *Hannibal* and *Hannibal Rising*. In *Hannibal*, there is no new serial killer and Lecter is not in captivity anymore. Unlike in the previous two novels, where he was not in the centre of events – he was not the hunter, nor the hunted – here his part is much bigger than just a consultant to the investigator. He lives in Florence where he is recognised by police officer Pazzi, who wants to collect bounty on Lecter. The bounty is offered by Mason Verger, the only surviving Lecter victim, who was disfigured by the doctor. Verger plans his revenge on Lecter and he decides to use agent Starling, whose career went downhill recently, as a bait. Lecter kills Pazzi and escapes from Florence to USA, where he finds Starling. He is caught by Verger's men and just before Verger would take revenge on him, Starling appears and saves him. Lecter and Starling then have therapy sessions together and get to know each other even more deeply than before. At the end Starling disappears with Lecter and they become lovers. This unprecedented ending was changed in the movie version.

In *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs*, Lecter is an element outside the central conflict, while in *Hannibal* he is part of it and that is one great difference between the novel's plot structures.

*Hannibal Rising* deals with events in Lecter's childhood and early adulthood which is the only thing that connects this work to the other three novels. It serves rather as a background to the character of Lecter, than a prequel to the series.

I have briefly presented the plots of *Hannibal* and *Hannibal Rising* and argued that they have different plot structure than the first two novels, that I selected for my analysis. This is one of the two reasons that these two novels were selected for the analysis.

## **2.4. Conclusion on Selected Works**

To conclude, I have summarized the plots of *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs* and explained why I would like to argue that they have similar plot structure. Then I briefly presented the plots of the other two novels of the series and showed how their plot structure is different. I stated that this is one of the two reasons why I chose these two novels for my analysis. Now let me move on to the second reason.

## **3. Genre Classification**

In the previous chapter it was stated that there are two reasons for why I chose *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs* out of the four Lecter novels for my analysis. The first, similar plot structure, was elaborated on above. Now let me elaborate on the second one, which is, that they are closer in terms of their genre.

In this chapter, I will therefore present and define several genres associated with the series and argue that the first two instalments are slightly different than the other books in the series in this matter. Specifically, I will state my opinion that the whole franchise can be labelled as crime fiction, thriller and horror. I will also claim that the first two novels belong to the psychological horror, while there are more classical horror genre conventions in the penultimate and final novels. Lastly, I will argue that the first two novels, unlike the other two, fall into the narrow category of serial killer fiction.

### 3.1. Crime Fiction

Here I will briefly talk about crime fiction. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* lists Thomas Harris among the notable modern authors of crime fiction, which is defined as a genre dealing with “the commission and detection of crime, with the motives, actions, arraignment, judgement, and punishment of a criminal.”<sup>3</sup> *A Glossary of Literary Terms* defines crime fiction as a narrative that “centers on criminal acts and especially on the investigation, either by an amateur or a professional detective, of a serious crime, generally a murder.”<sup>4</sup> From these definitions it is clear that the crime fiction is a very broad term, covering all sorts of different narratives, where a crime takes place. The Hannibal Lecter franchise can be safely labelled as crime fiction then.

### 3.2. Thriller

In this subchapter, I will examine the genre of thriller. Nicholas M. Williams refers to *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs* as thrillers in his paper.<sup>5</sup> Thriller is defined in by Cuddon as “a tense, exciting, tautly plotted and sometimes sensational type of novel (occasionally a short story) in which action is swift and suspense continual. Sex and violence may often play a considerable part in such a narrative.”<sup>6</sup> According to Abrams, “the thriller designates any novel that features a rapid sequence of sensational events; often, such novels represent hairbreadth escapes of a protagonist from relentless and terrifying pursuit by sinister enemies.”<sup>7</sup> These definitions use different words to express the same thing; browsing through the pages of Harris’ books, one can see the typical features of thriller there. Even the “pursuit by sinister enemies” is present, as both *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs* end with dramatic

---

<sup>3</sup> J.A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (London: Penguin Books, 1999), 192-195.

<sup>4</sup> M.H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. (Stamford: Cengage Learning, 2013), 69. PDF.

<sup>5</sup> Nicholas M. Williams, “Eating Blake, or an Essay on Taste: The Case of Thomas Harris's *Red Dragon*,” *Cultural Critique* no. 42 (Spring 1999): 152, accessed December 21, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1354594?seq=1>.

<sup>6</sup> J.A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (London: Penguin Books, 1999), 914.

<sup>7</sup> M.H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. (Stamford: Cengage Learning, 2013), 70. PDF.



confrontation between the protagonist and the antagonist. Therefore, I would like to argue that we can safely call Harris' novels thrillers.

### 3.3. Horror

Now, let me examine the genre of horror. Besides thriller genre, the work of Harris is labelled as the one of the horror genre. Horror is defined by Cuddon as “a fictional narrative [...] which shocks or even frightens the reader, and/or perhaps induces a feeling of repulsion or loathing. The word *horror* derives from Latin *horrere* ‘to make the hair stand on end, tremble, shudder’. [...] Apart from being about murder, suicide, torture, fear and madness, horror stories are also concerned with ghosts, vampires, [...] diabolic possession and exorcism, [...] lycanthropy and the macabre [...]”<sup>8</sup> One can see that horror has very wide range of thematic areas it can cover.

As noted by Noël Carroll, “genre of horror takes its title from the emotion it characteristically or rather ideally promotes; this emotion constitutes the identifying mark of horror.”<sup>9</sup> To sum up, the thriller uses elements of suspense, danger, excitement and tension, while horror tries to frighten, shock or disgust the reader. These two genres can often overlap and they have their respective subgenres.

#### 3.3.1. Discussion on Horror in the Lecter Novels

I would like to argue that of the three terms presented above – crime fiction, thriller and horror – the first two can be safely allocated to the Hannibal Lecter franchise. The one that is questionable, is horror, though.

While reading the first two Lecter novels, one finds out that they do not have many typical horror elements in them. There is by no means anything supernatural, but this is not required in a horror story.<sup>10</sup> There is not too much explicit violence shown. Sonia Baelo Allué states that in *The Silence of the Lambs*, “violence is hidden

---

<sup>8</sup> J.A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (London: Penguin Books, 1999), 388.

<sup>9</sup> Noël Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror, or Paradoxes of the Heart* (London: Routledge, 2004), 14. PDF.

<sup>10</sup> Horror does not have to be concerned with the supernatural. This argument is expressed in by S.T. Joshi:

“[...] the horrific potential in some literary works that do not involve the supernatural, but can nevertheless generate a substantial emotion of horror within the reader.”

S.T. Joshi, “Suspense vs Horror: The Case of Thomas Harris,” in *Dissecting Hannibal Lecter: Essays on the Novels of Thomas Harris*, ed. Benjamin Szumskyj (Jefferson: McFarland, 2008), 119. PDF.

behind the intellectual game between Clarice and Lecter.”<sup>11</sup> Even though there are only five conversations between Starling and Lecter in the plot, they dominate it and the whole plot is directed in the way Lecter directs Starling. There is almost no violence or explicitly horrifying or disgusting scenes in the plot.

Allué also claims that “the acts of violence are not directly described. As a proof of their existence, the audience only has the corpses of the victims, but the corpses turn into clues in the investigation and not women who were tortured and suffered.”<sup>12</sup> About Lecter himself, who is considered to be the most scary and frightening element of the franchise, she states the following: “Lecter’s cannibalism is described in aesthetic terms, he is no savage, he is sophisticated even in what he chooses to eat, only the organs that constitute the ‘sweet meats’, and accompanied by a good wine and herbs.”<sup>13</sup> Therefore, if we are to label these two novels as horrors, we must first determine what are the horror qualities and elements in them.

In the other two Lecter novels, things are not exactly the same. While in *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs* there is more emphasis on the investigation and some parts of the novels might be labelled almost as police-procedural,<sup>14</sup> in *Hannibal* and *Hannibal Rising* there is much more emphasis on horrific elements, for example the digestion of Paul Krendler’s brain by Paul Krendler himself; or half disgusting-half fearsome appearance of Mason Verger. As noted by Jonathan L. Crane: “[...] the ratio between elements drawn from police procedurals and the horror tradition changes markedly over the course of the series. By the penultimate novel, to date (*Hannibal*), horrific elements take pride of place [...] Genres are intrinsically unstable conjunctures and any particular syntactic combination is only a passing alliance.”<sup>15</sup> I agree with

---

<sup>11</sup> Sonia Baelo Allué, “The Aesthetics of Serial Killing: Working against Ethics in *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988) and *American Psycho* (1991),” *Atlantis* 24, no. 2 (December 2002): 19, accessed December 21, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41055067?seq=1>.

<sup>12</sup> Sonia Baelo Allué, “The Aesthetics of Serial Killing: Working against Ethics in *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988) and *American Psycho* (1991),” *Atlantis* 24, no. 2 (December 2002): 16, accessed December 21, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41055067?seq=1>.

<sup>13</sup> Sonia Baelo Allué, “The Aesthetics of Serial Killing: Working against Ethics in *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988) and *American Psycho* (1991),” *Atlantis* 24, no. 2 (December 2002): 17, accessed December 21, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41055067?seq=1>.

<sup>14</sup> Police-procedural “gives extensive details of official investigative methodology and most recently of the computerized and profiling techniques necessary to apprehend serial killers.” J.A. Cuddon, *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory* (London: Penguin Books, 1999), 195.

<sup>15</sup> Jonathan L. Crane, “Outsourced: Crime Stories, New World Horrors, and Genre,” *Studies in popular culture* 33, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 133, Accessed November 8, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23416387?seq=1>.

Crane that the genre classification evolves in the series and the later novels are more horrific.

My conclusion is, therefore, that while *Hannibal* and *Hannibal Rising* can be safely labelled as horrors, this is not the case for *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs*.

### 3.3.2. Psychological Horror

It was argued that the whole series can be labelled as crime fiction and thrillers, and the last two instalments as horrors. Here I will argue that the first two Lecter novels fall into one concrete subgenre of horror, that is, psychological horror.

As was stated before, horror (same as thriller) has its subgenres and one of those is called psychological horror. This is described by S.T. Joshi as “the horror engendered by an awareness of the depths of perversity to which humanity can descent.”<sup>16</sup> According to him, “the prototypical work of psychological horror in our time is Robert Bloch’s *Psycho* (1959).”<sup>17</sup> In simplicity, this kind of horror can be described as the horror of the mind; the horror of the things that we do not see.

Joshi analyses whether Harris’ work is more of a thriller (he uses term ‘suspense’, which is mostly used interchangeably, or suspense is considered one part of the thriller genre), or horror (he tends to use the term ‘weird tale’ for horror). He argues that the novels are more of the former than the latter, even when the latter means ‘psychological horror’.

Like Joshi, I also see these novels more in the thriller genre. But I believe it is also correct to label them as psychological horrors, which Joshi dismisses: “[...] question is whether any of them (novels of Harris) contain sufficient elements of psychological terror to classify them within the realm of the weird tale. In my judgment they do not, [...]”<sup>18</sup> I must respectfully disagree. For example, in *Red Dragon*, the reader can follow Dolarhyde’s thoughts about the murders and about his Becoming, especially while watching videos of the murders he had committed. These passages can be seen as psychologically horrific/terrific:

---

<sup>16</sup> S.T. Joshi, “Suspense vs Horror: The Case of Thomas Harris,” in *Dissecting Hannibal Lecter: Essays on the Novels of Thomas Harris*, ed. Benjamin Szumskyj (Jefferson: McFarland, 2008), 119. PDF.

<sup>17</sup> S.T. Joshi, “Suspense vs Horror: The Case of Thomas Harris,” in *Dissecting Hannibal Lecter: Essays on the Novels of Thomas Harris*, ed. Benjamin Szumskyj (Jefferson: McFarland, 2008), 122. PDF.

<sup>18</sup> S.T. Joshi, “Suspense vs Horror: The Case of Thomas Harris,” in *Dissecting Hannibal Lecter: Essays on the Novels of Thomas Harris*, ed. Benjamin Szumskyj (Jefferson: McFarland, 2008), 124. PDF.

“Watching the film was wonderful. But not as wonderful as the acts themselves. Two major flaws, Dolarhyde felt, were that the film did not actually show the deaths of the Leeds, and his own poor performance toward the end. [...] That was not how the Red Dragon would do it.”<sup>19</sup> And towards the end of the novel, the Dragon in killer’s head becomes a sole creature, instead of being the one with Dolarhyde himself: “He knew the voice came from the room. He knew it was the voice of the Dragon. This new twoness with the Dragon disorientated him. [...] The dragon had never spoken *to* him before. It was frightening.”<sup>20</sup> I find these excerpts enough to prove, that these novels can be regarded as psychological horrors, even though I tend to agree with Joshi, that they are more in the thriller genre.

I have presented the subgenre of psychological horror and argued that *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs* can be labelled as such, even though I see them more in the thriller genre.

### 3.4. Serial Killer Fiction

The final note concerning the genre classification, is that there is one very concrete and narrow subgenre of crime fiction, into which *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs* belong, and that is the serial killer fiction. This subgenre is limited to the narratives dealing with serial murder. Allué says: “This kind of criminal does not kill only once, as is usually the case in detective fiction. Serial killers kill over and over and, what is more important, they follow a pattern in the choice of their victims, a pattern that the detective must discover. [...] For Philip Simpson, Thomas Harris can be considered the creator of the serial killer formula (2000: 70) and, in that sense, *The Silence of the Lambs* serves as a perfect practical example of those conventions.”<sup>21</sup>

Again, it would be debatable to classify *Hannibal* and *Hannibal Rising* to this subgenre, because their plot is not concerned with the hunt for an unknown serial killer, like in the first two novels. There is a serial killer present – Lecter himself – but this fact alone does not determine whether the piece is a serial killer fiction.

---

<sup>19</sup> Thomas Harris, *Red Dragon* (London: Arrow Books, 1993), 78.

<sup>20</sup> Thomas Harris, *Red Dragon* (London: Arrow Books, 1993), 268.

<sup>21</sup> Sonia Baelo Allué, “The Aesthetics of Serial Killing: Working against Ethics in *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988) and *American Psycho* (1991),” *Atlantis* 24, no. 2 (December 2002): 8, accessed December 21, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41055067?seq=1>.

*Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs* had been written in the 1980's, which was the time of increasing popularity of the serial killer fiction, the popularity that culminated with the monumental success of the movie adaptation of *The Silence of the Lambs* (J. Demme, 1991).

I have presented the subgenre of serial killer fiction and argued that *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs* fall into this category, while in the case of *Hannibal* and *Hannibal Rising* it is highly debatable.

### **3.5. Conclusion on Genres**

I have stated that there are two reasons for picking *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs* for my analysis. In this chapter I discussed the second one – that they are closer in terms of the genre.

I have argued that the whole franchise can be referred to as crime fiction and thrillers. While I believe the selected two novels fall into the category of psychological horror, in the other two novels there are more classical horrific elements and thus those can be labelled just as horrors. Finally, I have argued that the selected novels are serial killer fiction, which is not the case for the other two.

## **4. Conceptual Background**

In this chapter I will elaborate on the concept of liminality, providing its varied definitions, and finally arriving at my way of working with the concept in the context of the novels selected for analysis. I will argue that liminality is present in the novels on the levels of characters and plot. I will also argue that one thematic area that is used widely with liminality in the books is the one of gender.

### **4.1. Liminality**

Here I will present the key concept of this thesis. The first use of the word 'liminal' in the sense as it is understood today, can be found in Arnold van Gennep's *The Rites of Passage* (*Les Rites de Passage*, 1909), his most famous sociocultural work, in which he examines various rituals of passage. According to him, there are "preliminal rites (rites of separation), liminal rites (rites of transition), and postliminal rites (rites of

incorporation).”<sup>22</sup> The middle part refers for example to the time, when a person has lost their previous social status but is yet to acquire the new one – it is a transition period.

Now I will provide some definitions of the concept of liminality. According to Isabelle Gadoin and Annie Ramel, “‘liminality’ derives from the Latin noun ‘limen, in is, n,’ which first denoted the threshold, the entrance to a house.”<sup>23</sup> The concept of the threshold is nicely followed up on in Peter Messent’s definition of liminality: “Liminality refers primarily to the concept of the threshold, the area between two spaces. And that threshold is predominantly associated with provisionality, instability, intermediate forms; it is what lies between the known and unknown or ‘other’.”<sup>24</sup> Messent works with this definition of liminality in his paper on Harris’ novels; for him the concept of the threshold is the principal idea of liminality.

In his monograph<sup>25</sup> on the topic of liminality, Bjørn Thomassen offers more elaborated definitions. He says that “liminality refers to moments or periods of transition during which the normal limits to thought, self-understanding and behaviour are relaxed, opening the way to novelty and imagination, construction and destruction. [...] Life and death, day and night, light and dark, girl and woman, novice and expert: liminality emerges in the in-between of a passage.”<sup>26</sup> And he also provides probably the most simple definition: “liminality refers, quite literally, to something placed in an in-between position.”<sup>27</sup> Another definition of Thomassen says that liminality is “any ‘betwixt and between’ situation or object, any in-between place or moment, a state of suspense, a moment of freedom between two structured world-views or institutional arrangements. It relates to change in a single personality as well as social change and transition in large-scale settings.”<sup>28</sup> Key terms from his words about liminality,

---

<sup>22</sup> Arnold van Gennep, *Rites of Passage*, trans. Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960), 11. PDF.

<sup>23</sup> Isabelle Gadoin and Annie Ramel, “Liminality – Introduction,” *The Hardy Review* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 5, accessed October 12, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45301764?seq=1>.

<sup>24</sup> Peter Messent, “American Gothic: Liminality and the Gothic in Thomas Harris’s Hannibal Lecter Novels,” in *Dissecting Hannibal Lecter: Essays on the Novels of Thomas Harris*, ed. Benjamin Szumskyj (Jefferson: McFarland, 2008), 13. PDF.

<sup>25</sup> The monograph by Thomassen is one of the seminal works on the concept of liminality.

<sup>26</sup> Bjørn Thomassen, *Liminality and the Modern: Living Through the In-Between* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 1-2.

<sup>27</sup> Bjørn Thomassen, *Liminality and the Modern: Living Through the In-Between* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 8.

<sup>28</sup> Bjørn Thomassen, *Liminality and the Modern: Living Through the In-Between* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 7.

I believe, are ‘moments of transition’, ‘in-between position’ and ‘change’. These capture the essence of liminality.

Returning to Gadoin and Ramel, they define the concept as “the gate or barrier between two separate fields or spheres. [...] The liminal is basically unascrivable, undescrivable, neither here nor there.”<sup>29</sup> It is yet another way of describing something so abstract as liminality; now let me summarize liminality in my words.

For the purpose of the literary analysis proposed in this thesis, I understand liminal as indefinite, unclear, ambiguous and multifaceted. Liminality is a state between two states, neither this or that, always in between. It is a transition point between two different points, a special period between two different periods, an intermediate stage of a passage.

The word ‘transition’ is crucial when speaking about liminality. Again, in the words of Thomassen, “[...] any application of liminality must, as a minimum, stay close to one aspect of its original meaning as defined by van Gennep: namely, that it has to do with the passing of a threshold and therefore with transition. If it is not about transition, it is not about liminality.”<sup>30</sup> Liminality is a very broad concept, interfering with wide range of fields. It is “a universal concept,”<sup>31</sup> because “single moments, longer periods, or even whole epochs can be considered liminal. Liminality can also be applied to both single individuals and to larger groups (cohorts or villages), or whole societies, and arguably even entire civilizations.”<sup>32</sup> To state an example, Sarah Gilead writes that “social critics commonly characterize the (Victorian) period as an ‘age of transition,’ as a liminal period in a history of spiritual, moral, and intellectual as well as material progress.”<sup>33</sup> We can therefore imagine liminality as an abstract and a very broad concept, which can be applied to almost anything; it goes far beyond the literary theory. It can be applied to history, sociology or anthropology.

Liminality is an increasingly important concept within contemporary studies of culture and its many products as well as human identity. For it is one of the more

---

<sup>29</sup> Isabelle Gadoin and Annie Ramel, “Liminality – Introduction,” *The Hardy Review* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 5, accessed October 12, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45301764?seq=1>.

<sup>30</sup> Bjørn Thomassen, *Liminality and the Modern: Living Through the In-Between* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 15.

<sup>31</sup> Bjørn Thomassen, *Liminality and the Modern: Living Through the In-Between* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 4.

<sup>32</sup> Bjørn Thomassen, *Liminality and the Modern: Living Through the In-Between* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 89.

<sup>33</sup> Sarah Gilead, “Liminality, Anti-Liminality, and the Victorian Novel,” *ELH* 53, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 186, accessed October 12, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2873153?seq=1>.

prominent concepts of modern times, it is essential to study it in all possible disciplines, including literature. What started as an anthropological concept with Arnold van Gennep, has since evolved into multidisciplinary approach. Anthropology, sociology and history are all sciences about human and human societies and cultures. These sciences and others of the similar kind are the disciplines that liminality is most widely studied on. Literature is a part of human culture; it depicts and reflects the society and cultural changes in time. Therefore, it makes sense to add it to the list of disciplines that we will study liminality on. Studying liminality in literature can lead us to better understanding of our own world, lives and culture.

Now that the concept of liminality has been delineated, the chapter will proceed to discussion upon its specific applications in the context of the literary analysis.

## **4.2. Liminality and Characters**

Now that the key term of this thesis has been introduced, I will explain how I will work with the concept. Liminality can inscribe into a literary work on many levels, as Harris' novels show. A major level the liminality will be examined on, is the one of characters.

In the following practical part, I will argue that both serial killers that are hunted in *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs* respectively, are strongly liminal characters. They both are (or think that they are) in a process of transition, they both want to forsake their previous life and become something different and they are in a process of doing it. Although they have completely different motives and goals, in this they are very similar and offer a great subject for comparison.

The third serial killer of the series, Hannibal Lecter, is also a character that the liminal concept can be applied to; he is a killer who helps the protagonists, a curious blend of cannibalistic monster and ingenious mind of a respected psychiatrist. It is not clear what traditional character types he can be labelled with; as he partly stands on the protagonists' side but his actions are by no means moral or right. For example, during his escape in *The Silence of the Lambs* he murders several people that did no harm to him, they just happened to be at the wrong place in the wrong time.

The two central characters, Graham and Starling, serve not only as protagonists, but also as foil characters to each other. The two novels could hardly have a more different protagonists; one retired FBI profiler with no ambition and will to return to the bureau; and one young woman, an FBI trainee, ambitious and planning



to start working for the bureau and doing everything she can to gain respect of her colleagues. These instances of characters balancing between several character types is another area of liminality in the novels.

### **4.3. Liminality and Plot**

Another level the liminality will be analysed on, is the one of plot. Of the plot, Abrams has this to point out: “The ‘plot’ [...] is constituted by its events and actions, as these are rendered and ordered toward achieving particular artistic and emotional effects. [...] When we summarize the story in a literary work, we say that first this happens, then that, then that, and so on. It is only when we specify how this is related to that by causes and motivations, and in what ways all these matters are rendered, ordered, and organized so as to achieve their particular effects, that a synopsis begins to be adequate to the plot.”<sup>34</sup> The plot is connected to the characters as their actions and motivations are what forms the plot. Therefore, if there are characters with liminal features, then necessarily it will manifest itself in the plot.

I will examine how liminality is contained in the murder scheme/modus operandi of Francis Dolarhyde, who murders his victims but after that arranges them so that they look like being alive. In the second instalment of the series, liminality appears to be strong in the relationship between Starling and Lecter, which, once again, goes back to the fact that Lecter is a liminal character. Such a relationship leads to somewhat liminal ending as well: with doctor’s help, Clarice manages to find Buffalo Bill and save the life of the abducted girl, but it is for the price of Lecter’s escape. Is it therefore a victory, a loss, or something between? One killer is eliminated, but the other is set free.

### **4.4. Liminality and Gender**

The liminal approach to Harris’ novels promises to open an original and widely unprecedented discussion on his work as there is not much research done in the area. One of the very few works dedicated to liminality and the Hannibal Lecter franchise is an article by Peter Messent, in which he states: “Harris’s novels engage with all

---

<sup>34</sup> M.H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. (Stamford: Cengage Learning, 2013), 224. PDF.

kinds of threshold areas, thus providing a particularly useful site for an exploration of liminality. Here I briefly describe a number of such engagements – though the spatial limits of this essay require that other areas necessarily go untreated (e.g., gender difference).”<sup>35</sup> It is fitting that gender will be one thematic area that I will argue is inscribed into the novels and formed and affected there by the concept of liminality, and this is especially relevant to *The Silence of the Lambs*. The great deal of space in this thesis will be devoted to the discussion of gender and liminality as it is portrayed in the selected novels. This will be done mainly by the analysis of the character of Clarice Starling, and furthermore the character of the serial killer Buffalo Bill.

#### 4.4.1. Defining Gender

To lay foundation for the discussion of liminality and gender in Harris’ works, I will first introduce the concept of gender and its complex implications. What I mean by gender is a ‘not-biological sex’, a concept that differentiates typical features of masculinity and femininity which may and may not be corresponding to the biological sex. This term, and with it also the distinction of sex and gender, was first introduced by sexologist John Money: “[...] all those things that a person says or does to disclose himself or herself as having the status of boy or man, girl or woman, respectively. It includes, but is not restricted to sexuality in the sense of eroticism.”<sup>36</sup>

What Money calls ‘all those things’ in the quote, famous gender theorist Judith Butler calls ‘acts’, as she defines gender as “an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts. Further, gender is instituted through the stylization of the body and, hence, must be understood as the mundane way in which bodily gestures, movements, and enactments of various kinds constitute the illusion of an abiding gendered self.”<sup>37</sup> These acts, that a person does, are the core

---

<sup>35</sup> Peter Messent, “American Gothic: Liminality and the Gothic in Thomas Harris’s Hannibal Lecter Novels,” in *Dissecting Hannibal Lecter: Essays on the Novels of Thomas Harris*, ed. Benjamin Szumskyj (Jefferson: McFarland, 2008), 14. PDF.

<sup>36</sup> John Money, Joan G. Hampson and John Hampson, “An Examination of Some Basic Sexual Concepts: The Evidence of Human Hermaphroditism,” *Bulletin of Johns Hopkins Hospital* 97, no. 4 (1955): 302, quoted in Marina Cortez, Paula Gaudenzi and Ivía Maksud, “Gender: pathways and dialogues between feminist and biomedical studies from the 1950s to 1970s,” *Physis: Revista de Saúde Coletiva* 29, no. 1 (2019): 5, accessed April 15, 2022, <https://www.scielo.br/j/physis/a/p4dXbydkK3jShSKdxxpgpCm/?lang=en>.

<sup>37</sup> Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (December 1988): 519, accessed January 11, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3207893?origin=JSTOR-pdf&seq=1>.

of gender, as Butler puts it, “without those acts, there would be no gender at all.”<sup>38</sup> She further elaborates that “gender reality is performative which means, quite simply, that it is real only to the extent that it is performed. It seems fair to say that certain kinds of acts are usually interpreted as expressive of a gender core or identity, and that these acts either conform to an expected gender identity or contest that expectation in some way.”<sup>39</sup> The thematic area of gender is present in Harris’ work and in case of some characters it displays liminal features, as I will argue in the practical part.

#### **4.5. Conclusion on Conceptual Background**

In this chapter I presented the key concept that intertwines through the methodology of this thesis – liminality. After providing several definitions, I expressed my approach to liminality; that it is the indefinite, unclear, ambiguous and multifaceted. I elaborated on the processual aspect of ‘transition’ being the key liminal term. Then I explained on which levels I will apply the liminality in the following literary analysis: on the levels of characters, plot and thematic area of gender. I briefly explained how some characters display liminal features. I have argued that liminal characters co-constitute the liminal nature of the plot as a whole and elaborated on some of the liminal plot patterns in the selected novels. Lastly, I introduced the concept of gender and provided its basic definitions; I stated that I will argue that among other aspects, gender is inscribed into the novels and formed alongside the concept of liminality.

### **5. Methodology**

The method applied in the practical part of this thesis is close reading of the novels *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs* and subsequent literary analysis. Abrams defines ‘close reading’ as “the detailed analysis of the complex interrelationships and *ambiguities* (multiple meanings) of the verbal and figurative components within a

---

<sup>38</sup> Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (December 1988): 522, accessed January 11, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3207893?origin=JSTOR-pdf&seq=1>.

<sup>39</sup> Judith Butler, “Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory,” *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (December 1988): 527, accessed January 11, 2022, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3207893?origin=JSTOR-pdf&seq=1>.

work,”<sup>40</sup> while Jonathan Culler simply states that it is “reading that is alert to the details of narrative structure and attends to complexities of meaning.”<sup>41</sup> In such a process, the scholarly traditions call for application of the established terms such as plot, themes, motifs, character as well as interpretation of various symbolic patterns.

In contrary to the usual working with traditional terminology and formalist readings, I have decided to expand my methodological approach with the interdisciplinary approach dubbed ‘working with concepts’, which is proposed and described by Mieke Bal in her work *Travelling Concepts in the Humanities* (2002), which allows me to apply the concept of liminality on several different levels of the narrative. The essential part was a study of the concept of liminality, where mainly the work of Thomassen proved to be a relevant tool. The concept of liminality shall be applied to different levels of the two selected novels.

## 6. Conclusion on the Theoretical Part

In the preceding five chapters of the theoretical part, I have laid foundation for my analysis in the following practical part. In the first chapter I briefly introduced Thomas Harris, the author of the novels *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs*, and his writing career. In the second chapter I claimed there are two reasons for picking these two novels for my analysis, and elaborated on the first one – that they have similar plot structure. I took this opportunity and presented briefly the plots and themes of the Hannibal Lecter novels and then showed how *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs* are similar to each other and different from *Hannibal* and *Hannibal Rising*.

In the third chapter, I elaborated on the second of the reasons – that the selected novels are closer to each other in terms of their genre. I introduced genres of crime fiction, thriller and horror and some of their subgenres; then I argued that *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs* fall into the categories of crime fiction, thrillers, psychological horrors and serial killer fiction, while *Hannibal* and *Hannibal Rising* can be labelled as crime fiction, thrillers and (classical) horrors.

---

<sup>40</sup> M.H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. (Stamford: Cengage Learning, 2013), 243. PDF.

<sup>41</sup> Jonathan Culler, *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 51. PDF.

In the fourth chapter, I stated what I will analyse in the novels; I introduced and defined the concept of liminality and stated that the key terms of the concept are 'moments of transition', 'in-between position' and 'change'. Then I explained at which levels I will inspect the treatment of the concept of liminality in the texts. I elaborated on liminality on the level of characters, on the level of plot, and on the thematic area of gender, the concept to which I also provided definitions. Finally, in the fifth chapter, I described my method of work consisting of a combination of the more-traditional close reading with an innovative approach of working with the concepts.

# **Practical part**

## **7. Introduction to the Practical Part**

The practical part is divided into two major chapters, liminality and characters and liminality and plot. The first chapter is divided into several subchapters, in which I am going to elaborate on the characters of Hannibal Lecter, Francis Dolarhyde, Jame Gumb, Will Graham and Clarice Starling. In the last subchapter I will introduce the concept of external and internal liminality.

The chapter about the plot will have three subchapters, one will deal with liminality in the modus operandi of Francis Dolarhyde, the serial killer from *Red Dragon*; next one will examine the complicated relationship of Clarice Starling and Hannibal Lecter and the last one will briefly mention the endings of both *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs*.

## **8. Liminality and Characters**

In this chapter I will approach liminality in the selected novels on the level of characters. As stated in the preceding theoretical part, my analysis will concern the characters of Hannibal Lecter, Francis Dolarhyde, Jame Gumb, Clarice Starling and Will Graham.

### **8.1. Hannibal Lecter as the Liminal Heart of the Novels**

Hannibal Lecter, cannibalistic serial killer, is the main connecting element of the series so he will be the first object of my analysis.

Not much space is devoted to him in *Red Dragon*, but his character is nevertheless an important one and already reader can see the ambiguity and obscurity of his nature. Shortly before the reader encounters Lecter for the first time, Will Graham has this to say of him: “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.”<sup>42</sup> Graham gives the reader an introduction to the character of Lecter but the reader is rather confused than being clarified about the character’s nature. Graham continues: “They say he’s a sociopath because they don’t know what else to call him. He has some of the characteristics of what they call a

---

<sup>42</sup> Thomas Harris, *Red Dragon* (London: Arrow Books, 1993), 54.

sociopath. He has no remorse or guilt at all.”<sup>43</sup> From what Graham says and how the scale and nature of Lecter’s crimes are hinted to the reader, one can easily imagine the man to be a devilish, sadistic, terrifying and threatening person. As Graham himself says: “He’s a monster.”<sup>44</sup>

This image of Lecter is amplified when Graham talks to Dr. Chilton, the administrator of the institute where Lecter is being held. Chilton describes to Graham a terrible incident, in which Lecter, during a medical treatment, attacked a nurse and severely injured her, all happening in the matter of seconds: “She managed to save one of her eyes. [...] His pulse never got over 85. Even when he tore out her tongue.”<sup>45</sup> This almost has to create a picture of a vile savage with blood dripping from his teeth in the mind of the reader; this picture is however spoiled when Lecter finally appears. The first question he asks Graham is, whether he got his Christmas card. Then he politely asks his guest to have a seat, showing completely normal behaviour. Then, he is willing to help the man, who got him imprisoned, with his new case. To sum up, he makes an impression of a highly intelligent, educated, polite and well-spoken individual, the most distant thing from a vile savage monster one could imagine. In the very first occasion the reader ever encounters Lecter in the text, he right away displays signs of a liminal character.

The similar introduction to Lecter takes place in the *Silence of the Lambs*, where the incident with the nurse is again mentioned and then follows the first meeting between Starling and Lecter. The doctor demonstrates his enormous intellect, when he correctly guesses that Jack Crawford’s wife is dying. And then he demonstrates the curious part of his nature, when he sends a note to Crawford, the man who helped collecting evidence against him. The note said: “I’m so sorry about Bella, Jack.”<sup>46</sup> Lecter was somehow able to figure out she was dying and he wrote Crawford a letter of sympathy.

It is not until the last third of *The Silence of the Lambs*, that we see Lecter being violent during his shocking escape. Then he truly reminds the monster he is said to be.

He is depicted as a highly intelligent person, a great psychiatrist, the master cook, an all-round educated person, who can read through people and play mind games

---

<sup>43</sup> Thomas Harris, *Red Dragon* (London: Arrow Books, 1993), 55.

<sup>44</sup> Thomas Harris, *Red Dragon* (London: Arrow Books, 1993), 55.

<sup>45</sup> Thomas Harris, *Red Dragon* (London: Arrow Books, 1993), 61.

<sup>46</sup> Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 48.



with them. On the other hand, he is a brutal murderer, sociopath and a cannibal. This dual nature of him manifests itself several times during the both books. As mentioned above, he sent a Christmas card to Will Graham; yet, when he gets the opportunity, he connects with Francis Dolarhyde and gives him Graham's home address, intending the killer to wipe out the whole Graham's family. It implies that he would not mind getting revenge on the investigator, but that still does not stop him from being polite and even friendly to Graham, treating him with respect and helping him with the case. Therefore, it can be argued that his nature and characteristics mentioned above show liminal features.

Lecter has much more central role in the second novel. While in *Red Dragon* there is only one face-to-face meeting between Graham and Lecter, in *The Silence of the Lambs* there are in total five meetings of Lecter and Starling and Lecter is now much more important element in the story. While in *Red Dragon* he helped Graham out of curiosity and he had to deduce any piece of knowledge he would share with the profiler, in *The Silence of the Lambs* he possesses key information about Buffalo Bill's identity and he wants to trade it for better conditions of his imprisonment and he even ends up using the opportunity to escape.

### 8.1.1. Lecter's Role in the Plot

Another liminal trait of Lecter's character is his role in the plot. An argument can be made that he is an antagonist. As Lecter is a serial murderer, one would not hesitate to label him as a villain.<sup>47</sup> But these labels can be questioned with strong arguments. Prototypically, the role of a major antagonist is occupied by only one character. The spot is already taken by Francis Dolarhyde in *Red Dragon* and Jame Gumb in *The Silence of the Lambs*. In both novels, Lecter helps the protagonists or at least is not on the opposite side of the central conflict. To label him as an antagonist or a villain is therefore highly debatable. The doctor might be an antihero, but he is not the protagonist of either of the two novels, which is essential for someone being an

---

<sup>47</sup> To briefly explain the terms used: "The chief character in a plot, on whom our interest centers, is called the **protagonist** (or alternatively, the **hero** or **heroine**), and if the plot is such that he or she is pitted against an important opponent, that character is called the **antagonist**. [...] If the antagonist is evil, or capable of cruel and criminal actions, he or she is called the **villain**."

M.H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. (Stamford: Cengage Learning, 2013), 293-294. PDF.

antihero.<sup>48</sup> The protagonists of both the novels are clear enough, Lecter does not have enough space in the plot to be labelled as the antihero. To make things more complicated, this changes later in the series, as Lecter is the protagonist of *Hannibal Rising*. Therefore, whatever his role in the story is, it changes throughout the course of the series.

The central conflict in both *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs* does not concern Lecter. The central conflict of both novels revolves around a struggle of the FBI agent trying to catch a serial killer. Lecter stands outside the conflict. Significantly, Lecter regularly switches sides of the conflict. In *Red Dragon* he shares with Graham his thoughts that could lead the agent to catch Dolarhyde. Shortly after, he gives Dolarhyde Graham's home address, intending him to kill Graham's family. Lecter did both things just for his amusement; he cannot be clearly placed on either side of the conflict. In *The Silence of the Lambs*, Lecter is on the side of his own, playing the third party in the central conflict. He knows the killer identity but he would not reveal it; he shares some insights with Starling but only in exchange for something from her. In this case he cares not for his amusement, but for his self-interest. This switching of sides, unclear position in the central conflict of the plots, unclear character type, are the most significant liminal qualities of Lecter's character.

To support that, let me remind what I stated about liminality in the theoretical part, that it is "predominantly associated with provisionality, instability, intermediate forms; what lies between the known and unknown or 'other.'<sup>49</sup> Lecter is an unclear and obscure character, and he is the connecting link of the series, as has been already mentioned. Therefore, I would like to argue, that he is the liminal heart of the two analysed novels and possibly the whole series.

---

<sup>48</sup> Antihero is "the chief person in a modern novel or play whose character is widely discrepant from that of the traditional protagonist, or hero, of a serious literary work. Instead of manifesting largeness, dignity, power, or heroism, the antihero is petty, ignominious, passive, clownish, or dishonest."

M.H. Abrams and Geoffrey Galt Harpham, *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. (Stamford: Cengage Learning, 2013), 16. PDF.

<sup>49</sup> Peter Messent, "American Gothic: Liminality and the Gothic in Thomas Harris's Hannibal Lecter Novels," in *Dissecting Hannibal Lecter: Essays on the Novels of Thomas Harris*, ed. Benjamin Szumskyj (Jefferson: McFarland, 2008), 13. PDF.

## 8.2. The Becoming of Francis Dolarhyde

The serial killer in *Red Dragon* is an antagonist of the novel. To fully understand his motivations, it is essential to say that he was born “with bilateral fissures in his upper lip and in his hard and soft palates. The centre section of his mouth was unanchored and protruded. His nose was flat.”<sup>50</sup> He spent the first years of his life in an orphanage, where he was bullied by other children. At five, he moved to his grandmother’s, where he was abused by her and his stepsister and stepbrother. He got his face operated only while he served in an army, when he was around twenty.

Shy, silent, timid Dolarhyde carries the weight of his traumas and when he discovers a painting of William Blake, *The Great Red Dragon and the Woman Clothed with the Sun*<sup>51</sup>, his inner demon awakes. He believes that he is in the process of Becoming from a human to the Red Dragon. “With the fervour of conversion he saw that if he worked at it, if he followed the true urges he had kept down for so long – cultivated them as the inspiration they truly were – he could Become. The Dragon’s face is not visible in the painting, but increasingly Dolarhyde came to know how it looked.”<sup>52</sup> The Dragon on the picture is everything that Dolarhyde would love to be: he is strong, muscular, threatening, and he seems to have a possession of a woman; the picture has a sexual energy that amazes Dolarhyde, as he has never been able to have any romantic or sexual relationship with a woman at all. When he abducts Freddy Lounds, a reporter that wrote about him, he reveals his true self to Lounds. He boasts:

“[...] you see, I am not a man. I began as one but, by the Grace of God and my own Will, I have become Other and More than a man.”<sup>53</sup> He is under an impression that his Becoming is the major event that will change the world: “I am the Dragon and you call me *insane*? [...] You are a privy to a great Becoming and you recognize nothing. [...] before Me you rightly tremble. Fear is not what you owe Me, Lounds, you and the other pismires. *You owe me awe*.”<sup>54</sup> He gains the strength of the Dragon by committing murders and acts of necrophilia with the corpses of the murdered

---

<sup>50</sup> Thomas Harris, *Red Dragon* (London: Arrow Books, 1993), 198.

<sup>51</sup> There are several paintings of Red Dragon from William Blake, the one that is in the Brooklyn Museum is called *The Great Red Dragon and the Woman clothed in Sun*. The author probably confused the painting with *The Great Red Dragon and the Woman clothed with the Sun*, that is different and is deposited elsewhere.

<sup>52</sup> Thomas Harris, *Red Dragon* (London: Arrow Books, 1993), 227.

<sup>53</sup> Thomas Harris, *Red Dragon* (London: Arrow Books, 1993), 173.

<sup>54</sup> Thomas Harris, *Red Dragon* (London: Arrow Books, 1993), 176-177.

women. He also exercises and lifts incredible weights to become as strong as the Dragon and he has a huge tattoo of the Dragon on his back.

The liminality of Dolarhyde's character is of a different kind than Lecter's. Unlike Lecter, Dolarhyde does not switch sides and his position in the central conflict is very clear. He has a goal and he is following his path towards it, not looking back. The path itself is liminal. In his mind he started as a human but he will eventually become the Dragon in his full physical appearance, when he gains enough strength – murders enough people. During the plot, he is in the middle stage, in the liminal phase of his change. He is in-between, not fully a man and not fully the Dragon. As stated in the theoretical part, liminality “refers, quite literally, to something placed in an in-between position.”<sup>55</sup>

Dolarhyde gains the confidence to do things he would never dare to do before his Becoming. He is not passive anymore. At one point he engages in an incident with a man; his thoughts after it show how much he has changed: “There was a time when he would have apologized for disturbing the man and never come back to the newsstand. For years he had taken shit unlimited from people. Not any more. The man could have insulted Francis Dolarhyde: he could not face the Dragon. It was all part of Becoming.”<sup>56</sup> Dolarhyde has changed his behaviour since the start of the Becoming, and as was mentioned, change is one of the crucial elements regarding liminality. He is now in different stage than before his Becoming started but he is yet to fully achieve being the Dragon. The process is a transition, and once more let me go back to the definitions of liminality: “It relates to change in a single personality as well as social change and transition in large-scale settings.”<sup>57</sup> Thomassen also says that “[...] any application of liminality [...] has to do with the passing of a threshold and therefore with transition. If it is not about transition, it is not about liminality.”<sup>58</sup>

Dolarhyde's new confidence manifests itself towards the end of the book when he actually starts a romantic relationship with a woman, Reba McClane, he takes her to his home and they spend a night together. Before his Becoming he would never have had the courage to do something like that; now he gets confused that he is able to

---

<sup>55</sup> Bjørn Thomassen, *Liminality and the Modern: Living Through the In-Between* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 8.

<sup>56</sup> Thomas Harris, *Red Dragon* (London: Arrow Books, 1993), 167-168.

<sup>57</sup> Bjørn Thomassen, *Liminality and the Modern: Living Through the In-Between* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 7.

<sup>58</sup> Bjørn Thomassen, *Liminality and the Modern: Living Through the In-Between* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 15.

function normally with a living woman, and because of that, an unexpected thing happens. He and the Dragon suddenly become two. This passage was already mentioned in the theoretical part in the chapter on genres. In the scene where Dolarhyde talks to the Dragon, he is like his old self: trembling, stuttering, cannot pronounce words correctly; he is intimidated by the Dragon who answers him in a strong, loud and menacing voice. But it is Dolarhyde's mouth that pronounces the words, it is him who speaks for the Dragon and he does not realise it as he constantly switches between his two personalities:

“‘WHOM ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT?’ He knew who spoke and he was frightened. From the beginning, he and the Dragon had been one. [...] Not now. Not since Reba. [...] ‘WHO IS ACCEPTABLE?’ the Dragon asked. ‘Mrs... erhman – Sherman.’ It was hard for Dolarhyde to say. ‘SPEAK UP. I CAN’T UNDERSTAND YOU. WHOM ARE YOU THINKING ABOUT?’”<sup>59</sup> A split personality is, perhaps, the most prominent manifest of liminality concerning the human mind.

Francis Dolarhyde is a liminal character, as he believes he changes to the Great Dragon, his transformation is one of the main themes of the novel and eventually leads to his personality splitting and the liminal nature of his character reaches its peak. Liminality is very formable, at first it is a process, or it rather marks a part of the process, then it can become a state. As in the case of Dolarhyde, liminality in his character is contained in the process of Becoming and at the end when his personality splits, liminality is a permanent state of his character.

### **8.3. Jame Gumb – a Transsexual?**

In the *Silence of the Lambs*, the role of an antagonist fell to Jame Gumb, known to the public as Buffalo Bill. He is a completely different character than Dolarhyde, yet their goal is in its core very similar. They both despise the person they currently are and they both seek to become someone or something else. While Dolarhyde's imagination of becoming the Dragon was nothing short of delusional, Gumb's goal is much more real. He desperately wants to undergo a gender reassignment surgery and become a woman. He had applied for the surgery but every time he was rejected.

He is not a real transsexual but he thinks he is. This important point is first mentioned by Lecter, who knows who Buffalo Bill is: “Billy's not a transsexual,

---

<sup>59</sup> Thomas Harris, *Red Dragon* (London: Arrow Books, 1993), 281.

Clarice, but he thinks he is, he tries to be. He's tried to be a lot of things, I expect."<sup>60</sup>

Lecter advises Clarice to search in the records of the three sex reassignment surgery centers in the USA and look for those who were denied the surgery because of concealing the criminal record and because they tested differently from a real transsexual person:

"[...] we're looking for a male who will test differently from the way a true transsexual would test. [...] You should try to obtain a list of people rejected from all three gender-reassignment centers. [...] Among those who tried to conceal criminal records, look for severe childhood disturbances associated with violence. [...] Then go to the tests."<sup>61</sup> This is exactly what FBI does and they find Jame Gumb thanks to this information. The doctor from the medical center who gives Gumb's name to Crawford says: "I want you to make it clear to the public he's not a transsexual."<sup>62</sup> What then was Jame Gumb, if not a transsexual?

He was a mentally unstable and disturbed person; he hated himself and wanted to become someone different. Allué says that "whether we agree that Gumb is a transsexual or not, it is certainly true that he does not belong to the norm. He does not represent a clear sexual identity and is deviant in his need to kill women to become one of them through their skin."<sup>63</sup> It is revealed that he had some homosexual relationships during his life<sup>64</sup> and also that he assaulted homosexual men.<sup>65</sup> This implies that he might have hated homosexuals and hated himself for being one and that by the change of his sex, his sexuality would become 'normal'. This theory is expressed for example by Megan Evans, who was analysing the movie adaptation, but it can be applied to the novel as well: "As a woman, Bill can erase his homosexuality; his attraction to men would thus metamorphose into the social norm."<sup>66</sup> This theory is never confirmed by anyone in the plot though, it is even questioned whether Gumb

---

<sup>60</sup> Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 189.

<sup>61</sup> Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 192-193.

<sup>62</sup> Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 357.

<sup>63</sup> Sonia Baelo Allué, "The Aesthetics of Serial Killing: Working against Ethics in *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988) and *American Psycho* (1991)," *Atlantis* 24, no. 2 (December 2002): 14, accessed December 21, 2021, <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41055067?seq=1>.

<sup>64</sup> Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 197.

<sup>65</sup> Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 358.

<sup>66</sup> Megan Evans. "Silence of the Sexes: Gender Inversion in Jonathan Demme's *The Silence of the Lambs*," *The Pegasus Review: UCF Undergraduate Research Journal* 4, no. 1 (2009): 24, accessed October 13, 2021,

[https://stars.library.ucf.edu/urj/vol4/iss1/3/?utm\\_source=stars.library.ucf.edu%2Furj%2Fvol4%2Fiss1%2F3&utm\\_medium=PDF&utm\\_campaign=PDFCoverPages](https://stars.library.ucf.edu/urj/vol4/iss1/3/?utm_source=stars.library.ucf.edu%2Furj%2Fvol4%2Fiss1%2F3&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages).

really was a homosexual, it is said that “it’s just something he picked up in jail. He’s not anything, really, just a sort of total lack that he wants to fill, and so angry.”<sup>67</sup>

Jame Gumb, as well as Dolarhyde, is in the process of transition. While he is in male body, he thinks of himself as a woman. He takes hormones which gradually make him more woman-like: “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.”<sup>68</sup> Gumb behaved as a woman when he was home, just on his own. But outside, between people, if he didn’t want to draw attention to himself, he had to meet the expectations of the society by behaving as a man. His gender acts (going back to Butler) were therefore different in different situations. In public he used his normal very deep voice; when speaking to himself or to his dog he deliberately used higher-pitched voice. He had to dress like a man in public which he didn’t have to do at home. Even without the surgery, he was changing from a man to a woman. Change, as stated before, is one of the key principles of liminality.

Liminality in Gumb’s character is in his unclear gender role, and his process of transition from being a man to being a woman, or at least the closest to a woman he can get. In the plot he is in the process of making the suit for himself, taking hormones and training to make his voice higher – he is in the process of transformation, in another words, transition period.

Gumb also uses a symbolism to express his motivations. To each of his victims, before he throws them into a river, he inserts a cocoon into their throat. In the words of Dr. Lecter: “A caterpillar becomes a pupa in a chrysalis. Then it emerges; comes out of its secret changing room as the beautiful imago. [...] The significance of the chrysalis is change. Worm into butterfly, or moth. Billy thinks he wants to change.”<sup>69</sup> The symbol of the butterfly in the plot refers to changing to something else, becoming something beautiful. Becoming, changing – liminality emerges before our eyes as we analyse the character of Buffalo Bill, as “liminality refers to moments or periods of transition [...] emerges in the in-between of a passage.”<sup>70</sup>

---

<sup>67</sup> Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 197.

<sup>68</sup> Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 155.

<sup>69</sup> Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 186-187.

<sup>70</sup> Bjørn Thomassen, *Liminality and the Modern: Living Through the In-Between* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 1-2.

Interestingly, in his position to gender and sexuality, Gumb can be argued to be an exact opposite to Dolarhyde. Dolarhyde idolized the strong masculine Dragon who had a beautiful woman before his feet. He sought to fulfil his masculine desires; no woman has ever showed interest in Francis Dolarhyde, so he would become the relentless Dragon. Gumb, on the other hand, sought to get rid of his masculinity and become the complete opposite of Dolarhyde's Dragon – beautiful, tender, seductive woman. While the two serial killers have both liminal characteristics and motives, they sought the opposite to each other.

Gumb's last words after he was fatally wounded by Starling were addressed to her: "How... does... it feel... to be... so beautiful?"<sup>71</sup> Even in his last moments he envied Starling's femininity and beauty. His character displays signs of liminality in his gender role and in his process of transformation from one gender to another.

#### **8.4. The Comparison of the Protagonists**

In this subchapter I will elaborate on the characters of Will Graham and Clarice Starling, the protagonists of *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs* respectively. They both work for the FBI, but as mentioned in the theoretical part, they are very much different.

Will Graham is a retired FBI profiler, who used to teach at the FBI academy and is well known for catching two serial killers – Garrett Jacob Hobbs and Hannibal Lecter. That is the reason why Crawford asks for his help in hunting Dolarhyde; as Graham explains to his wife, "Crawford thinks I have a knack for the monsters. It's like a superstition with him."<sup>72</sup> Graham possesses the ability to relate to sociopaths and psychopaths and think like them, this emphatic ability allows him to look at evidence and crime scenes with different eyes than other policemen and FBI agents. Because he knows what a psychopath would want to do, he often guesses correctly where to look for evidence. Crawford says: "[...] it's his bad luck to be the best. Because he doesn't think like other people. [...] There's nobody better with evidence. But he has the other thing too. Imagination, projection, whatever. He doesn't like that part of it."<sup>73</sup> Graham's gift is also his curse, because his sensitive nature cannot always cope with

---

<sup>71</sup> Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 400.

<sup>72</sup> Thomas Harris, *Red Dragon* (London: Arrow Books, 1993), 7.

<sup>73</sup> Thomas Harris, *Red Dragon* (London: Arrow Books, 1993), 9.



everything that happens to him. After he killed Hobbs in dramatic circumstances, Graham spent a month in a mental hospital. Then he returned to the bureau but after another dramatic incident with Lecter, he couldn't take it anymore and retired.

I would like to argue that the liminal quality of his character is this talent he possesses. He is a hunter who can think like his pray and therefore use it to catch the pray. He is an extremely emphatic person who can relate to the worst psychopaths and sociopaths. He feels empathy for those who feel none. He feels a strange connection to the people he seeks: "Sometimes Graham felt close to him (the Dragon). A feeling he remembered from other investigations had settled over him in recent days; the taunting sense that he and the Dragon were doing the same things at various times of the day, that there were parallels in the quotidian details of their lives. Somewhere the Dragon was eating, or showering, or sleeping at the same time he did."<sup>74</sup> It was his gift as well as curse, as it helped him to catch two serial killers, but at the same time it caused him mental problems that eventually led him to retiring from the FBI. With the gift, he was able to track down Dolarhyde but it proved almost fatal for himself and his family when Dolarhyde attacked them.

'Multifaceted' was the word I used to describe liminality in the theoretical part; this word, I would like to argue, is the right one to describe Graham's character and what his gift brings to the story and people around him and what it brings to himself. To the story it brings advance, to other people help, to Dolarhyde destruction, to Graham himself suffering.

Graham is a legend at the FBI, and he has no wish to return to the bureau, to lead another investigation. He has no ambition to go back and when Crawford asks for his help, he at first refuses to leave his family and return to his former life. Only the thought of more killings makes him change his mind and he makes the sacrifice and joins the investigation. This is in contrast with the character of Clarice Starling.

She is in many ways Graham's opposite. She does not have a special talent but she is devoted and a hard-worker. She is not a legend by any means; she is a trainee at the FBI academy, her whole career is in front of her. And contrary to Graham, she is very ambitious and competitive. She would take any opportunity to shine and gain respect of her colleagues. This is shown right at the beginning of *The Silence of the Lambs*, when Crawford assigns her to a special task: "Clarice Starling's self-interest

---

<sup>74</sup> Thomas Harris, *Red Dragon* (London: Arrow Books, 1993), 196-197.

snuffled ahead like a keen beagle. She smelled a job offer coming. [...] Clarice Starling felt a glad knocking in her chest and some apprehension too.”<sup>75</sup> In their first meeting, Lecter soon realizes her strong ambition and when he decides to set her on the trace of Buffalo Bill, he says to her: “‘I’ll give you what you love the most, Clarice Starling.’ ‘What’s that, Dr. Lecter?’ ‘Advancement, of course.’”<sup>76</sup>

Starling has two good reasons to be ambitious and hungry for success. The first of those is her father, who had been a town marshal. He was killed in duty when Clarice was a child. With the second reason we are coming back to the gender problem. Gender is one of the major themes of *The Silence of the Lambs*. Starling, a young woman, is motivated and determined to be successful in a job that is dominated by men. And on top of that, men who look down on her, who do not consider her as competent as themselves. That is why she studies harder and trains harder than most students – to match her male classmates and future colleagues. She hates sexism and is not afraid to speak up about it. This part of her character is shown to the reader when she talks to Dr. Chilton, before she goes to interview Lecter. Chilton behaves in a way that disgusts her:

“‘We’ve had a lot of detectives here, but I can’t remember one so attractive.’ [...] ‘Will you be in Baltimore for several days? You know, you can have just as good a time here as you can in Washington or New York, if you know the town.’ She looked away to spare herself his smile and knew at once that he had registered her distaste.”<sup>77</sup> Starling wants to be viewed as an FBI agent. Not as a woman FBI agent. She hates men’s remarks about her attractiveness. That is why she is not happy, when Chilton says, that Crawford was clever to use her on Lecter, because she is “a young woman to turn him on.”<sup>78</sup> Her response in her mind is not surprising to the reader: “*Well fuck off, Chilton.*”<sup>79</sup> Nevertheless, what really annoys her is that Chilton might not be far from the truth here. When Crawford gave her the job, in response to her question why he chose her, he said: “Mainly because you’re available. [...] I don’t have anybody left in this section to do it.”<sup>80</sup> That is a curious explanation; it seems odd to assign a trainee with interviewing a serial killer. Of course, should Crawford choose her because she

---

<sup>75</sup> Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 5.

<sup>76</sup> Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 29.

<sup>77</sup> Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 10.

<sup>78</sup> Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 13.

<sup>79</sup> Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 13.

<sup>80</sup> Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 5.

was young and beautiful, he would have never told her. But later he admits that he sent her to Lecter hoping it would lead to him helping with the Buffalo Bill case, so this being the true reason seems probable.

Sexism is a strong theme in the novel, it would not be an overstatement to say that Clarice Starling was one of the first prominent feminist protagonists in the world of literature and cinema.

I have already elaborated on Jame Gumb and his gender; I stated that he can be argued to be the opposite of Dolarhyde in terms of who is seeking masculinity and who femininity. Similarly, Starling can be viewed as Gumb's opposite in *The Silence of the Lambs*. She seeks equality with her male counterparts, she wishes to be treated exactly the same as men. She wants to have the same position and respect in the bureau as any male agent; she therefore seeks to get rid of her feminine gender role which is exactly what Gumb wants to gain. The central conflict of the story is all about gender; Starling wants to find Buffalo Bill to achieve her goal of gaining recognition and respect in the bureau and that way obtain more masculine gender role; while Buffalo Bill wants to make the suit for himself to obtain feminine gender role and he does not want to get caught. Logically, only one of them can be successful, which is nicely elaborated on by Megan Evans; she was analysing the film adaptation, but the same can be said about the book: "[...]the gendered objectives that Buffalo Bill and Clarice Starling seek depend on defeating each other: to become a woman, Bill needs to kill the masculinized woman who threatens his goal of becoming a woman, and Clarice, to achieve her goal of being recognized and accepted as masculine in her job, must stop this feminized male serial killer. Thus, without the death of his/her nemesis, the other cannot achieve his/ her goal to become identified with the opposite gender."<sup>81</sup> Gender as a concept is one of the essential themes of these two books as I hope my analysis proves, especially in *The Silence of the Lambs* it is thoroughly explored.

Gender and liminality are related to each other, because when a character does not have a clear gender role or is trying to switch from one gender role to another, then inevitably such a character is in a process of transition. Liminality inscribes itself to the character of Starling as well, even though it is not visible on the first sight.

---

<sup>81</sup> Megan Evans. "Silence of the Sexes: Gender Inversion in Jonathan Demme's *The Silence of the Lambs*," *The Pegasus Review: UCF Undergraduate Research Journal* 4, no. 1 (2009): 24, accessed October 13, 2021, [https://stars.library.ucf.edu/urj/vol4/iss1/3/?utm\\_source=stars.library.ucf.edu%2Furj%2Fvol4%2Fiss1%2F3&utm\\_medium=PDF&utm\\_campaign=PDFCoverPages](https://stars.library.ucf.edu/urj/vol4/iss1/3/?utm_source=stars.library.ucf.edu%2Furj%2Fvol4%2Fiss1%2F3&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages).

Apart from trying to achieve different gender role in the FBI, which I explained above, she is also in a transition from a trainee to an agent. She should be studying for her exams, but instead she finds herself doing work that only the best of FBI agents would be doing – interviewing ingenious serial killer, accompanying Crawford on his travel to the crime scene, hunting Buffalo Bill. She is changing from a student to a professional. The scene right at the beginning of the plot sees Starling accepting the offer to interview Lecter, this marks the start of the liminal phase, which ends when Starling finds and kills Buffalo Bill. The reader follows Starling all the way throughout her liminal phase.

In this subchapter I have elaborated on the two protagonists of the novels, Will Graham and Clarice Starling, compared them and explained how liminality appears in their characters. A lot of space was devoted to the problem of gender, which is the major theme of the novels.

## **8.5. External and Internal Liminality**

At this point I would like to discuss the concept of external and internal liminality. I elaborated on Hannibal Lecter being labelled with no clear archetypal character type despite him being one of the most prominent characters. I argued that he stands outside the central conflict of the both novels and that he regularly switches sides of the conflict, or rather, is on the side of his own. It is liminality of the character that concerns the plot and is external to that very character.

Then I elaborated on Francis Dolarhyde and I argued that the liminality of his character was contained in his nature, motivations and actions. His process of Becoming or his split personality were those things I indicated were liminal. In this case, liminality is a foundational part of his identity so I would like to call this type of liminality internal to the character.

Internal and external liminality can merge in one character, for example in the case of Jame Gumb. I argued that his transformation from one gender to the next was a liminal phase, a transition, liminal period. Gender is foundational and essential to one's own identity, therefore it could be argued that liminality of Jame Gumb was internal, but since gender is something that is co-formed by the society and environment one is living in, it has certain aspects of external liminality as well.

To sum up, internal liminality of a character is concerned with inner nature, motivations and identity of the character, while external liminality is concerned with the effect and impact a character's actions have on his surroundings and the plot. Both types of liminality can merge in the same character.

## **8.6. Conclusion on the Liminality and Characters**

In this chapter I elaborated on the main characters of the two novels. I argued that liminality is inscribed in the character of Hannibal Lecter in that he has a fluctuating position in the main plot and is described both as a crazy killer and an intelligent educated man. I argued that the Becoming of Francis Dolarhyde is a liminal process and compared his character to that of Jame Gumb, whose motive to commit murders was very different but also liminal, in different way. I argued that while Dolarhyde sought to become the masculine Dragon, Gumb wanted to get rid of his masculinity and acquire feminine gender role. I elaborated on the character of Will Graham and discussed the liminality of his character in terms of his special talent to empathise with the killers he hunted and think like them. Gender had a great part in the analysis of the character of Clarice Starling, I also argued that during the plot of *The Silence of the Lambs* she is in a liminal position between an FBI trainee and an FBI agent. In the last subchapter I introduced the concepts of external and internal liminality concerning the characters.

## **9. Liminality and Plot**

In this chapter I will show where liminality can be found in the plot events of the two novels. In the theoretical part I have already mentioned that characters and plot are closely related and therefore characters with liminal qualities would reflect in the plot.

### **9.1. Modus Operandi of Francis Dolarhyde**

Here I will argue that the murder scheme of Dolarhyde has certain liminal features. The reader is not there to see the murders explicitly, but he can reconstruct how they happened together with Will Graham, and also there are parts where we can see Dolarhyde watching his videos of murders.

Dolarhyde committed two murders of entire families. As mentioned above, he believed that these acts would help him Become the Dragon: “The Jacobis were the first to help him, the first to lift him into the Glory of his Becoming. The Jacobis were better than anything, better than anything he ever knew. Until the Leeds.”<sup>82</sup> His idea of the families *helping* him implicates that in his mind they did it almost voluntarily and he honoured them by choosing them.

The scheme of his murders shows signs of liminality in that he treats the dead people as living. A person can be alive or dead and seemingly nothing in between. One can argue that there are people whose heart stopped beating and they were saved and brought back to life; as there are people in deep coma. If one can say that these instances are stages between life and death, then it can be argued that these are liminal stages of transition. So, anything between life and death, we can describe as liminal. Now, let us look at Dolarhyde’s actions after the murders were done.

“They were all dead now. Arranged. Two children seated against the wall facing the bed, one seated across the corner from them facing the camera. Mr. and Mrs. Leeds in bed with the covers over them. Mr. Leeds propped up against the head-board, the sheet covering the rope around his chest and his head lolled to the side.”<sup>83</sup> They are dead but the killer arranges them in positions so that they seem alive. To further intensify this effect, he uses pieces of glass from the mirrors he had broken. With glass in their eyes, the dead faces look like living, similarly to dolls. Graham soon realises this, when he visits the crime scene:

“They had been in a row, seated along the wall facing the bed. An audience. A dead audience. [...] What were they watching? Nothing, they were all dead. But their eyes were open. They were watching a performance starring the madman and the body of Mrs. Leeds, beside Mr. Leeds in the bed. An audience. The crazy could look around at their faces.”<sup>84</sup> An audience makes sense only if it sees something; for Dolarhyde, an audience that cannot see him is pointless. In his mind he was thinking of them as living. By killing them, he changed them into something else and now they are able to see him as the Great masculine Dragon, while he conducts acts of necrophilia with the body of Mrs. Leeds. The second reason he uses mirror pieces is that this way he can see himself in their eyes, it looks like they are really watching him. The fact that he

---

<sup>82</sup> Thomas Harris, *Red Dragon* (London: Arrow Books, 1993), 228.

<sup>83</sup> Thomas Harris, *Red Dragon* (London: Arrow Books, 1993), 77.

<sup>84</sup> Thomas Harris, *Red Dragon* (London: Arrow Books, 1993), 19-20.

does not consider them truly dead is indicated, when he thinks about them as “his fellow performers”<sup>85</sup>.

The mind of Francis Dolarhyde is a well of liminality. Now it might look that the concept can be applied only to horrific things, but it is the plot of the novel that is horrific, not the liminality itself. Dolarhyde as a character displays liminal signs in the motive for his actions and in those actions as well. He takes lives of several people but after he puts pieces of mirror into their eyes and arranges them in the bedroom, in his mind they are alive and they are there to watch his magnificent performance and admire the Great Dragon. Mrs. Leeds is not dead to him, she is his co-performer, she fills the role of the woman clothed with the sun from Blake’s painting. That is how he sees her, and in her eyes he can see the reflection of himself, symbolizing the awe that the woman feels for him in his mind. I would like to argue that this instance of dead and yet in a certain sense living victims is an example of liminality in the plot of *Red Dragon*.

## **9.2. The Relationship of Clarice Starling and Hannibal Lecter**

The relationship of Starling and Lecter is an unusual one, to say at least. It began in the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, in the third chapter of *The Silence of the Lambs*, when a young FBI trainee came to interview a crazy cannibalistic serial killer. Bars and nylon net between them, Starling managed to catch Lecter’s interest and he agreed to talk to her, much to the surprise of Barney, the orderly who was taking care of Lecter. Lecter would never talk to anybody before. This is how it started, and even though the sequel *Hannibal* is not a part of my analysis for reasons stated in the theoretical part, I see fit to remind here that in the ending of that novel Starling and Lecter become lovers and they are living and hiding together.

In *The Silence of the Lambs*, their relationship develops throughout five meetings. Starling is at first intimidated by Lecter: “He looked up from his reading. For a steep second she thought his gaze hummed, but it was only her blood she heard.”<sup>86</sup> As their meetings progress however, she starts to be more comfortable in his presence. Their relationship has many faces and aspects, that are changing throughout the plot. I would like to argue that their relationship was that of a tutor and a pupil,

---

<sup>85</sup> Thomas Harris, *Red Dragon* (London: Arrow Books, 1993), 78.

<sup>86</sup> Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 17.

they were also strict negotiators, Lecter at one point became Starling's confidant, and Starling was also a messenger between Lecter and Crawford. Liminality emerges between these roles; what kind of relationship it is, when a serial murderer fills the role of a tutor to a soon-to-be FBI agent? How can someone be intimidating to a person and yet become the person's confidant?

Lecter became a tutor-like figure for Starling. When they were discussing Buffalo Bill, Lecter could have just reveal what he wanted, but instead he guided and led Starling so that she could eventually come to the conclusions herself:

“I've read the cases, Clarice, have you? Everything you need to know to find him (Buffalo Bill) is right there, if you're paying attention. [...] Of each particular thing, ask: What is it in itself, in its own constitution? What is its causal nature? [...] What does he do, the man you want?' 'He kills-' 'Ah-' he said sharply, averting his face for a moment from her wrongheadedness. 'That's incidental. What is the first and principal thing he does, what need does he serve by killing?'”<sup>87</sup>

Parts of their dialogue really resemble some kind of an academic discussion, where an older professor tries to educate his young student. These parts best illustrate Lecter's superiority over Starling. He is older and has the higher education and status, so he has the upper hand. He frequently interrupts her in her speech, but she never does so to him. The conversation mostly takes the direction he wants: “‘Deliberate-’ ‘I collect church collapses, recreationally. Did you see the recent one in Sicily? Marvelous! [...]’ ‘I can't explain you, Doctor, but I know who can.’ He stopped her with his upraised hand.”<sup>88</sup>

This demonstration of higher social status gets in strict contrast with how Lecter spoke to Graham in the one meeting they had in *Red Dragon*. While Starling is a young woman, a trainee, Will Graham is an experienced and successful FBI profiler, and above all – he is the one who caught Lecter. Even though he is much younger than Lecter, the dialogue is the one between two equals. When Lecter starts to play his mind games on Graham, the investigator does not let him: “‘Do you have the file with you?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘And pictures?’ ‘Yes’ ‘Let me have them and I might consider it.’ ‘No.’ ‘Do

---

<sup>87</sup> Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 259-260.

<sup>88</sup> Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 25.



you dream much, Will?’ ‘Goodbye, Dr Lecter.’ ‘You haven’t threatened to take away my books yet.’ Graham walked away.”<sup>89</sup>

Graham fears Lecter maybe even more than Starling does, but he does not allow Lecter to intimidate him; that is possible because of a different social status that he has, compared to Starling. She is in a different position to Lecter, the one that resembles a tutor - student relationship.

Another part of their relationship is, that Starling is a messenger between Crawford and Lecter: “‘He must be busy if he’s recruiting help from the student body.’ ‘He is, and he wants –’ ‘Busy with Buffalo Bill.’ ‘I expect so.’ ‘No. [...] you know perfectly well it’s Buffalo Bill. I thought Jack Crawford might have sent you to ask me about that.’”<sup>90</sup> Starling then writes a report of her visit to Lecter for Crawford and he decides how to cope with the information and tips from him. Once senator Martin’s daughter is kidnapped by Buffalo Bill, Starling and Hannibal become negotiators. She tries to get an information on Buffalo Bill and he wants to trade it for better conditions of his custody: “‘Clarice, I’m going to tell you what Buffalo Bill wants Catherine Baker Martin for, and then good night. This is my last word under the current terms. You can tell the Senator what he wants with Catherine and she can come up with a more interesting offer for me...’”<sup>91</sup>

Lecter eventually agrees to share some information with Starling in exchange for personal information about herself and this is where he fills the role of her confidant and she tells him things that nobody else knows. She tells him about her deceased father, childhood and a memory of slaughter of the lambs. She revealed her most inner self to him, told him things that even her best mate Ardelia Mapp probably does not know. In their final meeting, Lecter seems to know the true Clarice Starling: “‘You still wake up sometimes, don’t you? Wake up in the iron dark with the lambs screaming?’ ‘Sometimes.’ ‘Do you think, if you caught Buffalo Bill yourself and if you made Catherine all right, you could make the lambs stop screaming, do you think they’d be all right too and you wouldn’t wake up again in the dark and hear the lambs screaming?’”<sup>92</sup>

---

<sup>89</sup> Thomas Harris, *Red Dragon* (London: Arrow Books, 1993), 66-67.

<sup>90</sup> Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 23.

<sup>91</sup> Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 173.

<sup>92</sup> Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 263-264.

Their relationship in the novel ends with a glimpse of sexual energy, perhaps a foreboding for what was to come in *Hannibal*: “He held it (case file) at arm’s length through the bars, his forefinger along the spine. She reached across the barrier and took it. For an instant the tip of her forefinger touched Dr Lecter’s. The touch crackled in his eyes.”<sup>93</sup> After his escape, Lecter would write a letter to Starling assuring her that he is not going to go after her.

Starling and Lecter had a complicated relationship, they were coolly calculating what to say to each other to achieve their respective goals, at the same time Lecter acted as a tutor-like figure to Starling and they created a strange bond between each other. The bond transformed, in *Hannibal*, into a sexual relationship. Liminality, the unclear, the obscure, breaths out of the pages on which Starling and Lecter have their meetings. Tutor-student, messenger, negotiators, confidant; Starling feared Lecter and yet in a strange way admired him. “Liminality refers to moments or periods of transition during which the normal limits to thought, self-understanding and behaviour are relaxed, opening the way to novelty and imagination, construction and destruction. [...] Life and death, day and night, light and dark, girl and woman, novice and expert: liminality emerges in the in-between of a passage.”<sup>94</sup>

### 9.3. The Endings

There are several ways in which a novel can end. For instance, an ending can be happy, tragic, ambiguous. In *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs*, the main conflict of the story is resolved. In both novels, the FBI agent succeeds in their hunt for the serial killer and in both novels the killer dies. But there is a price for that in both novels and one could argue that the endings are not ‘happy’ at all.

In *Red Dragon*, after Graham is seriously injured by Dolarhyde, it is hinted that his wife is going to leave him. The reader can see her being more and more distant from Graham for the whole plot and when they are attacked by Dolarhyde, it is the last straw for her. Further, Graham’s face is almost unrecognizable after the attack. What happened to Graham after *Red Dragon*, we learn in *The Silence of the Lambs*: “Will Graham, the keenest hound ever to run in Crawford’s pack, was a legend at the

---

<sup>93</sup> Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 265.

<sup>94</sup> Bjørn Thomassen, *Liminality and the Modern: Living Through the In-Between* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2018), 1-2.

Academy; he was also a drunk in Florida now with a face that was hard to look at, they said.”<sup>95</sup> According to Crawford, “Will’s face looks like damn Picasso drew him.”<sup>96</sup> To sum up, the perpetrator was killed, the lives were saved, but the fate of the protagonist was rather tragic.

In *The Silence of the Lambs*, it all ends well for Starling. She manages to kill Buffalo Bill and save Catherine Martin’s life; this triumph secures her that she will not be recycled at the academy and it gained her the respect of her male colleagues as she had always wished. The price for all of this is Lecter’s escape. One serial killer is dead, but the other has escaped and is free. Nobody knows what he is going to do, whether he will be hiding or whether he will kill more people; he already killed several people during his escape though. The number of people he killed during his escape, in the matter of some thirty minutes, almost matches the number of all Buffalo Bill’s victims. I would like to argue that both novels have a liminal ending in a sense, that the main conflict is resolved in the ‘positive way’, but in both novels there is price for it that makes it impossible to say these endings are happy or positive. They are both positive and negative and with that they nicely conclude the two novels with liminal features.

#### **9.4. Final Notes on Liminality and Plot**

In this chapter I elaborated on the modus operandi of Francis Dolarhyde and argued that his murders displayed liminal features. In his mind, he revived the victims when he put glass to their eyes and they were his co-performers to him. In another subchapter, I argued that liminality can be found in a complex relationship between Starling and Lecter. I named the several roles they took to each other; I said that there was a tutor-student relationship, that Starling was a messenger between Lecter and Crawford and then she and Lecter became negotiators, and finally at the end when she was telling Lecter her inner fears and feelings, he became her confidant. I argued that such a relationship between a serial killer and a soon-to-be FBI agent is a liminal one. Lastly, I briefly touched on the endings of the two novels and argued that even the endings have liminal feeling to them, in that they are neither positive nor negative.

---

<sup>95</sup> Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 83.

<sup>96</sup> Thomas Harris, *The Silence of the Lambs* (London: Arrow Books, 2002), 7.

## **10. Conclusion on the Practical Part**

In the two chapters of the practical part, I first argued that liminality is inscribed in the character of Hannibal Lecter, with his unclear position in the main conflict and his ambiguous nature. Then I argued that liminality can be observed in the character and motives of Francis Dolarhyde, whose Becoming is nothing else than pure liminal process. This character proved to be a great comparison with the one of Jame Gumb, whose motives were similar but yet very different. His liminality was connected to gender role issue and I elaborated on how while Dolarhyde sought masculinity, Gumb wanted to get rid of it. Then I elaborated on Will Graham and his talent regarding investigation of crimes. I have compared the two protagonists and argued that gender is the main theme of the second novel not only because of Jame Gumb, but also because of the character of Clarice Starling and her struggle to gain respect in the men-dominated profession. I also argued that the novel follows Starling in her liminal stage between an FBI trainee and an FBI agent. Finally, I introduced the concept of external and internal liminality and explained how they are different on the examples of some of the characters mentioned above.

Then came the chapter dealing with liminality and plot, in which I was dealing with Francis Dolarhyde and his victims and argued that his modus operandi is a liminal process. Then I elaborated on the curious relationship of Clarice Starling and Hannibal Lecter and argued that liminality shows itself in it. Last subchapter was devoted to the issue of the endings of the both novels; I stated that the endings that are not positive nor negative are fitting to end such novels.

## Conclusion

This thesis examined the concept of liminality in the novels *Red Dragon* (1981) and *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988). It showed the way how the concept of liminality can be studied in literary analysis. On the example of the two novels, it showed how liminality can inscribe into a literary work on many levels and how it can differently affect the overall tone and meaning of the work. It also explained how liminality can be argued to have a major role in the two analysed novels and thus hopefully contributed to the study of liminality in literature. Finally, it was a study of the two novels and their comparison to each other and partly as well to the rest of the series. Their plot structure, genre, characters and plots were examined and compared, adding another piece to an already rich branch of academic study on the work of Thomas Harris.

In the theoretical part, the author was first introduced. After that, the plots and themes of *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs* were outlined. I justified my choice for these two novels for the analysis by two reasons. One of them was that the two novels have a different plot structure than the other two in the series – *Hannibal* (1999) and *Hannibal Rising* (2006). This I explained by briefly outlining their plots and then a whole chapter was devoted to the other reason – that the selected novels are close in terms of their genre and different from the two that were not selected. In that chapter I elaborated on crime fiction, thriller and horror, mentioning the subgenres of psychological horror and serial killer fiction. Both second and third chapters had two purposes: they justified the selection of the novels for analysis and at the same time served as a comparison of the plot structures and the genres of the whole series. In the fourth chapter, the concept of liminality was introduced and explained, using several definitions from different scholars. I indicated that ‘moments of transition’, ‘in-between position’ and ‘change’ are the key terms concerning liminality. Then it was outlined that liminality in the novels will be analysed on the level of characters and plot, while a great space and attention will be devoted to the thematic area of gender and how it is shaped by liminality in the novels. The last chapter of the theoretical part dealt with methodology, where it was explained how the research was conducted.

Practical part was divided in the two major chapters, one on characters and one on plot. The liminality in *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs* was analysed on the characters of Hannibal Lecter, Francis Dolarhyde, Jame Gumb, Will Graham and

Clarice Starling. The terms external and internal liminality were then introduced and explained. It was argued that liminality of a character is external when it has liminal impact on his surroundings and the plot. An example of this was the case of Hannibal Lecter, who, as was argued, cannot be labelled with a clear archetypal character type and has an unclear role in the plot, as he stands outside the central conflict. Internal liminality was argued to be the core of a character's nature, motivations and identity, such as in the case of Francis Dolarhyde and his *Becoming*. Both types of liminality can merge in one character, which was argued is best observable on the character of Jame Gumb, who was in a transformation process regarding gender; gender is not only foundational to one's own identity, but it is also co-formed by the society and environment one is living in, so it has aspects of both types of liminality.

There was also further comparison of the two novels; it was stated that while Dolarhyde sought to gain masculinity, Gumb was his opposite and sought to get rid of it. The comparison continued in the chapter on the protagonists, mentioning also Will Graham's special talent with liminal features and Clarice Starling's liminal phase between a trainee and an agent. In the chapter about the plot, liminality was explored in the *modus operandi* of Francis Dolarhyde and how the liminal phase between life and death took part in it. Then, a complicated relationship of Lecter and Starling and its many aspects and their roles were analysed, until finally the endings of the two novels were briefly examined and connected with liminality.

While this thesis is by no means the only academic work on Harris' novels, or liminality, it is to my knowledge one of the very few works that analyses liminality in his novels. The research in that area is opened for deeper study and new ideas. Liminality is an incredibly broad and formable concept that can connect several other concepts, like was shown in the case of gender. The study of liminality could also encompass the film adaptations of Harris' novels. The comparison of liminality in the novels and in the films of the Hannibal Lecter franchise would be a fascinating read for anyone who is interested in the work of Harris, liminality, or just in an exploration of our culture.

## Resumé

Hlavním cílem této práce bylo zkoumání liminality v románech Thomase Harris *Červený drak* a *Mlčení jehňátek* a popis toho, jak je v románech zpracována. Práce měla také dva vedlejší cíle, a to ukázat, jak může vypadat analýza liminality v literárním díle, a taky na několika rovinách porovnat oba romány, k čemuž jejich analýza vybízí.

Práce byla rozdělena na teoretickou a praktickou část. V té teoretické byl představen autor a jeho dílo a následně byly objasněny důvody výběru právě těchto dvou románů ze série o Hannibalu Lecterovi. Zároveň byly romány porovnány mezi sebou i s ostatními díly této série z hlediska struktury děje a žánrového zařazení – v obou případech si vybrané dva romány byly vzájemně blíže než k ostatním dílům série. Následně byl představen koncept liminality a bylo vysvětleno, jak bude vypadat analýza liminality ve vybraných románech. Teoretickou část ukončil popis metodologie výzkumu.

V první kapitole praktické části proběhla analýza pěti hlavních postav z dvojice románů. Analýza ukázala možné liminální prvky v dílech, kdy například role Hannibala Lectera v ději je stranou hlavního konfliktu. Nedá se říct, na čí straně se Lecter nachází, ani zda je antagonistou, antihrdinou či jiným typem postavy v příběhu. Tento typ liminality, kdy liminální charakteristika postavy má vliv na okolí a samotný děj, tato práce označuje jako *externí liminalitu*. Opakem je *interní liminalita*, která je klíčovou součástí identity, povahy a motivací postavy. Příkladem je postava Francise Dolarhyda, jehož domnělá Proměna z člověka na Velkého Červeného Draka je hlavním motivem jeho postavy a je také motivem liminálním. Na postavě Dolarhyda se práce také pokusila vysvětlit, že liminalita může být proces i stav; v průběhu Dolarhydovy Proměny to byl proces a v momentu, kdy se mu rozdvojila osobnost, liminalita jeho postavy byla trvalým stavem.

V případě Jamea Gumba se liminalita již týkala genderu, přičemž jeho transformace z muže na ženu byla liminálním procesem. V porovnání obou antagonistů vyšlo najevo, že byť jejich motivy k páčání vražd mají shodně rysy liminality, oba jsou v procesu transformace a oběma mají vraždy pomoci stát se něčím či někým jiným, než jsou – právě gender je tím, co je odlišuje. Dolarhyde touží být silným, svalnatým, hrozivým drakem, který má krásnou ženu u svých nohou, chce tedy dosáhnout svého ideálu maskulinity. Naproti tomu Gumb hledá způsob, jak se své

maskulinity zbavit a stát se ženou. Jeho transformaci symbolizuje kukla, ze které se vyvine motýl – něco krásného.

Krátká analýza byla věnována také postavě Willa Grahama. Rozbor ukázal, že liminalitu je možné hledat v jeho výjimečném způsobu vyšetřování, kdy je, jakožto velmi empatický člověk, schopen vcítit se do těch, kteří žádnou empatii necítí a myslet jako oni. Práce nabídla také srovnání Grahama s protagonistkou druhého románu, Clarice Starlingovou. Analýza Starlingové opět zabředla do vod genderu, kdy bylo popsáno, jak si musí osvojit maskulinní genderovou roli, aby dosáhla uznání a respektu svých kolegů. Liminalita byla u ní analyzována také na procesu přechodu od studentky akademie FBI k plnohodnotné agentce.

Druhá kapitola praktické části se věnovala ději románů. První podkapitola pojednávala o modu operandi Francise Dolarhyda, kdy liminální fáze mezi životem a smrtí byla v jeho mysli součástí jeho zločinů. V druhé podkapitole se práce zaměřila na vztah Lectera a Starlingové a na základě analýzy jejich rozhovorů ukázala možné stopy liminality. Nakonec práce krátce pojednávala o konci obou románů.

Práce splnila své cíle, neboť čtenáři představila analýzu liminality ve vybraných románech a porovnávala její projevy na jejich různých rovinách. Přidaná hodnota této práce spočívá v tom, že čtenáři ukazuje, jak může vypadat analýza liminality v literárním díle.



## Bibliography

Abrams, M.H. and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*, 11<sup>th</sup> ed. Stamford: Cengage Learning, 2013. PDF.

Allué, Sonia Baelo. "The Aesthetics of Serial Killing: Working against Ethics in *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988) and *American Psycho* (1991)." *Atlantis* 24, no. 2 (December 2002): 7-24. Accessed December 21, 2021. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41055067?seq=1>.

Butler, Judith. "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory." *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (December 1988): 519-531. Accessed January 11, 2022. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/3207893?origin=JSTOR-pdf&seq=1>.

Carroll, Noël. *The Philosophy of Horror, or Paradoxes of the Heart*. London: Routledge, 2004. PDF.

Crane, Jonathan L. "Outsourced: Crime Stories, New World Horrors, and Genre." *Studies in Popular Culture* 33, no. 2 (Spring 2011): 11-136. Accessed November 8, 2021. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/23416387?seq=1>.

Cuddon, J.A. *The Penguin Dictionary of Literary Terms and Literary Theory*. London: Penguin Books, 1999.

Culler, Jonathan. *Literary Theory: A Very Short Introduction*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2000. PDF.

Evans, Megan. "Silence of the Sexes: Gender Inversion in Jonathan Demme's *The Silence of the Lambs*." *The Pegasus Review: UCF Undergraduate Research Journal* 4, no. 1 (2009): 23-30. Accessed October 13, 2021. [https://stars.library.ucf.edu/urj/vol4/iss1/3/?utm\\_source=stars.library.ucf.edu%2Furj%2Fvol4%2Fiss1%2F3&utm\\_medium=PDF&utm\\_campaign=PDFCoverPages](https://stars.library.ucf.edu/urj/vol4/iss1/3/?utm_source=stars.library.ucf.edu%2Furj%2Fvol4%2Fiss1%2F3&utm_medium=PDF&utm_campaign=PDFCoverPages).

Gadoin, Isabelle and Annie Ramel. "Liminality – Introduction." *The Hardy Review* 15, no. 1 (Spring 2013): 5-10. Accessed October 12, 2021. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/45301764?seq=1>.

Gennep, Arnold van. *Rites of Passage*. Translated by Monika B. Vizedom and Gabrielle L. Caffee. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1960. PDF.

Gilead, Sarah. "Liminality, Anti-Liminality, and the Victorian Novel." *ELH* 53, no. 1 (Spring 1986): 183-197. Accessed October 12, 2021. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/2873153?seq=1>.

Harris, Thomas. *Red Dragon*. London: Arrow Books, 1993.

Harris, Thomas. *The Silence of the Lambs*. London: Arrow Books, 2002.

Joshi, S.T. "Suspense vs Horror: The Case of Thomas Harris." In *Dissecting Hannibal Lecter: Essays on the Novels of Thomas Harris*, edited by Benjamin Szumskyj, 118-132. Jefferson: McFarland, 2008. PDF.

Messent, Peter. "American Gothic: Liminality and the Gothic in Thomas Harris's Hannibal Lecter Novels." In *Dissecting Hannibal Lecter: Essays on the Novels of Thomas Harris*, edited by Benjamin Szumskyj, 13-36. Jefferson: McFarland, 2008. PDF.

Money, John, Joan G. Hampson and John Hampson. "An Examination of Some Basic Sexual Concepts: The Evidence of Human Hermaphroditism." *Bulletin of Johns Hopkins Hospital* 97, no. 4 (1955): 301-319, quoted in Cortez, Marina, Paula Gaudenzi and Ivia Maksud, "Gender: pathways and dialogues between feminist and biomedical studies from the 1950s to 1970s." *Physis: Revista de Saúde Coletiva* 29, no. 1 (2019): 1-20. Accessed April 15, 2022. <https://www.scielo.br/j/physis/a/p4dXbydkK3jShSKdxxpgpCm/?lang=en>.

Thomassen, Bjørn. *Liminality and the Modern: Living Through the In-Between*. Abingdon: Routledge, 2018.

Williams, Nicholas M. "Eating Blake, or an Essay on Taste: The Case of Thomas Harris's *Red Dragon*." *Cultural Critique* no. 42 (Spring 1999): 137-162. Accessed December 21, 2021. <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1354594?seq=1>.