To Amuse the Mouth: Anthropophagy in Thomas Harris's Tetralogy of Hannibal Lecter Novels

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Summary

The article is divided into two sections, like a two-course meal. The first section begins by defining food before considering some cultural aspects of what constitutes normal/permissible versus abnormal/non-permissible comestibles; it rounds out with a brief subsection devoted to anthropophagy. The second section discusses cannibalism (and some of its associated processes, such as decapitation and evisceration) as themes in Thomas Harris's tetralogy of novels featuring the psychiatrist/serial killer/cannibal, Hannibal Lecter. Cumulatively, the two sections seek to explore and explain how and why, in Hannibal Lecter's case, "*Der Mensch ist was er ißt*" (Man is what he eats).

Opsomming

Die betrokke artikel word in twee afdelings verdeel, soos 'n tweegangmaaltyd. Die eerste afdeling begin met die definisie van dit wat eetbaar is en oorweeg etlike kulturele aspekte wat normale/toelaatbare teenoor abnormale/ontoelaatbare voedsel uitmaak. Verder word die spesifieke afdeling afgerond met 'n kort onderafdeling wat oor antropofagie handel. Die tweede afdeling bespreek kannibalisme asook enkele prosesse wat daarmee geassosieer word soos onthoofding en oopvlekking (die verwydering van die ingewande), wat as temas in Thomas Harris se tetralogie van romans figureer en wat die psigiater/reeksmoordenaar/kannibaal, Hannibal Lecter, uitbeeld. Die twee afdelings poog om kumulatief ondersoek in te stel en te verduidelik hoe en waarom, soos in Hannibal Lecter se geval, "*Der Mensch ist was eri ßt*" (Die mens is wat hy eet).

1 Food

Because this special issue focuses on food, it seems important to consider at least one definition of it. The *Shorter Oxford Dictionary* (2007) defines food this way:

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1 a Substance(s) (to be) taken into the body to maintain life and growth, nourishment; provisions, victuals. b One's livelihood. ▸ c An article of food; a type of food. d Solid nourishment, as opp. to drink.

The same dictionary also offers a definition of the word's figurative meaning:

2 Something providing spiritual, emotional, or mental sustenance. Now spec. matter or material to discuss or dwell on.

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We note here the interrelationship between the substances we ingest to maintain the life and growth of the physical body and those absorbed as objects of contemplation (as food for thought, for example) or for "spiritual, emotional, or mental sustenance". They are not necessarily different; food can be ingested (or avoided) to satisfy a number of psychological hungers. And we note further that, separating out these two definitions of food only reinforces a mind/body split – given initial credence perhaps by Juvenal's idea of "*mens sana in corpora sano*" (a healthy mind in a healthy body) (Cohen & Cohen 1967: 214) – that is currently understood to be less than clearly distinguishable: "Psychological and physical health seem inextricably linked" (Watson 2003: 254).

Be that as it may, food has been suggested as the indicator of several behaviours. Several decades before the advent of the Christian era, the Roman writer, Lucretius, used it as a definer of taste, suggesting that what is food to one man is bitter poison to others (*Ut quod ali cibus est aliis fuat venenum*) (Cohen & Cohen 1967: 239). By 1850, Ludwig Feuerbach (1804-1872) was asserting that "*Der Mensch ist was er ißt*" (Man is what he eats) (Cohen & Cohen 1967: 157). A corollary, applicable to anorectics, would be that you are what you *don't* eat.

In an eighteenth-century treatise on the physiology of taste, Anthelme Brillat-Savarin (1755-1826) claimed: "Tell me what you eat, and I will tell you what you are" (*Dis-moi ce que tu manges, et je te dirai ce que tu est*) (Cohen & Cohen 1967: 66). In being able to tell a person what he or she "was", the author could have been referring not only to their social status or occupation but also to their psychological make-up. Or perhaps even their nationality, by virtue of stereotypical dishes such as Italian pasta, Spanish paella, English fish and chips, Japanese sushi, American hamburgers, and Greek moussaka. Had he been alive today, however, Brillat-Savarin might have been no less challenged than contemporary readers to name the national dishes of Ireland, Poland, Turkey, or Ukraine, to cite a random selection.

For pessimistic individuals, life is much more difficult simply because of their disposition. In his well-known poem, "The Pessimist", Benjamin King (1857-1894 or 1899) notes that, for such individuals, there is alas, "[n]othing to eat but food" (in Cohen & Cohen 1967: 221). In linking

pessimism and food, albeit in a preabsurdist manner, King conjoins one of the mind's particular dispositions with the body's primary physiological need.

The rise of the contemporary gymnasium, properly balanced eating habits, and psychological wellness have reinforced Juvenal's dictum. Healthy minds in healthy bodies are now frequently construed as individual and societal desiderata; they function as important components of society's fantasy about itself as a place where normal people can live together relatively harmoniously – and healthily. This fantasy also assumes the converse: that abnormal, unhealthy people do not belong in such a society.

Just as there are vocabularies associated with, or attached to, societally permissible and non-permissible behaviour so, too, are there vocabularies for food taboos, as Leach (in Maranda 1972: 44) explains:

> The physical environment of any human society contains a vast range of materials which are both edible and nourishing, but, in most cases, only a small part of this edible environment will be actually classified as potential food. Such classification is a matter of language and culture, not nature. It is a classification that is of great practical importance, and it is felt to be so. *Our* classification is not only correct, it is morally right and a mark of our superiority.
>
> (Leach in Maranda 1972: 44)

We observe how this explanation relies on the process of categorisation and its cultural embedment. Leach's last sentence articulates the societal fantasy of moral correctness and superiority. This fantasy also forms the foundation of, and justification for, the process of stigmatising those deviating from the parametric norms of that fantasy. But any such fantasy raises profound questions about what comprises "normality" and "abnormality" vis-à-vis social norms, as well as how they are defined and classified.

If classification is a systematic means of (a) knowing and recording the experiences and phenomena of the world (as well as humankind's relationships with them) and (b) of imposing order on the world (and so alleviating some of our deepest anxieties about chaos, confusion, and disorder), it is, conversely, a way of rejecting, consciously or unconsciously, the possibilities of anarchy, disorder, non-order, or chaos in the world. Classification may thus be viewed as a form of pattern-making through the societal establishment and application of norms and labels.

Classification or categorisation may be subdivided into three processes: (i) identification, (ii) definition, and (iii) labelling. Classification also presumes that, once identified, defined, and labelled, any phenomenon or object is self-evidently precluded from belonging simultaneously to any other category. Regrettably, it has never been possible to package reality so neatly. Rycroft (1992: 47-48) explains:

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> 1. All societies and indeed all individuals taken singly too, attempt to impose order on the universe by establishing categories into which, in theory, all phenomena can be fitted.
> 2. These prevailing categories do not, in fact, work, and there always remains a range of phenomena which cannot be fitted into them.
> 3. Phenomena which resist categorization evoke peculiar emotional reactions, varying from anxiety and disgust to fascination and awe, and are felt to be in some strange way "taboo", "unclean", or "sacred".
>
> (Rycroft 1992: 47-48)

Phenomena that fall within the category of non-categorisable phenomena – in other words, taboo – may be linguistic and/or behavioural (Leach in Maranda 1972: 41). However, it is obviously extremely difficult, if not impossible, to discuss matters that are socially unacceptable for discussion, such as anthropophagy. Ironically, while language facilitates the definition and labelling of both permissible and non-permissible behaviours, taboo prevents discussion of the latter. As Leach (p. 41) notes, "[i]t is hard to talk about the unsayable".

A little later in the same article, Leach describes the categorisation of comestibles:

> As a consequence of such cultural discriminations, the edible part of the environment usually falls in three main categories:
>
> 1. Edible substances that are recognized as food and consumed as part of the normal diet.
> 2. Edible substances that are recognized as possible food, but that are prohibited or else allowed to be eaten only under special (ritual) conditions. These are substances which are *consciously tabooed.*
> 3. Edible substances that by culture and language are not recognized as food at all. These substances are *unconsciously tabooed.*
>
> (Leach in Maranda 1972: 44-45)

Concurring with Rycroft's comments, Leach states: "Of course our linguistic categories are not always tidy and logical, but the marginal cases [what Rycroft calls „[p]henomena which resist categorization'], which at first appear [to be] exceptions to some general rule, are often especially interesting" (Leach in Maranda 1972: 45). Anthropophagy is, quite unequivocally, one of these phenomena.

1.1 Anthropophagy

Curiosity about people who eat people is not a new phenomenon, as Diehl and Donnelly point out: "Humanity's morbid fascination with cannibalism dates from well before the dawn of recorded history. Long before anthropologists and archaeologists found irrefutable evidence of early man's taste for human flesh, the knowledge that human beings engaged in canni-

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balism was already embedded deep in our collective psyche" (2008: 3). The reason appears quite simple: "The fact that cannibalism is a powerful taboo in most human societies undeniably contributes to our fascination with tales about organisms eating conspecifics (others of the same species), especially humans" (*Gale Encyclopedia of Food & Culture* (2003)).

Of the marginal cases to which Leach refers, none is perhaps as provocative, fascinating, and repulsive as anthropophagy. Here, context may matter more than the action itself: eating animal flesh is societally permissible; eating human flesh is non-permissible, at least in normal Western societies. As Leach notes, human flesh is not recognised as a food at all and is tabooed. From this example, it is clear that it is not the general principle of eating or not eating flesh that constitutes the distinction between permissible and non-permissible behaviour; rather, it is *the specific kind* of flesh being ingested that grounds that distinction, both culturally and linguistically.

Of course, cannibalism itself is not a new phenomenon, either. According to the *Gale Encyclopedia of Food & Culture* (2003),

> [t]he ancient Greeks' fears of cannibalism were reflected in the writings of Homer and others. For example, the Titan god Kronos ate his sons Hades and Poseidon and tried to eat Zeus in the fear that they would supplant him. Zeus, the future leader of the Olympian gods, forced his father to disgorge Hades and Poseidon. In another story, the curse on the House of Atreus was brought about by a deceptive form of endocannibalism. Atreus and Thyestes were brothers. In a series of deceptions, Atreus, having killed his own son without knowing who he was, exacted revenge against his brother, Thyestes, by killing Thyestes' own sons and serving them to him at a feast. A final example is in the tale of Odysseus' return from Troy to Ithaca. He stopped at an island in search of food and stumbled on the cave of Polyphemus, a Cyclops. Odysseus escaped from Polyphemus, but not before the Cyclops had devoured a number of his men.
>
> (*Gale Encyclopedia of Food & Culture* (2003))

One might also cite here the Minotaur in the Labyrinth of Knossos, being fed Athenian youths and girls. And there are further examples in Diehl and Donnelly's opening chapter (2008: 3-11). Nursery rhymes and fairy tales, too, include cannibalism. For example, in "Jack and the Beanstalk", the giant threatens the young boy with these words:

> Fe, Fi, Fo, Fum.
> I smell the blood of an Englishman.
> Be he alive or be he dead,
> I'll grind his bones to make my bread.
>
> (Cohen & Cohen 1967: 272)

The witch's anthropophagic intentions in the Brothers Grimm's "Hansel and Gretel" provide another example.

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As long ago as 1902, in his article for the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, Edward Burnett Tylor raised the primary question about cannibalism:

> Man being by nature carnivorous as well as frugivorous, and human flesh being not unfit for human food, the question first arises why mankind generally have not only avoided it, but have looked with horror on exceptional individuals and races addicted to cannibalism. It is evident on consideration that both emotional and religious motives must have contributed to bring about this prevailing state of mind.
>
> (Tylor 1902)

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Generally speaking, there are numerous reasons for, and explanations of, cannibalism:

> The practice of human cannibalism is highly variable and can be defined in a number of ways: (1) Endocannibalism is the consumption of deceased individuals who live within the group, such as kin and friends. (This pattern was common in New Guinea as an act of veneration.) (2) Exo-cannibalism is the consumption of outsiders as an act to gain strength or demonstrate power over the vanquished, who had usually been murdered. (3) Starvation or survival cannibalism is the consumption during actual or perceived starvation. (This is well documented in numerous historical sources.) (4) Gastronomic cannibalism is non-funerary, non-starvation cannibalism, that is, routine cannibalism for food. (This is not well documented.) (5) Medicinal cannibalism is the consumption of human tissues such as blood, powdered bone, or dried tissue for medicinal purposes. (6) Sadistic cannibalism is the killing and eating of individuals out of sadistic or psychopathological motives. (There is considerable evidence for this pattern of cannibalism.) In exocannibalism, gastronomic cannibalism, and sadistic cannibalism, the victims are murdered before being eaten; in endo-cannibalism, starvation cannibalism, and medicinal cannibalism, they are not.
>
> (*Gale Encyclopedia of Food & Culture* (2003))

In contemporary Western societies, however, "cannibalism is committed only by the deranged or by people who otherwise face death from starvation" (*The Columbia Electronic Encyclopedia*). Interestingly, in defining the word "deranged", the *Shorter Oxford English Dictionary* makes use of the terms "insane" and "mad" – all of which take us to the vexed question of what constructs such as "normality", "sanity", and "madness" mean and how society defines them. Unfortunately, a discussion of these definitional intricacies is beyond the scope of this piece; or, perhaps, we should say that it is off the menu.

2 Thomas Harris's "Hannibal Lecter" Novels[1]

Society functions primarily on the basis of a fantasy of itself as a good, healthy, normal, safe, even sacred place where its members can share their realities. In its efforts to transform this fantasy into reality, society devises and applies norms of permissible and non-permissible behaviours. Against both sets of norms – permissible and non-permissible alike – individual and group behaviours are defined, measured, labelled, and judged – or punished when infractions of the permissible norms occur (Ullyatt 2003: 221).

Society's fantasy of itself, especially with regard to what constitutes normal or abnormal behaviour, not least toward food, and what comprises the permissible and the non-permissible in both instances, establishes a context within which Thomas Harris's tetralogy of novels dealing with Hannibal Lecter can now be explored.

As the epigraph to his poem, "As I Step over a Puddle at the End of Winter, I Think of an Ancient Chinese Governor", James Wright (1990: 119) cites these words, written AD 819 by the Tang dynasty poet, Po Chu-i (772-846):

> And how can I, born in evil days
> And fresh from failure, ask a kindness of Fate?
>
> (in Wright 1990: 119)

As an embodiment of abnormal human behaviour, wartime offers an over-abundance of evil days and countless opportunities for non-permissible behaviours. The history of the Lecter family, which may be traced back to Hannibal the Grim (1365-1428), seems beset with evil days. He built Lecter Castle with the labour of prisoners of war, "the soldiers he had captured at the Battle of Zalgiris" (Harris 2006: 5).

Centuries later, Hannibal Lecter's anthropophagy also begins in evil days, during the Second World War. Hannibal and Mischa, his younger sister, enjoy their early days at the Castle, until "the second day of Operation Barbarossa, Hitler's lightning sweep across Eastern Europe into Russia" (Harris 2006: 8). That day was 23 June 1941. It is then that the family takes refuge in their country lodge "which had evolved over three hundred years from a crude shelter into a comfortable forest retreat" (Harris 2006: 10) with its promise of safety. They "[survive] in the woods for the terrible three and a half years of Hitler's eastern campaign" (p. 21) until Count Lecter and his wife are killed.

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1. In chronological order of their original publication, these are *Red Dragon* (1981), *The Silence of the Lambs* (1988), *Hannibal* (1999), and *Hannibal Rising* (2006). However, in terms of the chronology of Lecter's life, *Hannibal Rising* precedes *Red Dragon*.

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Hannibal and Mischa are left to fend for themselves in volatile, highly unpredictable times, not least because "[d]uring World War II, Lithuania was occupied by the Soviet Union (1940-1941), Nazi Germany (1941-1944), and the Soviet Union again in 1944" (Wikipedia 2011). For the Lecter children, the evil days continue. It transpires that the family were not the only inhabitants of the wooded environs, however; the invading Russian army that "rolled like lava across Eastern Europe" (Harris 2006: 30) was there as were opportunistic German and Lithuanian freebooters. The dogs of war had been loosed and havoc was indeed the consequence; they were all starving for food: "We have to eat or die" becomes the Lithuanian marauders' mantra (pp. 45, 60). When allied with war, starvation goes a long way towards extirpating any prevailing peacetime distinctions between permissible/normal and non-permissible/taboo foods. The exquisite diets of the gourmet's life are degraded into brutal survival strategies:

> They were leading a half-starved little deer, alive and stumbling, a tasselled swag from some looted mansion looped around its neck, an arrow sticking in its side. Milko picked up an axe.
>
> "Don't waste the blood," Pot Watcher said with a cook's authority. Kolnas came running with his bowl, his eyes shining.
>
> (Harris 2006: 43)

The abnormal circumstances of war bring with them upheavals in, and transgressions of, what constitute acceptable behaviours. For the Lithuanians facing extreme famine and death, it is a small step from a little deer to anthropophagy. Despite his best efforts, the boy Hannibal is too small and powerless to prevent the Lithuanians from killing and eating his sister, an event that does far more, psychologically speaking, than haunt his dreams persistently. Mischa's death also sets Lecter on the road of monstrous vengeance as he tracks down the Lithuanian cannibals, one by one.

As a medical student living with his uncle and aunt in Paris, he murders the bovine French butcher, Paul Momund, who insults his aunt, Lady Murasaki. During the investigation, Hannibal is subjected to a polygraph test:

> "The boy responds to nothing," the polygrapher said. "He's a blunted war orphan or he has a monstrous amount of self-control."
>
> "Monstrous," Popil [the French police inspector] said.
>
> (Harris 2006: 120)

The butcher had been fishing at the time, restraining his catch with a stringer while keeping them alive. Lecter releases the fish as well as the crickets being used for bait (Harris 2006: 104). Later, after tracking down Petras Kolnas, one of the Lithuanians who cannibalised Mischa, Hannibal releases the ortolans that are being served as delicacies in Kolnas's Café de L'Este from their aviary. These shows of compassion symbolise Lecter's own pro-

found understanding of the meaning of freedom as part of a societal fantasy. It is not something he gives up easily or permanently.

In the dead butcher's bag, there had been a "big cleaned fish" (Harris 2006: 104) which he takes back to his aunt's apartment, where he bakes it "[u]nder the tutelage of the chef": "Regard, Hannibal," the chef said. "The best morsels of the fish are the cheeks. This is true of many creatures" (Harris p. 107).

Returning later to the scene of his sister's murder, Hannibal searches the family's country lodge, uncovering his mother's jewellery, and a good deal of military insignia including "six stainless-steel dog tags", the top one of which belongs to Enrikas Dortlich, another of the Lithuanians (Harris 2006: 220). Unbeknown to Lecter, Dortlich is watching; he has been hiding in the woods surrounding the ruins of the lodge.

Another of the items Hannibal uncovers is Mischa's bathtub containing her remains: "it was oddly comforting to him to see she had all her baby teeth" (Harris 2006: 221). He buries the tub in a grave he digs. He also manages to outwit and capture Dortlich (whose presence is betrayed by Cesar, the horse) before binding him to a tree:

> "Herr ... Dortlich. On behalf of myself and my late family, I want to thank you for coming today. It means a great deal to us, and to me personally, having you here. I'm glad to have this chance to talk seriously with you about eating my sister."
>
> (Harris 2006: 222)

We notice the irony of Lecter's sardonic yet impeccable courtesy. Hannibal uses the excess mayonnaise on Dortlich's sandwich – "So much mayonnaise, Herr Dortlich!" he remarks, repulsed by his captive's poor taste – to grease the hangman's noose he has brought with him, and which is tied to the horse. By tightening the noose steadily, Hannibal persuades Dortlich to reveal the whereabouts of all the others in the cannibal group. About Mischa, the Lithuanian, he says, "I swear to God she was dead. She was dead anyway, I swear it" (Harris 2006: 225). As the horse moves away steadily, the rope wrenches off Dortlich's head which "followed the noose for about six metres and lay looking up at the sky" (p. 225). Then Hannibal sends the horse home: "Cesar knew the way" (p. 226).

Sometime later, when Sergeant Svenka arrives at the lodge, he finds Dortlich's head on a tree stump; the cheeks "were missing, excised cleanly" (Harris 2006: 228): "A brochette, cheeks and morels". The chef had taught Hannibal well.

Later, back at medical school, while he is busy working on a cadaver, Hannibal is interrogated by Inspector Popil about the murder:

> "You killed Dortlich in your family's woods."
> Hannibal's face did not change. He wiped the tip of the needle.

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> "His face was eaten," Popil said.
> "I would suspect the ravens. Those woods are rife with them. They were at the dog's dish whenever he turned his back."
> "Ravens who made a shish kabob."
> "Did you mention that to Lady Murasaki?"
> "No. Cannibalism – it happened on the Eastern Front, and more than once when you were a child .... But you know that, don't you? You were there. And you were in Lithuania four days ago."
>
> (Harris 2006: 261-262)

Hannibal Lecter may be seen as a blend of exocannibalism and gastronomic cannibalism with a soupçon of sadistic cannibalism.

In *The Silence of the Lambs* ([1989]2004: 27), Lecter dismisses Clarice Starling's first attempts to get him to agree to fill out a psychological questionnaire, which he disparagingly calls "this blunt little tool", with an implicit threat of cannibalism: "A census taker tried to quantify me once. I ate his liver with some fava beans and a big Amarone. Go back to school, little Starling".

Although, at first, it may not appear to fall entirely within the article's purview, the theme of decapitation raises its head (!) in Harris's tetralogy through its connection with cannibalism. We have already described how the process applied to Enrikas Dortlich, the Lithuanian, in *Hannibal Rising*. It recurs at the end of that novel, when Hannibal, now a researcher at Johns Hopkins University's Medical School in Baltimore, goes to visit Bronys Grentz, another of the Lithuanian cannibals, in his taxidermy shop in Quebec. After the visit, Lecter stops off in Montreal to mail Grentz's head to "one of the taxidermist's pen pals", using "the name and address of another" as the return address (Harris 2006: 322).

As a thematic concern, decapitation is also to be found in *The Silence of the Lambs*. When Clarice Starling finds Benjamin Raspail in a lock-up garage, his head is in "a big laboratory specimen jar" (Harris [1989]2004: 60), and "his thymus and pancreas" are missing:

> Clarice Starling, who from early life had known much more than she wished to know about meat processing, recognized the missing organs as the sweetbreads.
>
> Baltimore Homicide believed that these items appeared on the menu of a dinner Lecter gave for the president and the conductor of the Baltimore Philharmonic on the evening following Raspail's disappearance.
>
> Dr Hannibal Lecter professed to know nothing about these matters. The president and the conductor of the Philharmonic testified that they could not recall the fare at Dr Lecter's dinner, though Lecter was known for the excellence of his table and had contributed numerous articles to gourmet magazines.
>
> (Harris [1989]2004: 31-32)

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Later in *The Silence of the Lambs*, Sammy the "hebephrenic schizoid" (p. 167) who replaces Miggs, "put his mother's head in the collection plate at the Highway Baptist Church in Trune. They were singing „Give of Your Best to the Master' and it was the nicest thing he had" (p. 169).

The film, *Red Dragon* (2002), opens with a scene featuring the dinner party just mentioned (drawn from *The Silence of the Lambs* novel) but now there are nine guests who make up the symphony board. (Ted Tally was the scriptwriter for both *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs* (1991), although they were actually filmed in reverse chronological order.) When one of the guests asks, "What is this divine-looking *amuse-bouche*?" Lecter answers, "If I tell you, I'm afraid you won't even try it." (*Amuse-bouche* is a French term used to describe not only small bites of food, titbits, or appetiser-sized portions of food but also French hors d'oeuvre recipes. The term is almost synonymous with *amuse-gueule*).

In *The Silence of the Lambs*, Benjamin Raspail "of the gluey flute" (Harris [1989]2004: 67), and the main ingredient in the *amuse-bouche*, recounts how Jame Gumb, the novel's other sociopath, after Lecter, decapitated Klaus and then put his head in the refrigerator. Moments later, Lecter sticks a stiletto into Raspail's chest; the knife "wiggled as Raspail's spiked heart tried to keep beating" (p. 198). When Lecter kills Krendler with the crossbow, "[t]he feathers and part of the shaft remained on the visible side of the flower arrangement and moved at more or less the pace of a baton directing a heart. Krendler's voice stopped at once and in a few beats the baton stopped too" ([1999]2000: 551-552). Both victims are served with a gastronomic *maestoso*.

The themes of the head – still attached on this occasion – and anthropophagy are finally integrated in *Hannibal* ([1999]2000), the third novel of the series. After Lecter and Clarice Starling have escaped violent death at Mason Verger's Muskrat farm, the doctor takes care of her physical and psychological recuperation, a process which concludes with one of his gourmet dinners: "Dr Lecter poured wine and gave her only a tiny *amuse-gueule* to eat for starters, a single Belon oyster and a morsel of sausage" (p. 544). Belon oysters, noted for their excellent flavour, originate in France as does the butter:

> He fired up his burners and began with a goodly knob of Charante butter in his copper *fait-tout* saucepan, swirling the melting butter and browning the butterfat to make the *beurre-noisette*. When it was the brown of a hazelnut, he set the butter aside on a trivet.
>
> (Harris [1999]2000: 545)

Lecter continues to display the culinary skills he first acquired as a young man under the chef's guidance.

At this particular meal, the only other guest is Deputy Assistant Inspector General Paul Krendler, Clarice Starling's *bête noire* (Harris [1981]2004:

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245), the man who has done so much to damage, even destroy Starling's career. He has also colluded with Mason Verger to catch Lecter, but Lecter has organised "a quid pro quo" with Verger's sister, Margot. Krendler finds himself strapped into "a stout oak armchair" with "yards of duct tape" (p. 546). His immobility is reminiscent of the Lithuanian, Dortlich, as well as of slaughter animals in the abattoir.

After the soup – "it's more of a parsley and thyme infusion" (p. 548) – Lecter gives his attention to the meticulously detailed preparation of the main course (pp. 549-550):

> Carefully, using both hands, Dr Lecter lifted off the top of Krendler's head, put it on the salver and removed it to the sideboard. Hardly a drop of blood fell from the clean incision, the major blood vessels having been tied and the others neatly sealed under a local anesthetic, and the skull sawn around in the kitchen a half-hour before the meal.
>
> Standing over Krendler with an instrument resembling a tonsil spoon, Dr Lecter removed a slice of Krendler's prefrontal lobe, then another, until he had four. Krendler's eyes looked up as if he were following what was going on. Dr Lecter placed the slices in the bowl of ice water, the water acidulated with the juice of a lemon, in order to firm them.
>
> In classic cuisine, brains are soaked and then pressed and chilled overnight to firm them. In dealing with the item absolutely fresh, the challenge is to prevent the material from simply disintegrating into a handful of lumpy gelatine.
>
> With splendid dexterity, the doctor brought the firmed slices to a plate, dredged them lightly in seasoned flour, and then in fresh brioche crumbs.
>
> He grated a fresh black truffle into his sauce and finished it with a squeeze of lemon juice. Quickly he sautéed the slices until they were just brown on each side.
>
> Dr Lecter placed the browned brains on broad croutons on the warmed plates, and dressed them with the sauce and truffle slices. A garnish of parsley and whole caper berries with their stems, and a single nasturtium blossom on watercress to achieve a little height, completed his presentation.
>
> A second helping of Krendler's brain – "most of the frontal lobe, back nearly to the premotor cortex" – is also cooked and eaten before he becomes too obstreperous.
>
> (Harris [1999]2000: 551)

Lecter takes obvious delight in both his surgical skills and his gastronomic art, thus blending symbolically his manual dexterity as a doctor and his intellectual brilliance as a psychiatrist with his abnormal sociopathy as both a serial killer and a cannibal. As a psychiatrist, he works with deeply disturbed abnormal minds. As a human being, he possesses one himself. Society labels him as "normal" as far as his professional skills are concerned and even "refined" as far as most of his tastes go but labels him "insane", "mad" and "bad" because of his anthropophagic proclivities;

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society fails to understand the origins of his cannibalism and so alienates him from society by institutionalising him, albeit not very successfully.

To this complex blend of the permissible and the non-permissible, we need to add Lecter's own revulsion – which aggravates his murderous pathology – for socially unacceptable bad manners and discourtesy. In *Hannibal Rising*, he says to the butcher: "What you have done [insulting his Japanese aunt] is unforgivable" (Harris 2006: 103). In *The Silence of the Lambs*, when Miggs throws semen at Starling, Lecter says, "I would not have had that happen to you. Discourtesy is unspeakably ugly to me" (Harris [1989]2004: 28). In *Hannibal*, during his last supper, Krendler becomes increasingly obnoxious both in what he is saying and in the volume at which he is saying it.

To eradicate such social noxiousness, Hannibal kills the butcher by slicing him open with a sword. Then, using his psychiatric knowledge to manipulate Miggs's pathologies, the doctor causes him to commit suicide by swallowing his own tongue. Krendler he kills with a crossbow at the dinner table, after which he "simply scraped the plates into Krendler's skull [thus returning the remnants of his brains whence they came] and stacked them in his lap" before towing him away into the kitchen (Harris [1999]2000: 552).

In producing meat for human consumption, the processes of decapitating and skinning follow shortly after the killing of the animal. Thereafter, disembowelling occurs to remove the entrails.

While a medical student in Paris, Lecter murders the butcher, Paul Momund, with a sword, slashing him first across the belly:

> The butcher's scream rang off the trees and the birds flew with a rush. Paul put his hands on himself and they came away covered with thick blood. He looked down at the wound and tried to hold himself together, intestines spilling in his hands, getting away from him, Hannibal stepped to the side and turning with the blow slashed Paul across the kidneys.
>
> (Harris 2006: 103-104)

As Lecter effects his escape from the specially constructed steel cage detaining him on the top floor of the former courthouse and jail in Memphis, he inflicts critical injuries on Officer Pembry and kills Officer Boyle, who is found "partly eviscerated, his face hacked to pieces" (Harris [1989]2004: 278).

Commendatore Rinaldo Pazzi, the corrupt policeman in *Hannibal*, betrays Lecter to Mason Verger, who has plans to kill the psychiatrist by having him devoured by specially trained boars. The policeman attends a presentation by Dr Fell (Lecter's current nom de guerre or, perhaps, *nom de théâtre*) on an ironically apposite subject (Harris [1999]2000: 228):

> "Avarice and hanging are linked in the ancient and the medieval mind: St Jerome writes that Judas' very surname, Iscariot, means „money' or „price',

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> while Father Origen says Iscariot is derived from the Hebrew „from suffocation' and that his name means „Judas the Suffocated'".
> Dr Lecter glanced up from his podium, looking over his spectacles at the door.
> "Ah, *Commendatore* Pazzi, welcome."
>
> (Harris [1999]2000: 228)

Hannibal is already well aware of the *Commendatore*'s corruption and his craving for the reward monies offered for Lecter's capture; unfortunately, the *Commendatore* himself is not aware of this, and, like many others before and after him, underestimates Lecter's "criminal versatility" (Hare 1993: 68).

After the presentation, Lecter envelopes the policeman in "the big drop cloth" and slaps "an ether-soaked sponge over the canvas covering Pazzi's face" (Harris [1999]2000: 233). Using the floor polisher's "thick orange power cord" (p. 234), Lecter creates a hangman's noose and slips it over Pazzi's head, to elicit the information he needs. (The scene recalls Dortlich's similar situation in the Lithuanian woods.) The terrified Pazzi tries frantically to bargain his way out of his deadly situation, but fails:

> "*Arrivederci, Commendatore.*"
> Flash of the Harpy [knife] up Pazzi's front, another swipe severed his attachment to the dolly and he was tilting, tipped over the railing trailing the orange cord, ground coming up in a rush, mouth free to scream, and inside the salon the floor polisher rushed across the floor and slammed to a stop against the railing, Pazzi jerked head-up, his neck broke and his bowels fell out.
>
> (Harris [1999]2000: 237-238)

At least two processes characterising the killing, evisceration, dismemberment, hanging, drawing and quartering of mediaeval criminals are re-enacted through Lecter's actions: actions which serve to eradicate not only individuals whose discourtesy, vulgarity, corruption, and criminality deviate from polite societal norms, but also those individuals who, for whatever reasons, become obstacles to Lecter's unquenchable taste for freedom.

Conclusion

So, what are we to say about the protagonist of a novel whose curriculum vitae reveals his polymathy as a psychiatrist, an author of articles for gourmet magazines and psychiatric journals, an artist, an art historian, and a musical sophisticate but omits his polydactyly, to say nothing of his deviance as a serial killer and a cannibal? Certainly that he cannot be classified in any convenient (that is, "normal") societal category. No less challenging is the task of categorising his mental derangement, primarily

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because of the limitations of the language available to define mental illnesses.

In demonstrating the fallacy of Arnold's assertion that culture provides humankind with its humanity, thus diminishing its animality, Thomas Fahy writes:

> Maggie Kilgour points out, "Lecter is a man of great culture and refinement, a well-mannered gentleman (who never eats ladies), who quotes (if misquotes) Donne, a man of both cultivated aesthetic as well as crude savage taste, who exposes the affinity between barbarism and civilisation".
>
> (Fahy 2003: 248-249)

Certainly, the social implications of the aesthete-killer "expose" a disturbing link between barbarism and civilisation, for the guise of propriety makes Lecter's savagery more lethal.

The aggravated lethality created by the integration of propriety and murderous brutality makes Lecter a singularly complex anomaly. In essence, Lecter represents the shadow side of society's fantasy of itself, the dark side of the psyche gone astray for some entirely explicable but socially non-permissible reason. However, this aspect of his psyche conflicts with his role as psychiatrist, as one able to comprehend, even redeem, that dark side.

To this complexity, we must add his socially admirable gourmet and musical tastes. And the ingenuity of his criminality demands our respect for his deranged genius. He provokes in us a profound anxiety about the discrepancy between a superficial fantasy of society as a generally good, safe, normal place to live (to which most subscribe) and pathological anxieties inherent in the social realities of serial killing and cannibalism (which most fear). Although we might well enjoy his refined conversations and his cultural knowledgeability as a dinner host, we would be compelled to distrust his menus. Lecter attracts and repels simultaneously because he is one of the talented, charming psychopaths that are among us.

Apropos the theme of this special issue, Stanisław Lec's acerbic aphoristic question is delectably irresistible: "Is it progress if a cannibal uses a knife and fork?" (Cohen & Cohen 1980: 199). If so, then how much further may we assume we have progressed if the insane cannibal – head doctor and head hunter both – serves his unique meat dishes to his sane guests with exquisite manners, superb wines, and culinary aplomb?

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