



**The Silence of Clarice Starling:
Exploring the Female Investigator
in Popular American Thrillers**

"MA Thesis Literatuur en Cultuurkritiek,
Utrecht University."

Baan Al-Othmani - 3877132

Paul Franssen en Roselinde Supheert
November 2015

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction	1
Chapter Two: Analyzing the Female Detective in Thrillers	5
Chapter Three: Becoming Acquainted with Clarice Starling	11
Chapter Four: Searching for Dr. Lecter	29
Chapter Five: Conclusion	48
Works Cited	53
Plagiaatverklaring	55

Chapter One: Introduction

Thomas Harris's novels *The Silence of the Lambs* and *Hannibal*, the former published in 1988 and the latter in 1999, are two of the most well-known thrillers in American fiction; the antagonist of these novels, Hannibal Lecter, has become one of the most notorious characters in crime fiction.¹ Nonetheless, Harris did not begin his career as a writer of American thrillers. After graduating in 1964, Harris worked as a crime reporter for a local newspaper and he also worked as an international crime reporter in Mexico ("Thomas Harris"); the vivid descriptions of crimes in his novels are likely based on crimes in real life. Moreover, Harris's first novel, *Black Sunday*, was a best-seller, though it did not revolve around a specific criminal; in fact, it portrays a terrorist attack. The success of *Black Sunday* ensured the publication of his second novel in 1981, namely *Red Dragon*.

In *Red Dragon*, veteran FBI officer Will Graham is ordered by his superior to cooperate with a criminal, who he has arrested before, namely Dr. Lecter. Together, they seek to find a serial killer called the Tooth Fairy. However, Dr. Lecter is still vindictive towards Graham for having arrested him and he lures the Tooth Fairy to Graham's family. The plot of *Red Dragon* is very similar to *The Silence of the Lambs*. In this novel, a young FBI student, Clarice Starling, is assigned to catch a serial killer with Dr. Lecter's assistance, viz., Buffalo Bill. Starling returns in Harris's fourth novel, *Hannibal*, in which Dr. Lecter is pursued by a powerful businessman called Mason Verger, who seeks revenge after Dr. Lecter humiliated him. Starling has to work with Dr. Lecter again to save him from Verger.

The Silence of the Lambs and *Hannibal* are both praised for their remarkable "shock effect" (Lehmann-Haupt) on readers. His thrillers are both well-known among academics because of their complex intertextuality.

¹ This may be due to the well-known film adaptation of *The Silence of the Lambs* in 1991, starring Jodie Foster and Anthony Hopkins respectively.

However, thrillers are generally overlooked in literary analysis and they are accused of being uncomplicated (Moody 175) but *The Silence of the Lambs* and *Hannibal* have proven to be exception. David Glover comments on the underestimation of thrillers: “the ambivalence associated with a hugely successful mode of crime writing, a guilty sense that its lack of literary merit has always somehow been inseparable from the compulsiveness with which its narrative pleasures are greedily gobbled up, relegating the thriller to the most undeserving of genres” (135). Glover explains that readers can underestimate thrillers because they might provide only entertainment and excitement. Most thrillers are thus not added to the academic canon. Thrillers are considered part of popular culture. Moody comments on the significance of popular culture, which includes popular novels outside of the traditional canon, such as *The Silence of the Lambs* and *Hannibal*. She argues: “The understanding that popular and mass media texts act as sites of cultural practice [...] links popular culture directly to ways of thinking, feeling and acting in the world” (172). Popular texts or novels are a representation of society and its current morals and values. Moody also elaborates on the traits of popular texts, which “are open to contradictory readings and capable of articulating ambiguity or negotiating tensions in cultural values” (174). Popular texts tend to be ambiguous and therefore many people can easily relate to them. She continues: “The status of these texts as shared cultural reference points that make visible ideologies, discourses, and values is a major topic of feminist analysis. Popular culture constitutes a space of exchange between dominant and subordinate cultures and provides a valuable area of study for those who hope to understand social change” (172). In other words, popular texts can also lay bare problematic relationships in society, such as the repression of women in modern society and therefore readers should not underestimate or dismiss thrillers in favor of traditional, canonized texts because they might seem simple or unsophisticated.

Applying literary analysis to popular texts, such as Thomas Harris's novels, might illustrate current problematic or taboo issues of American society, for example inequality between genders. In fact, women are often reduced to supporting roles in thrillers, viz., the venal criminal or the femme fatale (Glover 143) and they serve as mere companions to the male detective and hero. According to Glover, a thriller depicts "a hero who is identified by his recklessness, his cavalier willingness to take risks, even to allow mistakes or errors to multiply at random in the belief that they will move events forward" (138). This hero can be found in *The Silence of the Lambs* and in *Hannibal* as well; surprisingly, this hero is a female, namely Clarice Starling. By examining ways in which Starling exceeds the usual flat representation of women in thrillers, this MA paper illustrates the significance and uniqueness of Starling's status as a female detective in *The Silence of the Lambs* and in *Hannibal*.

However, Starling is discriminated against because of her sex. Bureaucracy and corruption within the FBI have damaged her career. She does not receive the promotion and recognition she deserves. In fact, the patriarchal society in Thomas Harris's novels has caused the repression of a very capable female officer. Thus, Thomas Harris's thrillers discuss the powerlessness of women in popular culture by placing a strong female character in a patriarchal society.

My analysis of *The Silence of the Lambs* and *Hannibal* refers to feminist psychoanalysis and female sexuality to demonstrate that the portrayal of Starling counters the usual sexist representation of women in thrillers because Starling's sexuality influences her relationship with her peers; in fact, she is often underestimated and alienated because of her sexuality. Moreover, the sexual attraction between Starling and Dr. Lecter cannot be overlooked and it is even connected to the plots of these novels.

Starling is the main character of these novels and her conscious and unconscious desires are intertwined with the plots. In fact, “psychoanalysis singles out desire as the fundamental human passion and emotion and develops special techniques to decode and interpret it” (Braidotti 255) and the next chapter elaborates on the theories and arguments within feminist psychoanalysis and female sexuality. In chapter three, these theories are applied to *The Silence of the Lambs* to demonstrate that the main heroine could be categorized as a feminist character, even though this is not a feminist novel. Chapter four discusses Clarice Starling in *Hannibal*. In this chapter, Clarice Starling’s development from a graduate student to an FBI veteran is analyzed. Lastly, all arguments and findings are summarized in chapter five, the conclusion, to emphasize that Clarice Starling’s sexuality, femininity and skills in *The Silence of the Lambs* and in *Hannibal* oppose the stereotypical portrayal of women in most thrillers.

Chapter Two: Analyzing the Female Detective in Thrillers

This chapter illustrates various feminist theories regarding female psychoanalysis, female sexuality and the description of feminist characteristics. The theories in this chapter also concern common gender stereotypes, the female Other, the repression of women in the “social contract” (Kristeva 200) and the parents’ involvement in gender conflicts. These terms are essential in the analysis of Starling’s representation and show that her portrayal in Thomas Harris’s *The Silence of the Lambs* and *Hannibal*, counters gender stereotypes in most thrillers.

1. Gender Stereotypes

Feminist studies focus on gender as a behavior instead of gender as a fixed identity.

According to some theorists, the oppositions between men and women in literature are “social constructs that were generated by the pervasive patriarchal biases of our civilization” (Abrams and Harpham 122). Feminine and masculine behaviors are thus learned in a patriarchal society. In this view, the social boundaries between genders are neither fixed nor unchangeable.

Braidotti argues that females in literature can gain strength by copying male behavior. She notes: “In some ways, the emancipation of women takes the form of repeating certain aspects of male behaviour insofar as the masculine represents power, visibility, and authority” (249). This means that females in literature can become stronger, if the author gives male traits to female characters. This is certainly illustrated in Harris’s novels, where the male protagonist is replaced by a female heroine and detective. In other words, Clarice Starling is the equivalent of the male hero. In Harris’s novels, Starling is the main character and she is not a femme fatale; however, she remains feminine in appearance and personality.

Braidotti also discusses the classic symbol of male authority, namely the sword (249). This symbol of phallogentrism is, in the past, usually utilized by a male protagonist to

eliminate his opponents in battle. The sword thus also stresses that the male is often the hero or conqueror. The modern equivalent of the sword would be the gun. In most thrillers, the protagonist uses his weapon, sword or a gun, to defeat the antagonists; in Harris's novels, the protagonist is clearly a woman, who also uses her gun to defend herself against criminals (*Hannibal* 7; *Silence* 399). Starling's weapon emphasizes her status as the heroine of the novel and it again shows that Starling is the female equivalent of the male hero.

2. The Other Female

Braidotti uses the term "the inappropriate (d) other" (243) to illustrate power relations between characters. The Other is a character who is often repressed and powerless and the Other is also neglected and mocked. A female is usually the Other in a patriarchal setting: "the female tends to be defined by negative reference to the male as the human norm, hence as an Other, or non-man, by her lack of the identifying male organ, of male capabilities, and of the male character traits that are presumed, in the patriarchal view" (Abrams and Harpham 122). Her desires and emotions are limited by male authorities. In *The Silence of the Lambs* and in *Hannibal*, Clarice Starling is repressed and singled out because of her gender; therefore, she can be linked to the female Other.

Moreover, Braidotti argues that women can also gain power from male authorities by using so-called female characteristics to their advantage. In other words, stereotypical female characteristics, which are taught in a patriarchal society, can also be used by women as a source of power (Braidotti 256). She terms these characteristics "feminist knowledge" (257). Braidotti claims: "A crucial element of feminist knowledge claims is the positive role it attributes to creativity, the emotions, and especially the imagination. The faith in the creative power of critical thought forms an overt contrast to the standards of scientific reason, which banks on objectivity, rationality, and protocols of logical thinking" (257). Feminist knowledge

stresses that the imagination, creativity and emotions are powerful female characteristics.

The advantages of feminist knowledge are shown in *The Silence of the Lambs* and in *Hannibal*, where Starling uses creativity, empathy and imagination in her work. For example, she can imagine what victims are feeling and she gains insight into other people's lives. However, Starling is also able to use objective analysis to solve a case, thereby exemplifying that stereotypical male characteristics also have advantages. She possesses contrasting traits: logic and empathy. She displays so-called masculine and feminine behavior and her personality illustrates that gender behavior is learned and that it is interchangeable.

3. The Social Contract

Kristeva clarifies a crucial term in literary feminist studies and psychoanalysis viz., the "social contract" (200). As she puts it: "Sexual difference – which is at once biological, physiological, and relative to reproduction – is translated by and translates a difference in the relationship of subjects to the symbolic contract which is the social contract: a difference, then, in the relationship to power, language, and meaning" (200). This term signifies unequal power relations between genders, which are caused by past social rules and conventions. Kristeva also notes that women in contemporary society have recognized modern forms of this detrimental social contract and they demand its dissolution. The social contract is noticeable in modern forms of patriarchy, where the differences between genders are apparent. In other words, patriarchy strengthens the social contract and the repression of women. However, Braidotti is more specific; she rather elaborates on the connection between women's sexuality and patriarchy: "A woman's sexuality is perceived, experienced, and represented as a form of provocation in a male-dominated culture that assumes male desire to be the rule and the norm and female passivity the desired effect" (244). Women are supposed to surrender to males' sexual desires in a patriarchal society.

Modern forms of the social contract and of patriarchy are exemplified in the patriarchal setting in *The Silence of the Lambs* and in *Hannibal*. Clarice Starling's attractiveness is very noticeable in a predominantly male environment; in fact, her good looks attract and provoke many men in these novels. She challenges male characters because she does not reciprocate their desire to have sexual intercourse. She does not obey the rules of her society, which entail the professional and sexual subordination of females to males. For instance, women should oblige males who have superior vocations and women are not encouraged to argue with these powerful males if they want a promotion. Starling ignores these rules; as a result, she is treated differently, thereby exemplifying Kristeva's social contract in a patriarchal setting.

“Gerontocracy” (Braidotti 245) is also a modern example of Kristeva's social contract because it is a social rule, which causes unequal power relations between genders. In fact, this term describes the repressive relationship between females and older males. Older males guide and control younger females. In fact, they are “undutiful daughters” (244) if they do not follow the patriarchal rules.

Gerontocracy is clearly illustrated in the relationship between Jack Crawford and Clarice Starling in *The Silence of the Lambs*. Jack Crawford is Starling's mentor. He is an experienced investigator and he orders her to interview Dr. Lecter. He guides Starling during her first investigation; however, he also manipulates and pressures her to solve the case. The approval of her father-figure is linked to Starling's intense dedication to apprehend criminals. In *Hannibal*, Starling is controlled by the memories of her father instead of Crawford's authority because she still desires his approval, even though he passed away when she was a child. Starling's father was also a police officer and he was killed during a robbery. Starling pressures herself to become like him and to uphold his values. Nevertheless, gerontocracy is

no longer apparent in *Hannibal* because male authority is transferred from the older males to young, chauvinistic bureaucrats. She is pressured by young powerful males who desire sexual and professional submission.

4. Mother Dearest

Gilbert and Gubar observe that the role of the mother is significant in language and female sexuality: “If the female does have a crucial linguistic role, moreover, isn’t it also possible that the primordial self/other couple from whom we learn the couplings, doublings, splittings [sic] of ‘hierarchy’ is the couple called ‘mother/child’ rather than the one called ‘man/woman?’” (97-8). Gilbert and Gubar explain that the hierarchy between a mother and her child is more important than the hierarchy between genders; there is too much emphasis on the problematic relationship between men and women in literature. They instead suggest that sexuality, especially female sexuality, originates in the mother and therefore the connection between the mother and child should not be overlooked. According to Gilbert and Gubar, the relationship between mother and child is significant because this bond is the root of gender oppositions. They also note:

For if any of our speculations have any validity, we must also ask whether the whole structure of ‘hierarchised’ [sic] oppositions that some of us have thought essentially patriarchal has been historically erected as a massive defense against the deep throat of the mother and the astonishing autonomy of that mother tongue which is common to both genders. (98)

The link between the genders, the mother figure, has been overlooked when males and females are placed in opposition. The mother is thus the most oppressed female figure in gender oppositions, despite her potential to link the genders.

Kristeva also comments on the role of the mother; she claims that the bond between

the mother and her child, particularly the female child, is repressive: “there is also the connivance of the young girl with her mother, her greater difficulty than the boy in detaching herself from the mother in order to accede to the order of signs as invested by the absence and separation constitutive of the paternal function” (209). In contrast with Gilbert and Gubar, who insist that the mother figure links the genders, Kristeva maintains that the child needs to separate from the mother and father in order to evolve as a mature adult.

Kristeva’s argument is illustrated in *The Silence of the Lambs*. Starling’s mother is still a role model, though she passed away when Starling was a young child. Starling’s actions are aimed to please her mother and she tries to imitate her mother’s behavior. In this novel, the memory of her mother motivates her to continue with the investigation. Nonetheless, Starling also desires to distance herself from her mother because she is ashamed of her impoverished parents and simple background. In *Hannibal*, Starling’s shame becomes more evident; her parents remind her of her lack of sophistication. Starling desires luxury and wealth; as a result, she dissociates herself from her mother and father.

Conclusion

I have illustrated various feminist theories, viz., the blend of feminine and masculine traits, Starling’s status as the female Other, the “social contract” (Kristeva) which exemplifies various forms of female repression, “gerontocracy” (Braidotti 245) and the ambiguous role of the mother in gender relations. These theories are exemplified in the following chapters, to show that Clarice Starling’s depiction counters the usual sexist representation of women in thrillers.

Chapter Three: Becoming Acquainted with Clarice Starling

This chapter centers Clarice Starling in *The Silence of the Lambs*, the second novel of the Hannibal Lecter series by Thomas Harris. Clarice Starling, a graduate student of the Federal Bureau of Investigation, has to interrogate the famous Dr. Lecter, who knows the identity of a brutal serial killer, Buffalo Bill. Buffalo Bill is a psychopath who hunts, murders and skins women in order to make his own female body. The hunt for Buffalo Bill becomes more urgent because he has kidnapped the daughter of Senator Ruth Martin, Catherine.

In this novel, Starling meets Dr. Lecter for the first time and therefore it is imperative to analyze their relationship, which will help her to catch the serial killer and main antagonist. Though Starling is an FBI graduate student, her capabilities and personality are remarkable and they certainly demonstrate that she is unlike any other investigator:

This story focuses on a woman who, while in training to develop her masculine side, discovers her exceptional nature lies in her ability to utilize feminine powers. She confronts an almost mythic demon who demands an emotional exchange whereby she must yield her softest innards in order to gain his cooperation. She opens herself up to Lecter and trusts—not in him—but in her own feminine capabilities as weapons in her fight for life and safety. (Stewart 52)

Stewart explains that Starling has learned to utilize stereotypical masculine and feminine traits. She uses her feminine characteristics, or her “feminine powers” (52) because they are more useful in her investigation. The strength of feminine powers can be linked to Braidotti’s “feminist knowledge” (257). Braidotti notes that so-called feminine traits, such as empathy, creativity and the imagination, can be used by women to their advantage (256). Braidotti and Stewart thus explain that stereotypical female characteristics can be useful.

In fact, Starling’s personality, thoughts, appearance and sexuality are powerful tools in

her investigation and they illustrate the interchangeability of gender characteristics. In other words, it is suggested in *The Silence of the Lambs* that gender behavior is learned, not inborn. Topics of the theoretical framework are also linked to *The Silence of the Lambs*, namely the “social contract” (Kristeva 200) and “gerontocracy” (Braidotti 245).² Moreover, Starling’s interaction and relationships with Dr. Lecter and her parents are also taken into consideration to illustrate that Starling’s portrayal counters the sexist representation of women in most thrillers.

1. Gender Stereotypes in *The Silence of the Lambs*

Conventional male-oriented rules for survival are symbolized in *The Silence of the Lambs* by the FBI training that Clarice Starling receives: be strong, handle a gun properly, cover your back. By inference, this schooling suggests she must suppress her feminine qualities, qualities that are regarded both as provocation for attack and as explanation for women's helplessness. While the intention behind that training may come from the well-meaning desire to help women, schooling women to perform like men in order to achieve safety shows a refusal to trust or rely upon what the feminine has to offer (Stewart 45).

Starling’s education forces her to adapt to masculine behavior and to ignore her powerful feminine qualities because they are, in the perspective of her male peers, unreliable. However, the skills which she acquires can also be useful. Braidotti claims that females can benefit from stereotypical male skills (249), such as the proper usage of weapons and the objective analysis of evidence. Starling acquires these skills in *The Silence of the Lambs* but she uses them in combination with feminist knowledge, which illustrates that stereotypical gender traits are learned, not inborn.

² For more information, view chapter two: Analyzing the Female Detective in Thrillers.

As mentioned previously, Starling's training is male-orientated and readers expect her to be masculine because they are used to male heroes: "We hope that she [Starling] will emulate the male role model. And that hope is our Achilles heel. We are afraid to identify with Starling, to choose her inclusion of emotionality as a path of honor and nobility" (46). Readers expect masculinity in a female main character such as Starling, otherwise she will not defeat the serial killer Buffalo Bill. Readers might be surprised to find a female hero in *The Silence of the Lambs*, who is able to combine sentiment with objectivity. Starling can imagine what victims are feeling; for instance, she sympathizes with and fears for Catherine Martin, the next victim of Buffalo Bill (*Silence* 334). Starling is also able to use scientific reason – FBI skills – to solve a case, which is evident when she examines the horrific body of a victim (*Silence* 95-96). She manages to combine the best of both genders, which shows that gender behavior is not innate but learned.

However, Starling's feminine qualities are not appreciated and she is alienated. In fact, her gender makes her powerless and suppressed in the FBI Academy. Starling thus also represents the female Other (Braidotti 246). Starling often reflects on her own abilities because she is torn between objectivity and empathy. She does not know how to approach this high-profile case and the victims:

Starling was having some trouble with herself. At that moment in the night when she knew she had to leave the Academy to hunt Buffalo Bill, a lot of extraneous noises had stopped. She felt a pure new silence in the center of her mind, and a calm [sic] there. In a different place, down the front of her, she felt in flashes that she was a truant and a fool [...] Starling had paid a high price for this time and she meant to use it [time] as she thought best. Her time could be up at any moment, if Crawford was overruled and they pulled her credentials. (*Silence* 352)

Starling is powerless and pressured because the success of her career depends on the approval of her male superiors, such as her mentor Jack Crawford. Yet, she still acts according to her intuition and judgment. Furthermore, Starling knows that she should not be insecure and she has to be confident in her ability to solve the case, despite her setbacks. She is certainly faced with many insecurities and painful memories during her investigation. For example, she is aware that Catherine Martin's wealthy background is very different from her own modest upbringing. Starling tries to connect with Catherine, who has been kidnapped by Buffalo Bill. Nevertheless, Starling endeavors to connect with her because that would make her investigation more effective:

Starling knew she had to be careful here because she had her own prejudices and resentments. Starling had done her time in boarding schools, living on scholarships, her grades much better than her clothes. She had seen a lot of kids from rich, troubled families, with too much boarding-school time. She didn't give a damn about some of them, but she had grown to learn that inattention can be a stratagem to avoid pain, and that is often misread as shallowness and indifference [...] Missing your father, the common wound, made Starling feel close to this young woman. Starling found it essential to like Catherine Martin, because it helped her to bear down. (*Silence* 238)

Eventually, Starling's empathy makes her research more effective than the investigation of her male colleagues. She becomes more determined to locate Catherine Martin because she can relate to Catherine's pain. Catherine also lost a parent and Starling uses their shared loss to connect with her. Starling also sympathizes with Catherine's fear of Buffalo Bill and the excruciating death that awaits her. Starling's sympathy shows that the victims are her priority and that her dedication is more important than ambition. This also sets her apart from most of her male colleagues, who are solely motivated by their desire to be promoted.

Starling's impressive investigation ensures Catherine's rescue. Starling eventually faces Buffalo Bill and an intriguing chase ensues between them in the dark. She finally shoots Buffalo Bill when he attacks her. Even he is impressed by her feminine appearance. His last words were: "How ... does ... it feel ... to be... so beautiful?" (*Silence* 400). Starling defeats the antagonist with a symbol of male authority (Braidotti 249), the modern equivalent of the sword, namely her gun. She establishes her authority when she uses her gun to stop Buffalo Boll. In this novel, the female protagonist becomes more powerful because she rescues the victim and she defeats the main antagonist. Starling becomes the female equivalent of the traditional male hero.

2.1 Starling's Social Contract

Kristeva explains that in past societies, social rules and conventions caused unequal power relations between genders. Society adhered to a "social contract" (Kristeva 200), where females obeyed males. *The Silence of the Lambs* is set in the 1990's, where rules of the social contract are not present anymore; nonetheless, there are modern traces of this social contract in the secluded society of the FBI.

The FBI deals with official, secret investigations and its headquarters are isolated from the rest of American society. The FBI society of *The Silence of the Lambs* and *Hannibal* is also dominated by males because the FBI does not employ many women. As a result, women should oblige men, especially powerful men, in order to have important assignments. As discussed before, Starling's career within the FBI depends on the approval of her male superiors (*Silence* 352). However, her involvement in the high-profile Buffalo Bill case symbolizes female defiance in this patriarchal society. Starling does not obey the rules of her society. She consciously antagonizes males because she does not reciprocate their desire to engage in sexual relations. Afterwards, she is treated differently, thereby exemplifying the

social contract in a patriarchal setting.

Many powerful men, such as Dr. Frederick Chilton and Paul Krendler of the Department of Justice, attempt to seduce Starling. She meets Dr. Chilton for the first time when she visits Dr. Lecter. Dr. Chilton immediately notices Starling's attractiveness and during their first meeting he says: "We've had a lot of detectives here, but I can't remember one so attractive," (*Silence* 9). He immediately mispronounces her name as "Sterling" (9), which demonstrates his inattentiveness and lack of professionalism. It is also apparent that Dr. Chilton does not respect female officers: "So the FBI is going to the girls like everything else" (9). Starling immediately replies: "The Bureau's improving Dr. Chilton. It certainly is" (9). She gives a sharp comeback, which shows her support for female officers. This short dialogue illustrates the hostility between Dr. Chilton and Starling. Though Dr. Chilton is not employed by the FBI, he is still a part of the patriarchal society where Starling lives and works. He tries to overpower Starling from the start, by giving her strict instructions and by making her afraid of Dr. Lecter (*Silence* 14). Dr. Chilton offends Starling by questioning her actions: "Do you *really* feel you know what you're doing?" (*Silence* 160). However, Starling needs Dr. Chilton's assistance during her investigation thus she cannot openly offend him.

Yet, she also knows that her rejection is the most lasting insult: "she felt the ache of his whole yellow-smiling Sen-Sen lonesome life - and switchblade quick she knew not to spare him, not to talk on or look away. She stared into his face, and with the smallest tilt of her head, she gave him her good looks and bored her knowledge in, speared him with it" (*Silence* 161). Starling's ability to obtain personal information about Dr. Chilton exemplifies the usage of her feminist knowledge because she can imagine his loneliness; however, Starling does not pity Dr. Chilton. She punishes him with her rejection and she gains more

power over him.

Starling meets her arch enemy, Paul Krendler, the Deputy Assistant General of the Department of Justice, when she searches Catherine Martin's apartment. Though Senator Martin and Krendler treat Starling with contempt, she realizes that Krendler's disdain is permanent: "She knew Senator Martin was not herself, but she would never forgive Krendler for the doubt in his face. Never" (*Silence* 246). Like Dr. Chilton, Krendler offends Starling by underestimating her. Starling understands that Senator Martin is an anxious mother who fears for her child; however, Krendler mistreats Starling because she is young, attractive and clever. He feels threatened by her. Consequently, Krendler immediately orders Starling to stop her investigation (*Silence* 249). He dismisses all her findings and Crawford's instructions. When she tries to defend herself, Krendler threatens her: "You must be a bright kid, or Crawford wouldn't bother with you, so I'll tell you one time: do something about that mouth or it'll put you in the typing pool [...] You're out of line, Officer Starling, and you're out of this case" (*Silence* 250). He uses his superior status to suppress Starling; Krendler thus personifies patriarchal power in the FBI. Despite Krendler's insults, Starling tries to reassure the Senator as she is ushered out of Catherine Martin's apartment. Starling sympathizes with Ruth Martin, who is also a victim. This again demonstrates the power of Starling's feminist knowledge because she views Martin as a grieving mother, instead of a powerful Senator.

Senator Martin is the only female character with a powerful vocation in this novel; however, she looks down on Starling, who is also a woman in a patriarchal society. Starling is hurt by Senator Martin's disdain, who claimed that Starling was stealing a few items from Catherine's room: "In all the long day, when she had been disrupted by Chilton, insulted by Senator Martin, abandoned and rebuked by Krendler, taunted by Dr. Lecter and sickened by his bloody escape, and put off the job by Jack Crawford, there was one thing that stung the

worst: being called a thief” (*Silence* 331). Starling may have desired Martin’s sympathy, considering she is also a female who works in a predominantly male environment; unfortunately, Martin’s disdain further stresses Starling’s isolation.

Nonetheless, Starling’s goals are to apprehend criminals and to save the victims in *The Silence of the Lambs*, despite her setbacks and status as the isolated Other. In fact, Stewart claims that Starling’s intention is to apprehend Buffalo Bill and to change the patriarchal system within the FBI: “Clarice’s goal involves more than finding the killer, the new heroine’s goal reaches beyond any desire to overthrow the patriarchy: it strives instead for a transformation of what has become heartless in patriarchy, seeking above all, a societal rebalancing” (58). Stewart’s statement is too strong in this case; it is not Starling’s intention to change or improve the patriarchal society in *The Silence of the Lambs*; after all, she is merely trying to solve the case and to apprehend the serial killer, like any other dedicated investigator. She does however, challenge male authority when she is confronted by it.

2.2 Monitoring the Mentor

What Braidotti has called “gerontocracy” (245) is also an example of modern patriarchy because it is also a social rule, which describes the repression of younger females by older males (Braidotti 244). This term is clearly illustrated in *The Silence of the Lambs*. Starling is trained by men; however, the intention behind their training is not always helpful or well-meant because she is often manipulated. This is shown in Crawford’s treatment of her. His friendship and guidance are important to Starling: “Starling came from people who do not ask for favors or press for friendship, but she was puzzled and regretful at Crawford’s behavior. Now, in his presence, she liked him again, she was sorry to note” (*Silence* 2). Starling already values his opinion; however, Crawford ignored her for several months and when he finally

summons Starling, he gives her a peculiar assignment: she has to interview Dr. Hannibal Lecter, a notorious cannibal.

When Crawford sends Starling to Dr. Lecter for the first time, he “not only fails to acknowledge Starling's value, he feigns a protective attitude as a cover to exploit her femininity as a lure and engage her cooperation without revealing his motive” (Stewart 49). Perhaps Crawford knew that Dr. Lecter would be interested in Starling and therefore he sent her to him, despite Starling’s unwillingness to be a femme fatale. Dr. Lecter is also an older male; however, his relationship with Starling cannot be linked to gerontocracy because she does not view him as a father-figure and he does not have the power to expel Starling or to influence her career. Starling realizes early on that Crawford uses her to extract information from Dr. Lecter about Buffalo Bill: “If she wanted to stop Buffalo Bill, she was in the right crowd. Crawford had organized successful hunts for three serial murderers. But not without casualties. Will Graham, the keenest hound ever to run in Crawford’s pack, was a legend at the Academy; he was also a drunk in Florida now with a face that was hard to look at” (*Silence* 83). Crawford is a respected senior investigator and Starling is familiar with his past cases, such as the infamous investigation in *Red Dragon*. In *The Silence of the Lambs*, it becomes clear that Graham has resigned from the FBI. This passage also illustrates Crawford’s double role: he leads investigations but he uses competent and unique officers, such as Starling and Graham. He is a mentor because he wants to stop serial killers and not because he feels affection towards Graham or Starling. He uses his status as a senior investigator to influence young and impressionable FBI detectives.

Young detectives, such as Starling, certainly need Crawford’s approval in their education and careers. Ardelia Mapp, Starling’s best friend, warns Starling that she needs Crawford’s support, otherwise she might get expelled: ““Girl, they’ll sail you off the back

steps like a dead Easter chick. Gratitude's got a short half-life, Clarice. Make him [Crawford] say *no recycle*. You've got good grades - make him say it" (*Silence* 140). Mapp realizes that Crawford has power over Starling because he is her official counselor and superior. He uses Starling's capabilities as long as it suits him; otherwise, he can remove Starling from the investigation and recommend her departure from the Academy.

Starling is certainly aware and hurt and disappointed by Crawford's dismissive treatment, which contrasts his mentor-like behavior. She even calls him an "old creep. Creepo son of a bitch" (*Silence* 33). Starling is disappointed in Crawford because he did not warn her of the challenges she would encounter during her investigation (*Silence* 334), for example her struggle to work with Dr. Chilton or Paul Krendler. Crawford is an experienced FBI investigator and he should have known Starling would be in trouble at some point during her investigation.

Starling eventually resists Crawford's authority. She confronts him, by claiming that she can solve the case quicker than any male officer: "The victims are all women and there aren't any women working this. I can walk in a woman's room and know three times as much about her as a man would know, and *you* know that's a fact" (*Silence* 343). Starling retaliates against Crawford because she is the only officer who uses her feminist knowledge to connect with female victims. Her male colleagues are unwilling to utilize the same method because they associate it with weakness and powerlessness. Consequently, Crawford cannot continue the investigation without her and she has more power over him.

Nevertheless, Starling never openly criticizes Crawford and he remains unaware of her distrust. In fact, he believes in Starling: "What if I trusted your judgment, Starling? What if I thought you were my best shot, and I wanted to keep a lot of second-guessers off your back?" (*Silence* 180). He realizes that Dr. Lecter is willing to share information only with Starling;

therefore, he wants to gain Starling's trust and ensure her cooperation. Crawford's words and assignments certainly help Starling to become motivated again:

Crawford really was good. She knew that his little nitrogen question was a nod to her forensic background, meant to please her and to trigger ingrained habits of disciplined thinking. She wondered if men actually regard that kind of manipulation as subtle.

Curious how things can work on you even when you recognize them. Curious how the gift of leadership is often a coarse gift. (*Silence* 221)

Starling is always mindful of Crawford's manipulative words and assignments. Nonetheless, his tactics remain effective. Crawford is very proud of her for stopping Buffalo Bill and for saving Catherine Martin: "Crawford took her to him and held her very tight for a moment, just a moment, and then put her away from him and kissed her on the forehead" (*Silence* 403). His reaction is similar to that of a proud father. However, Crawford uses his status and power as Starling's superior to force her to dedicate herself entirely to this case, otherwise her career with the FBI will end. The relationship between Starling and Crawford can thus be linked to gerontocracy because Crawford is an older man who uses his power to influence a younger woman.

3. Becoming Acquainted with Dr. Hannibal Lecter

Starling is eager to gain Dr. Lecter's trust and approval from the onset of their relationship. She tries to connect with him by finding similarities in their appearance: "She could see that he was small, sleek; in his hands and arms she saw wiry strength like her own" (*Silence* 18). Starling is attracted and intimidated by Dr. Lecter's physical appearance alone: "The hair on her forearms rose and pressed against her sleeves" (18).

Starling is not the only one who is paying attention; Dr. Lecter often uses his acute senses to extract information from people's appearance and personality. In fact, Dr. Lecter

was a well-known psychiatrist. However, he detests psychology, despite his former occupation: “‘Psychology doesn’t get very good material to start with. Go to any college psychology department and look at the students and faculty: ham-radio enthusiasts and other personality-deficient buffs’” (*Silence* 23). Indeed, instead of helping Starling, he manipulates her into giving information about herself and the current FBI case. Furthermore, he rejects any opportunity of cooperation with her during their first meeting:

You’d like to quantify me, Officer Starling. You’re so ambitious, aren’t you? Do you know what look like to me, with your good bag and your cheap shoes? You look like a rube. You’re a well-scrubbed, hustling rube with a little taste. Your eyes are like cheap birthstones - all surface shine when you stalk some little answer. And you’re bright behind them, aren’t you? Desperate not to be like your mother. Good nutrition has given you some length of bone, but you’re not more than one generation out of the mines, *Officer Starling*. (*Silence* 25)

This passage shows that Dr. Lecter can obtain accurate information from people by observing small details from their appearance. He mocks Starling by presenting a truthful analysis of her fears. He rightly assumes that she wants to separate herself from her impoverished family. She does not want to become like her parents: her mother became a hotel maid after her father, a simple police officer, was murdered by robbers. Dr. Lecter’s analysis exemplifies Kristeva’s claim of mother-daughter detachment (209); Starling has difficulty with distancing herself from her parents, even after their deaths because she still clings to their traditional morals and values. Dr. Lecter also likes to use personal details to corrupt impressionable people and he even quickly becomes bored with most people because he can read them well. However, Starling’s response to his analysis illustrates her strength:

You see a lot, Dr. Lecter. I won't deny anything you've said. But here's the question you're answering for me right now, whether you mean to or not: Are you strong enough to point that high-powered perception at yourself? [...] How about it? Look at yourself and write down the truth. What more fit or complex subject could you find? Or maybe you're afraid of yourself. (*Silence* 26)

Starling distances herself from Dr. Lecter's hurtful comments, which helps her to focus on the hints he has given her concerning the investigation. Dr. Lecter also immediately realizes that Starling is unique; he cannot toy with her emotions because she is strong enough to retaliate. He also realizes that she is an impressive officer because he changes her nickname from "Student Starling" (*Silence* 26) to "Officer Starling" (*Silence* 28).

Dr. Lecter's appreciation and interest for Starling grows after their initial meeting. He is curious and he gives her an incentive to return: subtle hints of Buffalo Bill's identity. Afterwards, Dr. Lecter and Starling develop a "Quid pro quo" (*Silence* 173) agreement, which is vital in their relationship and Starling's investigation; simply put, they exchange information. Dr. Lecter provides Starling with hints of Buffalo Bill's background and she describes her traumatic childhood, which Dr. Lecter finds very interesting. Starling is aware that Dr. Lecter can obtain personal information from her: "*He sees very clearly - he damn sure sees through me.* It's hard to accept that someone can understand you without wishing you well" (*Silence* 337-8). Yet, she keeps visiting him and she continues to answer his questions because she values their agreement and she wants to solve the case. The relationship between Dr. Lecter and Starling is somewhat similar to the relationship between Starling and Crawford. In his way, Dr. Lecter guides Starling as well. He keeps her motivated by giving her clues. Their "Quid pro quo" (*Silence* 173) agreement thus symbolizes the equality and respect between them, in contrast with Starling's submissive relationship with Crawford, who

uses his power to ensure her dedication to the investigation. The relationship between Starling and Dr. Lecter is thus not linked to Braidotti's gerontocracy; Dr. Lecter encourages Starling to think for herself, instead of pressuring her to apprehend Buffalo Bill.

Harris already gives subtle hints that Starling and Dr. Lecter's relationship will grow. In fact, Dr. Lecter is the only male character in *The Silence of the Lambs* who acknowledges Starling's femininity and he does not underestimate or mock her. He even motivates Starling and helps her to develop her true potential, in contrast with Crawford. Moreover, by responding to Dr. Lecter's manipulation, Starling proves that she is his intellectual equal. Any other officer would have been insulted and would have stopped the conversation. Starling however, knows better than to fall for Dr. Lecter's smart psychological tricks.

Dr. Lecter and Starling are even unconsciously attracted to each other. This is shown when he subtly flirts with Starling before he gives her his first hint: "I could make you very happy on Valentine's Day, Clarice Starling" (*Silence* 27). Furthermore, Dr. Lecter comments on Starling's motivation for her frequent visits: "People will say we're in love" (*Silence* 257). They also have physical contact for the first time during Starling's last visit: "the tip of her forefinger touched Dr. Lecter's. The touch crackled in his eyes" (*Silence* 265). Their touch symbolizes their connection and it hints that they might have more contact in the future.

Nonetheless, Starling does not purposely attempt to seduce Dr. Lecter, despite her eagerness to gain information from him. She visits Dr. Lecter with the intention of cooperating with him and not seducing him. Most characters in this novel believe that Starling and Dr. Lecter have a romantic relationship. For instance, it is frequently suggested by reporters that Starling and Dr. Lecter have an intimate relationship; she is even called "Bride of Frankenstein" (*Silence* 74) in one magazine. The rumors of an intimate relationship show that other characters in *The Silence of the Lambs* cannot believe that a man and a woman can

have a non-sexual and meaningful relationship. These narrow-minded assumptions in the society of *The Silence of the Lambs* thus emphasize Starling's repression as a female in a patriarchal setting. However, Dr. Lecter is the only male in this novel who appreciates Starling without pressuring or seducing her, in contrast with Crawford, Dr. Chilton and Krendler.

Despite the false accusations and rumors, Dr. Lecter and Starling have no intention of visiting each other after the apprehension of Buffalo Bill. Dr. Lecter sends Starling a letter after he has escaped from the facility in Memphis in which he states: "I have no plans to call on you, Clarice, the world being more interesting with you in it" (*Silence* 421). He will not pursue Starling after his escape because he views her as a remarkable FBI officer. Indeed, Starling cannot ignore people who are in danger and therefore she will continue to solve cases with the FBI. However, Dr. Lecter also implies that he would like to have more contact with Starling: "You've been very frank, Clarice. I always know. I think it would be quite something to know you in private life" (*Silence* 172). She has certainly made an impression on Dr. Lecter and it is apparent that their unusual friendship will gradually change into a romantic relationship.

4. Starling's Roots

In the previous chapter, Kristeva discusses the mother's role in gender relations. She claims that the mother-figure has a detrimental impact on the child's growth to adulthood (209). Daughters need to grow apart from the mother figure in order to become healthy adults. In *The Silence of the Lambs*, Starling desires to distance herself from her parents' poverty; however, memories of her parents motivate her and therefore Kristeva's argument cannot be exemplified in Starling's relationship with her parents.

Starling's relationship with her parents is explained in flashbacks and in conversations with Dr. Lecter. Starling explains that she was sent to live on her mother's cousin's ranch after the brutal death of Starling's father (*Silence* 188). However, her mother's cousin sends Clarice to an orphanage after she discovered that Starling attempted to run away (*Silence* 262). Starling's memories of past challenges, particularly her family's poverty, are linked to her present problems. She remembers her mother's struggle to survive and provide for her family. She became a hotel maid and worked in a cheap motel. Starling often had to assist her even though she was only a child then (*Silence* 216). She is ashamed of her family's poverty and therefore she wants to distance herself from her parents' modest background. Despite Starling's shame, which can be linked to the child-parent dissociation process, she does not want to distance herself from her parents entirely and therefore her relationship with her parents is not connected to Kristeva's dissociation process.

The strength of Starling's parents helps her to deal with the horrific crimes of Buffalo Bill. Starling works on the Buffalo Bill case alone and she investigates unknown, dangerous areas even when she is terrified. For instance, she investigates an old, dark storage room, where Dr. Lecter's hints have led her. She is nervous to thread the dark room alone, however her father's words help her to overcome her fears and to continue: "If you can't play without squawling [sic], Clarice, go on to the house" (*Silence* 55). After she discovers the victim's severed head in the room she is not horrified: "[s]he was exhilarated. She wondered for a second if those were worthy feelings. Now, at this moment, sitting in this old car with a head and some mice, she could think clearly, and she was proud of that" (*Silence* 60). She is satisfied because she knows that her father's memory helps her to overcome her fear, though other FBI students would not be pleased at such a horrific sight.

There is another example which shows that the memories of Starling's parents are

beneficial. Starling travels with Crawford to a small town in Virginia to investigate the body of a victim. She knows how to communicate with the male officers there because she also grew up in a small town (*Silence* 90). Crawford leaves with the superior officer, while Starling has to analyze the corpse in front of the other officers and talk to the relatives herself. She is apprehensive to thoroughly investigate the body in front of the many male officers; however, the memory of her mother helps her to continue: “‘*We’ll be alright, Clarice*’” (*Silence* 93). She then finds the strength to ask the male officers to leave the room: “‘You officers and gentlemen! Listen here a minute. Please. Let me take care of her. [...] There’s things we need to do for her. You brought her this far, and I know her folks would thank you if they could. Now please go on out and let me take care of her’” (*Silence* 94). She knows how to communicate with these men from the countryside because she has the same background. Crawford is impressed that Starling uses her background to connect with the female victim and the male officers: “Clarice Starling had a special relationship to her [the victim]. Crawford saw that in this place Starling was heir to the granny women, to the wise women, the herb healers, the stalwart country women who have always done the needful, who keep the watch and, when the watch is over, wash and dress the country dead” (*Silence* 94). Crawford realizes that Starling’s unique capabilities, such as her feminist knowledge, are integral to the investigation. Unlike her male colleagues, Starling is able to adapt herself to the objective FBI protocols and she can communicate with the victim’s family, due to her parents’ background. Crawford even gives Starling the greatest compliment she’s ever had: “‘Starling, your father sees you’” (*Silence* 410), which again illustrates that Starling is still very connected to her parents. Moreover, she still desires their approval, which means more to her than the approval of her superiors.

Conclusion

Applying the topics of the theoretical framework to *The Silence of the Lambs* shows that Starling's representation in this novel opposes the sexist representation of women in most thrillers. Her personality and skills are a unique combination of stereotypical masculine and feminine traits: she is able to use masculine force to stop her opponents and she uses empathy to connect with the victims.

Starling also openly defies male authority, such as the orders of Paul Krendler and Jack Crawford, thereby refusing to obey the social contract. In fact, Starling's defiance and unique personality mark her status as the female Other. Gerontocracy, another form of the social contract, is illustrated in Jack Crawford's subtle manipulation. As a mentor and father figure, he uses Starling's remarkable skills to catch Buffalo Bill. Starling needs his guidance thus Crawford uses his power to pressure Starling into dedicating herself to the case.

Dr. Lecter is also a mentor to Starling; in contrast with Crawford and Dr. Chilton, he values Starling's personality and he gives her vital clues because he respects her. In fact, it is hinted that the relationship between Starling and Dr. Lecter may become romantic in the future.

Lastly, Starling's parents play an important role in her investigation. The memory of her parents helps her to deal with brutal crimes and to continue her search for the victims, despite her attempts to dissociate herself from her parents' traditional values.

Chapter Four: Searching for Dr. Lecter

This chapter focuses on the portrayal of Clarice Starling in Thomas Harris's *Hannibal*. *Hannibal* is set ten years after Starling's first encounter with Dr. Lecter and she is a veteran FBI officer, who has gained considerable experience in apprehending criminals. However, Mason Verger, a powerful businessman, persuades Starling's employers to give her a peculiar assignment: to find Dr. Lecter. Mason is a pedophile and a psychopath and he uses his power and wealth to gain immunity from the law. His sole purpose is to have revenge on Dr. Lecter, by using Starling as bait. The relationship between Dr. Lecter and Starling is also further explored in this chapter; in fact, they become lovers. This novel thus differs from *The Silence of the Lambs* because it has a romantic focus.

Modern forms of patriarchy are also illustrated in *Hannibal* because male authority is transferred from senior male investigations, such as Crawford, to chauvinistic male bureaucrats. Indeed, bureaucratic relationships and corruption still hold Starling back from the promotion she deserves after she caught Buffalo Bill. She has to obey the corrupt, patriarchal rules within the FBI if she wants a promotion and retaliation against the FBI will make her an outcast.

However, Starling remains a strong female character, despite her setbacks; her personality, her retaliation against the "social contract" (Kristeva 200) and the relationship with her parents and Dr. Lecter demonstrate that she still counters the usual sexist representation of women in most thrillers. Moreover, her thoughts, personality and sexuality also indicate that gender behavior is learned and not inborn in *Hannibal*.

1. The Other and Gender Stereotypes in *Hannibal*

In Thomas Harris's *The Silence of the Lambs*, Clarice Starling displays stereotypical male and female traits in her pursuit of the serial killer Buffalo Bill. In *Hannibal*, Starling uses her acquired skills in investigations; for instance, she locates Dr. Lecter after his escape in *The Silence of the Lambs* by using her feminist powers and she fights criminals, such as the drug dealer EVELDA DRUMGO, with masculine force. The depiction of Starling's unique skills indicates that stereotypical gender traits are learned, not inborn in *The Silence of the Lambs* and in *Hannibal*.

Starling remains the most important female investigator in *Hannibal*. She knows how to deal with criminals like EVELDA DRUMGO, who is a dangerous drug dealer. In fact, Starling should have been promoted and respected among her peers; however, she is still isolated: Each day, inside Starling a grim knowledge grew: "The federal service would never be the same for her again. She was marked. Her coworkers had caution in their faces when they dealt with her, as though she had something contagious. Starling was young enough for this behavior to surprise and disappoint her" (*Hannibal* 253). Starling's accomplishments are still unappreciated and unwanted. Despite her immaculate investigations and experience she is alienated because of her gender; therefore, she exemplifies the female Other in *Hannibal*.

However, Starling still uses her learned skills – stereotypical male and female traits – to her advantage. She uses her "feminist knowledge" (Braidotti 257), namely empathy and creativity, in her investigations. Starling can gain insight into other people's lives, which is shown in *Hannibal* when she uses her feminist knowledge to locate Dr. Lecter because he is very adept at concealing himself from the authorities. She knows what Dr. Lecter finds interesting, namely luxury:

Taste. The wine, the truffles. Taste in all things was a constant between Dr. Lecter's lives in America and Europe, between his life as a successful medical practitioner and fugitive monster [...] Taste was a sensitive area to Starling, because it was in the area of taste that Dr. Lecter first touched her in the quick, complimenting her on her pocketbook and making fun of her cheap shoes. What did he call her? A well-scrubbed hustling rube with a little taste. It was taste that itched at her in the daily round of her institutional life with its purely functional equipment in utilitarian settings. (*Hannibal* 255)

Starling has learned more about Dr. Lecter during her research; she knows that he is fond of luxury and that makes it easier to track him down. She tries to put herself in his shoes, which shows the importance of Starling's feminist knowledge. This passage also illustrates that even though Starling has become an experienced investigator, she still struggles with the same insecurities as in *The Silence of the Lambs*. Starling is again reminded of her lack of wealth and extravagance and she remains powerless to improve the situation because her career prospects depend on the approval of her male superiors.

Starling's repression in the FBI, which unfortunately has not changed since *The Silence of the Lambs*, leads to her disillusionment. She questions the validity of her work; yet, she also realizes that she is a unique investigator: "Who in the hell was she? Who had ever recognized her? *You are a warrior, Clarice. You can be as strong as you wish to be*" (*Hannibal* 448). Dr. Lecter praises Starling in the italicized words as a warrior, which motivates her to continue with her work and more importantly, uphold her self-esteem. Indeed, Starling's morality has remained strong and unwavering since *The Silence of the Lambs*. She is still willing to risk her life and to defend her values, even though they are viewed as unorthodox by her society.

In *The Silence of the Lambs*, Starling is the female equivalent of the traditional male hero in thrillers. In fact, she uses a modern symbol of phallocentrism³ to defend herself. In *Hannibal*, she uses various complex guns, such as “a well-worn Colt. 45 Government Model” (*Hannibal* 7); however, male officers are still patronizing her. One officer assumes she cannot use her weapon and he offers to give her an instruction (7). This instruction is useless because Starling kills Eveda in self-defense (*Hannibal* 474). Starling feels more secure when she has her gun.

Yet, Starling has evolved from her role as a replacement of the male hero in *Hannibal*. This is shown when she arrives on Verger’s property, where Dr. Lecter is captured. She is afraid to trespass on the Verger property because she does not have a gun. She panics, which shows that she is not a superhero, like a modern Wonder Woman; she is just a woman trying to save a friend on her own: “She was suddenly a thirty-three-year-old woman, alone, with a ruined civil service career and no shotgun, standing in a forest at night. She saw herself clearly, saw the crinkles of age beginning in the corners of her eyes. She wanted desperately to go back to her car” (*Hannibal* 470). Despite the absence of confidence and a weapon, she saves Dr. Lecter. Unlike the male hero, Starling does not need a weapon to demonstrate her courage. She battles antagonists without any aid whatsoever and she only uses her unique learned traits viz., her feminist knowledge and her FBI objectivity, which proves that she is unlike any female character in thrillers.

2.1 The Extension of Starling’s Social Contract

A crucial term illustrates the patriarchal rules and conventions in the FBI environment: the “social contract” (Kristeva 200). It is connected to past societies, when females had to oblige dominant males. Clarice Starling’s struggle with male chauvinists illustrates that traces of this

³ The ancient symbol of phallocentrism is, according to Braidotti, the sword (249).

social contract are present in *Hannibal*. Starling is still dependent on her male superiors because she still works in a predominantly masculine environment. As in *The Silence of the Lambs*, several powerful males desire her because she is still attractive: “Male officers looked her over whenever her face was turned to the window. FBI Special Agent Clarice Starling, thirty-two, always looked her age and she always made that age look good, even in fatigues” (*Hannibal* 4). Nonetheless, Starling refuses to engage in bureaucratic games to gain a promotion: “As long as impersonal competitive testing was the challenge, or doing the job on the street, she knew she could make her place secure. But Starling had no gift for institutional politics” (*Hannibal* 277). She does not use her attractiveness; therefore, she does not adhere to the social contract.

However, she has made several enemies by her continuous refusal of sexual submission, which is exemplified in her relationship with Paul Krendler from the Department of Justice. His predatory nature is elaborated in his interaction with Starling: “he used the extreme articulation of his long neck to turn his face to her, as a hyena would shuffle at the fringe of a herd, peering in at a candidate. Mixed hungers crossed his face; it was Krendler’s nature to both appreciate Starling’s leg and look for the hamstring” (*Hannibal* 50). This demonstrates that Krendler desires and expects Starling’s submission, sexually and professionally. In fact, he personifies the social contract in the FBI.

Krendler organizes a hearing after the death of the drug dealer EVELDA DRUMGO. During this hearing, Starling is falsely accused of contacting and aiding Dr. Lecter (*Hannibal* 401). This hearing demonstrates the repression of females within the FBI because Starling was left alone to defend herself against chauvinistic males. She is suspended at the end of the hearing and she has to hand in her weapon, which symbolizes a transition of power. As discussed in the previous section, Starling’s gun represents her power and self-esteem. When

Starling hands her gun to these males, they mentally conquer her and she has to submit.

However, she speaks up at the end of the hearing: ““This is a frame [...] I think Paul Krendler of the Department of Justice is making money out of this and I think he is willing to destroy me to do it. Mr. Krendler has behaved toward me before in an inappropriate manner and is acting now out of spite as well as financial self-interest”” (*Hannibal* 405-6). Her statement signifies her defiance, as well as her recognition of bureaucratic power relations, showing she is aware of the social contract and she even purposely resists it. Furthermore, Starling does not engage in personal attacks, she only defends herself, which distinguishes her from her enemies and other characters, e.g. Krendler and Dr. Lecter.

In order to fully diminish the power of corrupt males, Dr. Lecter convinces Starling that she has to confront Krendler. Dr. Lecter kidnaps Krendler (*Hannibal* 528) so that Starling can face him outside of a patriarchal environment. She is thus finally able to fully confront and reproach Krendler, while collaborating with Dr. Lecter, in a striking scene where Starling and Dr. Lecter engage in cannibalism. This shows Starling’s support of Dr. Lecter and her retaliation against chauvinists such as Krendler, who expect her submission simply because she is a woman. While Starling enjoys her meal, she criticizes Krendler: ““For years I’ve been doing the job and every time you could you’ve stuck the knife in me. What is it with you, Mr. Krendler?”” (*Hannibal* 300). Starling rightly believes that Krendler detests her because she refuses to become his mistress. In fact, Starling threatens Krendler’s masculinity:

Krendler could not have explained his animosity to Starling. It was visceral and it belonged to a place in himself where he could not go. A place with seat covers and a dome light, door handles and window cranks and a girl with Starling’s coloring but not her sense and her pants around one ankle asking him what in the hell was the matter

with him, and why didn't he come on and do it, was he *some kind of queer? some kind of queer? some kind of queer?* (*Hannibal* 382)

Krendler's animosity is connected to his own insecurities, which in turn are linked to his masculinity. When Starling refuses him, he loses power over her and he feels emasculated; their confrontation signifies Starling's refusal to obey the sexual expectations that come with her position as a female in a patriarchal setting.

Starling continues to describe her anger towards Krendler during their confrontation: "every time you leered at me, I had the nagging feeling I had done something to deserve it [...] I *didn't* deserve it. Every time you wrote something negative in my personnel folder, I resented it, but still I searched myself. I doubted myself for a moment, and tried to scratch this tiny itch that said Daddy knows best" (*Hannibal* 530). In this scene, Starling expresses her frustrations without any interruptions or dismissals, in contrast with their confrontation during the hearing. It becomes clear that Starling has unconsciously connected Krendler to the image of her father. She has forced herself to adapt her father's values and excessive dedication to her investigations, which means that she views her father as a symbol of repression and she does not idolize him anymore.

Dr. Lecter is the only powerful male who helps Starling to overcome Krendler, which entails overcoming all dominant men in her life and that should destroy Starling's social contract. Dr. Lecter is aware of Krendler's hostility and he analyzes Starling's inner motives and animosity towards Krendler:

Her resentment of the very real injustices which she suffered at Krendler's hands was charged with the anger at her father that she could never, never acknowledge. She could never forgive her father for dying [...] Or was Krendler, and every other

authority and taboo, empowered to box Starling into what was, in Dr. Lecter's view, her little low-ceiling life? (*Hannibal* 510)

Starling is disappointed in most men because they expect her submission because of her gender. For instance, Dr. Lecter understands that Starling harbors a child-like resentment towards her father because she believes that he abandoned her when he died. Dr. Lecter is also aware of the repressed positions of females in the FBI and thus he knows that Starling is suppressed in her occupation. By confronting Krendler, Starling takes back the power which is denied to her and she resigns from the FBI. As a result, Starling does not have to obey patriarchal rules and she breaks the social contract.

2.2 Truancy of the Mentor

“Gerontocracy” (Braidotti 245) also describes unequal power relations between genders because it illustrates the power of older men⁴ over younger females; it exemplifies the relationship between Clarice Starling and Jack Crawford in *The Silence of the Lambs*. In *Hannibal* however, he is not her instructor anymore. He does not influence Starling; gerontocracy is thus not evident in *Hannibal* because power is transferred from older men to young, ambitious bureaucrats. Starling is certainly aware of her diminishing career prospects in the FBI, in contrast with *The Silence of the Lambs*:

Now that she was a veteran of the Bureau, (veteran of many lateral assignments), she could see that her early triumph in catching the serial murderer Jame Gumb was part of her undoing in the Bureau. She was a rising star stuck on the way up. [...] she had made at least one powerful enemy and excited the jealousy of a number of her male contemporaries. [...] And she was forever on loan, when a sister agency needed a reliable hand in a raid. She had wiry strength and she was fast and careful with a gun.

⁴ Krendler's interaction with Starling could be an example of gerontocracy; however, there is no evidence that he is older than Starling or that he is Crawford's age.

Crawford saw this as a chance for her. He assumed she had always wanted to chase Lecter. The truth was more complicated than that. (*Hannibal* 57)

As the female Other, Starling poses a threat to the masculinity of her colleagues and therefore she is unable to get promoted. Crawford is aware of the tension between Starling and her male superiors and he believes that Starling's pursuit of Dr. Lecter will motivate her. Nevertheless, this passage shows that Crawford underestimates Starling, though he might have kind intentions. As a veteran FBI officer, Starling's goal is to gain the promotion and recognition she deserves. The problematic relationship between Starling and her male superiors does not change if she is assigned to another investigation, for instance chasing Dr. Lecter.

Starling is severely criticized in the media, after the FBI failed to apprehend EVELDA Drumgo. Starling states: ““They had me taking the fall for the raid, Mr. Crawford. For EVELDA Drumgo's death, all of it. They were like hyenas”” (*Hannibal* 52). Starling still confides in Crawford; yet, she realizes that he has become powerless in the FBI and he cannot repair her career, partly due to his upcoming retirement.

Indeed, Crawford has become distant in *Hannibal*, even though he remains Starling's mentor. He is no longer involved in crime investigations. When Starling meets with Crawford, she observes: “He looked much older now than any memory she had of her own father” (*Hannibal* 278). Though she views him somewhat as a father-figure, the distance between them is much more apparent, compared to *The Silence of the Lambs* (*Hannibal* 277). Crawford does not motivate Starling and she does not need his approval because they do not work together during her pursuit of Dr. Lecter, which also differs from their cooperation in *The Silence of the Lambs*. She has to work alone, which emphasizes her position as an outcast – the Other – in the FBI society.

Crawford's powerlessness is also illustrated in Starling's hearing, which is arranged

by Krendler. He could not defend Starling: “All he could do was bitch himself up” (*Hannibal* 401) and he is dismissed by Krendler. This shows that gerontocracy is no longer illustrated in *Hannibal* because Crawford is too old to be of service in the FBI. Nonetheless, there is one older male character present during the hearing and who can influence Starling career, namely Assistant Director Noonan. He has the power to officially dismiss Starling from her vocation; however, “the Inspector General could overrule him, and the inspector apparently had sent Krendler as his plenipotentiary” (*Hannibal* 401). The relationship between Starling and Noonan thus does not exemplify gerontocracy, even though Noonan is an older man who has more power than Starling. The hearing also demonstrates that power within the FBI is transferred from older men to young, ambitious officials in *Hannibal*, in contrast with *The Silence of the Lambs*, where gerontocracy is evident.

3. The Apple Falls Far from the Tree

In *Hannibal*, the relationship between Starling and her parents is connected to a dissociation process, which is vital in the development to adulthood (Kristeva 209), though Starling is an adult. Starling’s frustration towards her parents becomes apparent in this novel; initially, Starling’s loneliness and isolation stress her need for her parents:

What did she have framed? Her diploma from the FBI Academy. No photograph of her parents survived. She had been without them for a long time and she had them only in her mind. Sometimes, in the flavors of breakfast or in a scent, a scrap of conversation, a homely expression overheard, she felt their hands on her: She felt it strongest in her sense of right and wrong. (*Hannibal* 448)

After several years with the FBI, Starling evaluates her view of her parents. She misses her family, like any woman would and she still upholds her parents’ values, as in *The Silence of the Lambs*. However, Starling is still very aware of her modest background. She frequently

communicates with refined and wealthy characters such as Mason Verger, his sister Margot and Dr. Lecter. As a result, she contemplates her lack of refinement and her desire for luxury and extravagance more often: “Starling examined herself for snobbism and decided she had damn little to be snobbish about. Then, thinking of style, she thought of EVELDA DRUMGO, who had plenty of it. With the thought, Starling wanted badly to get outside herself again” (*Hannibal* 81). Even a criminal such as EVELDA DRUMGO has more self-esteem and refinement than Starling.

Starling’s simplicity originates in her parents’ poverty thus she wants to distance herself from them. This is shown in her interaction with Dr. Lecter. He sends Starling a letter after she is attacked in the media (*Hannibal* 34). In this letter, Dr. Lecter attempts to manipulate Starling by mentioning her parents: “[I]t was apparent to me that your father, the dead night watchman, figures large in your value system [...] Will your failure reflect on them, will people forever wrongly believe that your parents were trailer camp tornado bait white trash?” (*Hannibal* 35). Dr. Lecter predicts that her discharge from the FBI will lead to what Starling fears most: returning to her old neighborhood and having a low-paid job like her parents. Dr. Lecter makes Starling aware of her ambition. Consequently, Starling desires to disassociate herself more from her parents in *Hannibal*.

During their conversations in *The Silence of the Lambs*, Dr. Lecter understands the impact of Starling’s old-fashioned values:

He knew that, like every sentient being, Starling formed from her early experience matrices, frameworks by which later perceptions were understood. Speaking to her through the asylum bars so many years ago, he had found an important one for Starling, the slaughter of lambs and horses on the ranch that was her foster home. She was imprinted by their plight. (*Hannibal* 509)

In *The Silence of the Lambs*, the memory of Starling's parents motivates her to continue with her investigation. In *Hannibal*, it is clear that the memories of Starling's parents have a detrimental impact; she clings to her parents' strict and old-fashioned values in her investigations. In fact, the lambs are a symbol of Starling's past traumas and unhappy childhood because she was sent to a farm after her parents died. This passage shows that Starling's present is intertwined with her past.

Dr. Lecter helps Starling to distance herself from her parents and the ingrained values. He tries, in his own way, to help Starling heal from her past traumas, particularly her father's death. He digs up the corpse of Starling's father (*Hannibal* 508) and he drugs Starling so she can she face her grief and deal with her disappointment in her father: "Like a toddler she caught up the tail of her pullover and held it to her cheek and sobbed, bitter tears falling with a hollow *tap tap* on the dome of her father's skull resting in her lap, its capped tooth gleaming. 'I love my daddy, he was as good to me as he knew how to be. It was the best time I ever had'" (*Hannibal* 509). Dr. Lecter believes that Starling can confront her past traumas by making her regress into a child-like state and by having physical contact with her father's remains. Eventually, she learns to distance herself and she does not idolize her parents anymore.

4. An Unlikely Bond

In *The Silence of the Lambs*, Starling and Dr. Lecter develop a "Quid pro quo" (*Silence* 173) relationship, which entails an exchange of information and mutual respect. In fact, Dr. Lecter is impressed with Starling because she is not manipulated by his psychological tricks. Moreover, it is hinted in *The Silence of the Lambs* that Dr. Lecter and Starling will have a romantic relationship and in *Hannibal* they become intimate.

In *Hannibal*, it is revealed that Dr. Lecter has fled to Florence and he contacts Starling, even though Starling is still an FBI officer. He often thinks about Starling and he actively follows attacks on her in the media. Dr. Lecter even sends Starling a letter to comfort her:

Dr. Lecter cuts out the image of Clarice Starling's face and glues it on a piece of blank parchment. He picks up a pen and, with a fluid ease, draws on the parchment the body of a winged lioness, a griffon with Starling's face. Beneath it, he writes in his distinctive copperplate. *Did you ever think, Clarice, why the philistines don't understand you? It's because you're the answer to Samson's riddle: You are the honey in the lion. (Hannibal 211)*

This passage refers to a well-known biblical riddle, which is presented by Samson to the philistines: "Out of the eater came forth meat, and out of the strong came forth sweetness" (Judges 14:14 KJV). The answer to this riddle: "'Bees hive in a lion's carcass and produce honey'" (Margalith 226) is difficult to understand; however, "the pivotal point of the riddle is 'honey/sweet'" (Margalith 227). This riddle symbolizes the vital combination of strength and kindness viz., the lion and the honey, in Starling's character. By using this riddle, Dr. Lecter reveals Starling's personality: she combines femininity and empathy with discipline in her profession. He thus implicitly praises her because she is unique but unappreciated and people find it difficult to understand her. Dr. Lecter also states: "You are a warrior, Clarice. The enemy is dead, the baby safe. You are a warrior" (*Hannibal 37*). He confirms what Starling already believes, namely that she is a hero because she saves innocent people. After reading the letter, Starling was "glad and sorry [...] glad of the help, glad she saw a way to heal" (*Hannibal 38*). This letter illustrates that Dr. Lecter and Starling still desire contact and that they recognize each other's unique skills and personality. Indeed, they are both outcasts who are criticized by their society and it is clear that they seek comfort in each other. This letter

also shows that Dr. Lecter can still provide a correct analysis of Starling's personality and background, as in *The Silence of the Lambs*.

Starling can also accurately analyze Dr. Lecter's personality, which helps her to locate him. In this novel, she pursues Dr. Lecter thus she is able to focus all her attention on him and not on another serial killer as in *The Silence of the Lambs*. Their interaction and Starling's lengthy research has made her a Lecter expert within the FBI. She even explains to her arch enemy, Krendler, how she can find Dr. Lecter: "He's a man of very cultivated tastes, some of them exotic tastes, in food, in wine, music. If he comes here [the U.S], he'll want those things. He'll have to get them. He won't deny himself" (*Hannibal* 297). She knows his tastes and his flaws: he cannot deny himself luxury and that makes him stand out.

Dr. Lecter's view of Starling is also elaborated in this novel. An acquaintance of Dr. Lecter, Barney, explains that Dr. Lecter is not Starling's enemy. In fact, he believes that Dr. Lecter respects Starling: "He admires and respects her courage and her discipline. He says himself he's got no plans to come around. One thing he does *not* do is lie" (*Hannibal* 314). Barney's description illustrates that Dr. Lecter is the only man who does not underestimate Starling simply because she is a woman. More importantly, he does not repress her, which Barney also explains:

He could see what she was *becoming*, she was charming the way a cub is charming, a small cub that will grow up to be - like one of those big cats. One you can't play with later. She had the cublike [sic] earnestness, he said. She had all the weapons, in miniature and growing, and all she knew so far was how to wrestle with other cubs.

That amused him. (*Hannibal* 313)

He even admired Starling as a student, when she did not display her full potential yet.

According to Barney, Starling is innocent and naïve in *The Silence of the Lambs*; in *Hannibal*,

Starling is not a student anymore: she is a hardened investigator who is disillusioned with the FBI. Starling also realizes that Dr. Lecter admires her: “*He likes me*” (*Hannibal* 257). Dr. Lecter’s praise and her disillusionment with the FBI help Starling to view him in a positive light.

The mutual respect and admiration between Starling and Dr. Lecter is an important incentive in the development of their romantic relationship. However, their similar family tragedies also play a significant part in their relationship. As mentioned previously, Dr. Lecter values luxury; however, he endured poverty after the death of his parents and younger sister, Mischa, who were murdered shortly after World War Two in Lithuania (*Hannibal Rising*). Shortly after the death of his parents, Dr. Lecter and Mischa, his younger sister, are kidnapped by looters, who cannibalize Mischa (*Hannibal Rising*). Dr. Lecter becomes severely traumatized and he uses cannibalism and murder to retaliate against people who, in his opinion, are corrupt, e.g. Mason Verger in *Hannibal* or Dr. Chilton in *The Silence of the Lambs*. *Hannibal* offers a new perspective of Dr. Lecter: he is not just a serial killer but he is also a man who desires revenge and justice.

Dr. Lecter relates to Starling’s tragic family history thus he has more respect for her. In fact, he connects Starling with Mischa because they are both females whom he respects and admires. As a result, Dr. Lecter decides to transform Starling mentally into Mischa in order to overcome his trauma concerning her violent death:

Dr. Lecter’s maroon eyes opened wide at the sight of her [Starling] and in the depths of his pupils sparks flew around his image of her face. He held her countenance whole and perfect in his mind long after she was gone from the screen, and pressed with another image, Mischa, pressed them together until, from the red plasma core of their

fusion, the spark flew upward, carrying their single image to the east, into the night sky to wheel with the stars above the sea. (*Hannibal* 412)

Mischa is an important female figure in Dr. Lecter's memory and he tries to replace her with Starling because he wants to create a positive image of his younger sister. Dr. Lecter keeps Starling sedated for a couple of days to manipulate her (*Hannibal* 495). He takes care of her, only because he wants to transform her into Mischa. When Starling eventually sees through Dr. Lecter's plan she supports him, as he helped her deal with her father's death: "there's room in me for my father, why is there not room in you for Mischa?" (*Hannibal* 536). They help each other to overcome their past tragedies, which leads to their intimacy. Their sexual attraction is realized when Starling comforts Dr. Lecter by offering to breastfeed him:

Looking away into his eyes, with her trigger finger she took warm Château d'Yquem from her mouth and a thick sweet drop suspended from her nipple like a golden cabochon and trembled with her breathing. He came swiftly from his chair to her, went on a knee before her chair, and bent to her coral and cream in the firelight his dark sleek head. (*Hannibal* 537)

Dr. Lecter's movement symbolizes his submission to her and Starling offers to take care of him, willingly. She is able to build an equal relationship with a man who respects her. In other words, Starling sides with a criminal who does not repress her, rather than working in a corrupt system, where she is suppressed and underestimated.

After they become lovers, Starling enjoys luxury because Dr. Lecter gives her expensive dresses and emeralds, which she appreciates; however, she remains modest and independent: "[U]naccustomed as she was to this level of dress, she did not examine herself long in the mirror, only looking to see if everything was in place" (*Hannibal* 522). Dr. Lecter now fully appreciates her beauty and their sexual attraction becomes apparent: "He looked up

and saw her and his breath stopped in his throat” (522). He even admits: “You’re quite beautiful, Clarice” (522) even though Starling still is unaware of her beauty. Nonetheless, Dr. Lecter realizes and accepts that he cannot control Starling: “It occurred to Dr. Lecter in the moment that with all his knowledge and intrusion, he could never entirely predict her, or own her at all” (*Hannibal* 513). This passage again emphasizes that Dr. Lecter is unlike any man Starling has encountered in *The Silence of the Lambs* and in *Hannibal*. Starling is not dependent on Dr. Lecter and therefore she remains the female hero of the novel. The last chapter of *Hannibal* describes Starling and Dr. Lecter’s interaction as a couple and it emphasizes their sexual and romantic relationship:

Sometimes our couple dances at dinnertime. Sometimes they do not finish dinner.

Their relationship has a great deal to do with the penetration of Clarice Starling, which she avidly welcomes and encourages. It has much to do with the envelopment of Hannibal Lecter, far beyond the bounds of his experience. It is possible that Clarice Starling could frighten him. Sex is a splendid structure they add to every day.

(*Hannibal* 543)

A man and a woman could have a sexual relationship without the submission of the female. Indeed, Dr. Lecter does not feel compelled to repress Starling; in other words, he does not force her to have intercourse with him, in contrast with Krendler. Starling’s femininity is respected and Dr. Lecter also values her wit and discipline. This vital combination of feminist knowledge and discipline – Starling’s unique traits – remains unchanged.

Hannibal can thus be classified as a romance novel because it centers the build-up to intimacy between Starling and Dr. Lecter. Romance novels usually minimize the roles of female characters (Moody 177). Generally, female characters in romance novels are just the lovers of the hero and there is more focus on patriarchy in most romance novels: “They

[romance novels] do, however, demonstrate how flexible patriarchal ideology has to be in order to maintain its credibility for new generations of women” (Moody 177). However, that is clearly not the case in *Hannibal*. Starling’s role as the feminist hero remains unchanged and it is important to realize that Starling and Dr. Lecter are two independent and clever characters, who refuse to be criticized by their narrow-minded society. They value each other’s unique personality. Their relationship illustrates that Starling’s depiction defeats the common sexist representation of women in thrillers.

Conclusion

There are important connections and differences between *The Silence of the Lambs* and *Hannibal*. In the *The Silence of the Lambs* Starling is the female equivalent of the male hero. However, in *Hannibal*, Starling decides who her enemies are and she uses her own tools to defend the victims and her values.

Unfortunately, Starling’s accomplishments remain unappreciated. She has more experience and skills but she is still alienated because of her gender. Starling poses even more of a threat to powerful men. Her continuous setbacks emphasize the patriarchal social contract. Moreover, Starling does not adhere to these repressive rules in *Hannibal* because she refuses to give into the desires of her male superiors. Consequently, Starling antagonizes several powerful male chauvinists such as Paul Krendler. Starling eventually confronts and defeats Krendler, who represents all male authority figures, including Starling’s father. In this way, she destroys the social contract in her life.

The invalidity of the social contract is also shown in the absence of Jack Crawford in *Hannibal*. He is no longer Starling’s teacher and she has to conduct investigations on her own. Crawford has no power over her thus their relationship is no longer linked to gerontocracy in this novel.

However, Starling has a complex relationship with other mentors in her life, namely her parents. After their death, Starling has idolized them and she upheld their morals and values, which is illustrated in *The Silence of the Lambs*. Consequently, she becomes too dedicated in her work and she remains in the FBI work environment. In *Hannibal*, she distances herself from her parents with Dr. Lecter's help, thereby exemplifying Kristeva's disassociation process (209).

Dr. Lecter motivates Starling and he helps her to destroy the social contract in her life. Moreover, Starling's disillusionment with the FBI, her alienation and research help her to view Dr. Lecter in a better light. Their similar past trauma – the loss of parents and siblings – eventually brings them together. Dr. Lecter does not repress Starling and he has no power over her. In fact, their relationship shows that Starling is a unique female character who also deserves her version of a happy ending, with her chosen lover. Indeed, her personality, skills, and relationships set her apart from the sexist representation of female characters in most thrillers.

Chapter Five: Conclusion

Some readers might think that thrillers generally provide only entertainment and therefore they are usually not associated with the academic canon. However, Moody argues that readers should not dismiss thrillers because they portray society's current morals and values (172).

This is certainly exemplified in Thomas Harris's novels, *The Silence of the Lambs* and *Hannibal*, which accurately illustrate the problematic relationship between the genders. In thrillers, the representation of genders, especially the portrayal of women, can be inaccurate (Glover 143). However, my analysis demonstrated that Starling is the female equivalent of the male hero. My arguments and theories, which refer to feminist psychoanalysis and female sexuality, demonstrate that the portrayal of Starling counters the sexist representation of women in most thrillers.

1. Theoretical Framework

Stereotypical male and female characteristics, such as feminine intuition, empathy and masculine objectivity, are taught in a patriarchal society and therefore they are not inborn (Abrams and Harpham 122). Braidotti claims that women can use so-called feminine traits to their advantage, which she terms "feminist knowledge" (257). Stereotypical gender characteristics are interchangeable in *The Silence of the Lambs* and in *Hannibal*. In these novels, masculine traits placed in a female character; as a result, Starling becomes the female equivalent of the male hero. Her personality shows that gender behavior is learned and that is it interchangeable in *The Silence of the Lambs* and in *Hannibal*.

The setting of these novels influences Starling's depiction and her relationship with other characters. Starling lives in a patriarchal society, which can be linked to Kristeva's "social contract" (200) because her career and education depend on the approval of powerful males. Starling's constant refusal to adhere to the social contract causes her alienation

repression within the FBI; therefore, she also represents the female Other (Abrams and Harpham 122). Another form of the social contract is “gerontocracy” (Braidotti 245) which illustrates the repression of young females by older, powerful males. This is apparent in *The Silence of the Lambs*, particularly in Starling’s relationship with Jack Crawford, her mentor, who controls Starling’s education.

Lastly, the mother-figure plays an important part in gender relations. Gilbert, Gubar (98) and Kristeva claim that the mother figure is significant; however, Kristeva argues that the child, particularly the daughter, is repressed by the mother (209) and separation between them is essential. This is exemplified in Starling’s relationship with her parents; she realizes that her excessive admiration has a detrimental impact on her mental health.

2. *The Silence of the Lambs*

Clarice Starling has acquired stereotypical masculine traits during her FBI training, e.g. using weapons effectively (*Silence* 95-6). Femininity is associated with weakness according to her teachers (Stewart 45) and she has to repress feminine qualities, such as empathy and creativity. Nevertheless, Starling combines her FBI skills with feminist knowledge, which proves that gender behavior is learned and not inborn in *The Silence of the Lambs*.

Starling uses feminist knowledge in her investigation. She links Catherine’s Martin’s background to her own modest family history in order to locate her (*Silence* 334). She also battles and beats the main antagonist, Buffalo Bill, with a symbol of phallocentrism, namely the gun. She is a powerful character and therefore she is the female equivalent of the male hero.

Moreover, Starling’s animosity towards Dr. Frederick Chilton and Paul Krendler exemplifies the dominance of chauvinistic males in *The Silence of the Lambs*. These men attempt to seduce her and they become hostile when she refuses their advances (*Silence* 250)

and this shows that Starling does not adhere to the social contract in *The Silence of the Lambs*. Gerontocracy, another form of the social contract, is shown when powerful older males, particularly Jack Crawford, manipulate Starling. He pressures Starling to dedicate herself fully to the case, otherwise he will ensure her departure from the FBI academy. However, Starling knows that she is invaluable to Crawford and therefore she can afford to demand respect, which again shows that she does not obey the social contract in this novel.

However, Starling's relationship with Dr. Lecter is not linked to the social contract. Dr. Lecter is initially hostile towards Starling, when he attempted to manipulate her through psychological tricks, considering he was a well-known psychiatrist. However, they develop a "Quid pro quo" (*Silence* 173) agreement; this agreement illustrates their mutual respect and it proves that they will have a sexual and romantic relationship, which is also supported by other various hints throughout the novel.

Kristeva's disassociation process (209) is not exemplified in the relationship between Starling and her parents in *The Silence of the Lambs*. She still desires their approval, which is more important than the approval of her superiors. Her dedication helps her during her investigation; it keeps her motivated to find the serial killer, despite her hardships.

3. *Hannibal*

There are noticeable similarities and differences between *Hannibal* and *The Silence of the Lambs*. The FBI society in *Hannibal* has not changed since *The Silence of the Lambs*; consequently, Starling is still isolated in a predominantly male environment. She has become an experienced investigator but she is not promoted or praised after her apprehension of Buffalo Bill. Nevertheless, she is not a student anymore and her unique personality also remains unaltered in *Hannibal*: she still combines objective analysis with empathy and creativity, which shows that gender behavior is learned and interchangeable in *Hannibal*.

In contrast with *The Silence of the Lambs*, young ambitious bureaucrats, such as Krendler and Verger, have more power than FBI veterans. Starling challenges Krendler in *Hannibal*. He feels emasculated because Starling threatens his masculinity (*Hannibal* 382) and he wants to destroy her career at the FBI. Nevertheless, his attempts to make Starling powerless fail because she defends herself (*Hannibal* 405-6), proving that she resists male authority. Gerontocracy is also diminished in *Hannibal* because Jack Crawford does not have power over Starling.

In this novel, Kristeva's disassociation process between a child and her parents (209) is clearly exemplified. Starling wants to distance herself from her parents' poverty and she wants to enjoy luxury like Dr. Lecter (*Hannibal* 81). Starling realizes that she needs to confront her past traumas, particularly her father's violent death, in order to distance herself from her parents. She manages to face her frustration towards her parents, with Dr. Lecter's assistance (*Hannibal* 510).

Indeed, Starling does not view Dr. Lecter as just a bloodthirsty felon. In fact, Starling would rather work with Dr. Lecter, who is viewed as a criminal by the FBI, instead of working in a corrupt society. Though *Hannibal* has a romantic focus, due to the relationship between Starling and Dr. Lecter, Starling is still a strong female character and she is in a relationship with a man who understands her. Dr. Lecter and Starling will not be confined by the narrow-minded morals and values of their society; therefore, their relationship emphasizes that Starling's depiction counters the usual sexist representation of women in thrillers.

My intention is to change readers' perception of women's depiction in popular culture. I explained that women can be heroes, without being altered by sexist trends or opinions. They do not have to be sexualized to be fascinating. Starling's struggle represents the challenges many women face in a modern society: she tries to be valued without being seductive or

manipulative. Starling eventually chooses a path, which is right in her opinion, though many readers might not understand her reasons for being in a romantic relationship with Dr. Lecter. She stands up for her own beliefs, even though that makes her an outcast in her society. She is thus not only a role model for other female characters in thrillers but she is also an example for women in real life.

Works Cited

- Abrams, M.H., and Geoffrey Galt Harpham. "Feminist Criticism". *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 10th ed. USA: Wadsworth Cengage Learning, 2012. Print.
- The Bible. King James Version. Cambridge Edition: 1769. *King James Bible Online*. Web. 13 Okt 2015.
- Braidotti, Rosi. "Dympna and the Figuration of the Woman Warrior." *Doing Gender in Media, Art and Culture*. Eds. Rosemarie Buikema and Iris van der Tuin. New York: Routledge, 2009. 241-261. Print.
- Gilbert, Sandra M and Susan Gubar. "Sexual Linguistics: Gender, Language, Sexuality." *The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism*. Eds. Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992. 81-99. Print.
- Glover, David. "The Thriller." *The Cambridge Companion to Crime Fiction*. Ed. Martin Priestman. 1st ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003. 135-154. *Cambridge Companions Online*. PDF. 29 Apr.2015.
- Harris, Thomas. *Hannibal*. New York: Dell, 2000. Print.
- . *Hannibal Rising*. 2006. London: Random House, 2007. *Thomas Harris Official Website*. Web. 9 Okt. 2015.
- . *The Silence of the Lambs*. London: Arrow Books, 2009. Print.
- Kristeva, Julia. "Women's Time." *The Feminist Reader: Essays in Gender and the Politics of Literary Criticism*. Eds. Catherine Belsey and Jane Moore. Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1992. 197-217. Print.
- Lehmann-Haupt, Christopher. "The Return of Hannibal the Cannibal." *New York Times*. The New York Times Company, 15 Aug.1988. Web. 22 Apr. 2015.

Margalith, Othniel. "Samson's Riddle and Samson's Magic Locks." *Vetus Testamentum* 36.2

(1986): 225-234. *JSTOR*. Web. 9 Okt. 2015.

Moody, Nickianne. "Feminism and Popular Culture." *The Cambridge Companion to Feminist*

Literary Theory. Ed. Ellen Rooney. 1st ed. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press,

2006. pp. 172-192. *Cambridge Companions Online*.

Stewart Alexander, Jane. "The Feminine Hero of the Silence of the Lambs." *The San*

Francisco Jung Institute Library Journal 14.3 (1995): 43-62. *JSTOR*. PDF. 14 Sep.

2015.

"Thomas Harris." *FamousAuthors.org*. FamousAuthors.org. 22 Apr 2012. Web. 22 Apr. 2015.