

**PSYCHOANALYTICAL ANALYSIS ON HANNIBAL LECTER AND BUFFALO BILL  
CHARACTERS AS SEEN IN THE SILENCE OF THE LAMBS AND HANNIBAL  
RISING BY THOMAS HARRIS.**

**Panji Perdana Putra**

[panjiperdanap@gmail.com](mailto:panjiperdanap@gmail.com), 081270626773

English Department, Faculty of Humanities, Andalas University

**ABSTRAK**

Jurnal ini menjelaskan tentang analisis dua karakter dalam novel The Silence of the Lambs dan Hannibal Rising oleh Thomas Harris. Dua karakter ini memiliki perbedaan, namun juga sekaligus persamaan yang membuatnya menarik untuk dianalisis lebih jauh. Kedua karakter pembunuh berantai ini terlihat berbeda jika dilihat dari segi penokohan, Hannibal Lecter yang digambarkan sebagai karakter pembunuh yang canggih, sementara Buffalo Bill digambarkan sebagai karakter pembunuh berantai tradisional, analisis ini kemudian dibandingkan secara langsung untuk melihat bagaimana masing-masing karakter mengembangkan mentalnya setelah mengalami trauma masa kecil melalui analisis dengan menggunakan teori Psychoanalysis yang diperkenalkan oleh Sigmund Freud, dan teori Self Defense Mechanism yang dikenalkan oleh Anna Freud. Dalam teori Sigmund Freud dikemukakan bahwa ada tiga zona psikis manusia yang bekerja sama dalam membentuk tingkah laku manusia yang kompleks, yaitu Id, Superego, dan Ego. Dalam menganalisis karya ini digunakan metode penelitian kualitatif dengan menggunakan metode deskriptif. Hasil analisis yang didapatkan adalah bahwa, meskipun tokoh Hannibal Lecter dikategorikan sebagai pembunuh yang canggih, dan Buffalo Bill dikategorikan sebagai pembunuh tradisional. Tiap karakter menggunakan hasil pertahanan diri mereka tadi sebagai cara/alat untuk mencapai tujuan masing-masing.

**Kata kunci: psikoanalisis, mekanisme pertahanan diri, sublimasi, trauma**

## ABSTRACT

This research describes about the analysis of the characters in The Silence of the Lambs and Hannibal Rising by Thomas Harris. These characters is very interesting to be analyze because they appeared the similarity in serial killer, and also the differences in style. Both of them, comparing in the development of their psychological problems by their childhood traumatic experiences. The writer uses the psychological approach by Sigmund Freud who divided three human psyche zones *Id, Ego and Superego*. Also the Self Defence Mechanism that proposed by Anna Freud. In this research, the writer applies the qualitative research by using descriptive method. As the result of the analysis, the writer finds that despite of these characters, Buffalo Bill who is the traditional method in serial killer and Hannibal Lecture who is categorized as sophisticated serial killer. Both of them applies their self defence mechanism as the tools to achieve their goals.

**Keywords: psychoanalysis, self-defense mechanism, sublimation, trauma,**

### A. INTRODUCTION

Hannibal Lecter, a famous psychopathic character depicts as a very smart psychopath, highly manipulative ability, and killing without sense of guilt, with his extraordinary ability compared to another serial killer character. His character is reckons to way different from the generic psychopathic character; lack of charm, dirty, out of control, unsophisticated, in which Buffalo Bill is represented. His remarkably exceptional character is originated from the series of suspense novels written by Thomas Harris. The creation of these two psychopatic characters is influenced by the popular real serial killer, Ted Bundy and Ed Gein, the Buffalo Bill character in particular. Bill character who willing to have sex-change to relieve his misery, yet it was refute by the authority, decided to kill woman to be skinned for then creates a skin-suit to fulfill his desire is very resemble to Ed Gein motives.

The modus operand of Bill in trapping his victim by actinf as a disable person who need helps from his victim. As his victim get into his trap, he makes them unconscious by hitting their head. This MO is very similar in using a sling, then ask

unsuspecting coeds to help him move something he could not manage by himself. While, the creation of Hannibal Lecter character is strongly influenced by a murderer named William Coyne, who escaped from prison in 1934, who practice murder and cannibalism (trutv.com). On the other side, seeing the creation of the two fictional character is inseparated from the writers's personal childhood experience. The writer finds shortage of Thomas Harris life background, since he has only few media interview. Yet in some sources, the writer finds the fact that Harris was live under a supervision of overbearing mother. Harris had a difficult childhood, and regarded as a loner by many of his friends (last.fm). In examining the two of four novels of Thomas Harris's; Hannibal Rising and The Silence of the Lambs, Freud's conventional theory contains conscious-unconscious mind, id-ego-superego, and defense mechanism could help the writer to disclose the complicated way of thought of the main character, Hannibal Lecter. In attempt to elucidate the characters, the writer uses the self-defense-mechanism theory, particularly Sublimation by Freud as tool to analyze Hannibal Lecter and Buffalo Bill.

Therefore, applying the theory; Psychoanalysis, by Sigmund Freud toward the challenging psychopath character in Thomas Harris novels; Hannibal Lecter and Buffalo Bill, is appropriate. The strong extraordinary psychopathic character, the brave plot, and the surprising way of a psychopath way of thinking, has fascinated the writer to get in a deeper study with this character, in a research entitled **Psychoanalytical Analysis on Hannibal Lecter and Buffalo Bill Characters as seen in The Silence Of The Lambs and Hannibal Rising by Thomas Harris.**

### 1.1 Identification of the Problem

Description about two challenging psychopathic characters on Thomas Harris's novel. Hannibal Lecter, who depicts as a sophisticated serial killer character and Buffalo Bill as the antithesis of Lecter, the Tradional Serial Killer are the two objects to be analyzed and the way they manage their anxiety, guilty and depression during his childhood, and the way they actualize the drives into an action in his later years by using Psychoanalysis and Self defense Mechanism theory. The comparison of Hannibal Lecterto

Buffalo Bill, whom both reaches the sublimation, are captivating objects to be examined by utilizing Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis study.

### 1.5 Method of the Research

#### **Collecting the Data**

In doing the research, the writer uses several methods and steps in applying the method of the research.

At the first step, the writer chooses and collects data, which is needed to support the research. Here, the writer applies qualitative method. It is the method, which derived from collecting data, and the result will contain quotation that will support the presentation. The writer collects the data by doing the library research to collect the primary and secondary data. The primary data is the novel Hannibal Rising and The Silence of The Lamb by Thomas Harris. Then, the secondary data are the relevant books, journals, articles that are related to this novel and the theory.

#### **Analyzing the Data**

After collecting the data, the second step is processing the analysis. In processing the analysis, the structure of the novel is analyzed to find out the data, which are related to this analysis. Psychological approach is used to conduct this analysis. The writer confines his attention to the id, ego, and super ego of the characters Hannibal Lecter and Buffalo Bill and seeing their character deeper by using self-defense mechanism theory of Freudian.

#### **Presenting the Result of Analysis**

The third step is presenting the result of the analysis. Descriptive method is used to present the result of the analysis by quoting the sentences from the novel that relevant to the analysis. In presenting the data, the writer using qualitative research method. According to Bogdan and Biklen in their book entitled Qualitative Research for Education: "Qualitative research is descriptive, the data are collected in the form of work rather than number and result of the analysis is written descriptively"(1982:27).The result of analysis is presented in form words rather than number. So, the writer descriptively presents the data in the form of analysis. The writer also uses the narrative biographical method in presenting the data. This method is a part of qualitative research. Like Denzin

and Lincoln states: “By using this method, researcher will shows the deepest meaning of someone’s experience and history life whom enlightenment to other people”(1994).

## **B. REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE**

In this subchapter, the writer provides the previous research related to the analysis, the literary work, and also related to the theory, the psychological approach. During the library research, the writer finds out that there is no student of the Faculty of Letters of Andalas University who already analyzed this novel for the thesis, and so does by specifying their analysis in sublimation.

The writer also found several theses of student in Faculty of Letters in which using the same theory to analyze different novels. First research is a thesis written by Halida Mayasari entitled: “The Domination of Superego toward Id as seen in Thomas Hardy’s Jude the Obscure”. (2005). She found in that novel that shows the domination of superego toward id from the main character, Jude

A thesis from Tiara Adinda entitled: “The Psychoanalysis on the Main Character of Robert Louis Stevenson’s The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde” (2009) also using the psychological approach. The author found that there is a psychological conflict within the main character of the novel, and the conflict gives impacts to the main character’s society that also creates another conflict within his society.

Another thesis that using the psychological approach is from Novi Fitria entitled: “Psychological Analysis on Tom Wingfield’s Attempt to Escape in Tennessee Williams’ Play The Glass Menagerie”. (2004) Tom Wingfield is described by Tennessee Williams as the main character who tries to escape from his mother and job. Because of them, he commits to leave home and never returns back. The author found that Tom’s attempt of escape from them is driven by psychological conflict.

## **C. DISCUSSION**

This chapter focuses on identifying Hannibal Lecter and Buffalo Bill true desire by linking back to their past experience, and the social circumstance that

surround them which finally result their psychopathic behavior, for later, they will be compared from the psychological point of view. The first subchapter discusses Hannibal Lecter's and Buffalo Bill's past traumatic experience and the second subchapter discusses about how Hannibal Lecter and Buffalo Bill manage their mentality after suffering for traumatic experience to fulfill their desire, and the third subchapter is where the two serial killer is compared to show the evidence that Hannibal Lecter is just another psychopathic murderer character.

### **Hannibal Lecter's and Buffalo Bill's Traumatic Childhood Experience as the Trigger of Their Psychopathic Behavior.**

Earlier in the story, Hannibal Lecter describes as a marvelous kid. Coming from the wealth and noble family, the young Hannibal Lecter, before his sister being murdered then cannibalized depicted as a remarkably smart. He shows responsibility and independency upon his younger sister soon after their parents died in a bombing, including protects her from the deserted armies who tried to occupy their residence. His warm personality shows in the way he interacts with another characters.

According to Sigmund Freud's psychoanalytic theory of personality is composed of three elements. These three elements of personality--known as the id, the ego and the superego work together to create complex human behaviors. Psychoanalysis theory has described the process by which we protect ourselves from awareness of our undesired and feared impulses. Defense mechanisms are our way of distancing ourselves from a full awareness of unpleasant thoughts, feelings and desires. In psychoanalysis theory, defense mechanisms represent an unconscious conciliation by the ego of id impulses which are in conflict with the wishes and needs of the ego and/or superego. By altering and distorting one's awareness of the original impulse, one makes it more tolerable. However, while defense mechanisms are used in an attempt to protect someone from unpleasant emotions, they often result in equally harmful problems.

In the case of Hannibal Lecter, he experienced in one traumatic event in which he couldn't cope with. This traumatic event has resulted a drastic personality change

of him all in sudden. The cannibalistic upon his sister result feeling guilty. Hannibal, who has ever promised to protect his sister Mischa, finding himself failed to fulfill this promise. In addition, the cause of this inability is very big, the death of his sister. This is the cause of his psychopathic behavior. After seeing his sister taken away from his lap "Grutas' face was smeared with blood and feathers. He turned his bloody face up to the children and he said, "We have to eat or die." That was the last conscious memory Hannibal Lecter had of the lodge" (Rising; 21), ever since Hannibal seems live without a drive.

On the other side, Buffalo Bill from early of his life has always surrounded by problems. Bill depicts a unwanted kid. His mother failed to join in a beauty pageant in the year 1948 after she found pregnant "His mother had been carrying him a month when she failed to place in the Miss Sacramento Contest in 1948" (Silence215). Assuming a participant of beauty pageant must be a single woman, it means that Buffalo Bill' s father is unknown, or at the minimum he had never have a chance to meet him. Frustrated of her failure, Bill's mother turns into drunkard, after failed in pursuing her dream as an artist. In this circumstance, can be assumed that this family living in shortage, and Buffalo Bill might be accused by his mother for her failure. The heavy trial he had suffered from the early of his life, may cause mental instability in the later years. By the age of two, Gumb must live in an orphanage after his mother couldn't afford him, and he lives under country protection. His mother fade away. At the age of ten, Gumb was taken back by his grandparents to be fostered. For an unclear reason, at the age of twelve, he kills them both. Killing people at this age, could only be done by a person with strong character and smart in certain way "I mean he killed *his grandparents when he was twelve, you'd think a person that volatile would have some presence, wouldn't you?*" (Silence108). In the same year, he was displaced to a mental institution for juvenile. In the novel, it was never stated that Bill has ever entered into a school or another formal education institution. On the later years, Buffalo Bill get big amount of legacy from a woman whom for years had becoming his customer.

## **Analysis of Hannibal Lecter and Buffalo Bill Mental Development from Psychoanalytical Study.**

After suffering for unbearable mental trauma, Hannibal Lecter's character change all the way, but he is still able to show his magnificent ability, in the intelligence part in particular. This can be seen from the self defense mechanism point of view as introduced by Sigmund Freud and developed by Anna Freud. Hannibal Lecter undergoes several types of self-defense mechanism;

a. Repression in short can be defined as repression is simply the blotting of threatening material out of the conscious mind, and if that could succeed, then there would be no need for defense mechanisms (Karen Dale, 4). In repression, usually the unacceptable or unpleasant impulses are pushed back into the unconscious. Oftenly, this type of self-defense mechanism happen on the person who suffer for deep trauma, just like Hannibal Lecter does. He couldn't remember anything after his sister taken from his lap "Grutas' face was smeared with blood and feathers. He turned his bloody face up to the children and he said, "We have to eat or die." That was the last conscious memory Hannibal Lecter had of the lodge" (Rising; 21). His conscious mind refuse the fact that he couldn't protect his sister, where his inability to protect her, cause the death of her sister after cannibalized by the Hiwis. Ever since, Hannibal remember what was happen exactly, except the pieces of scenes that presence in every dream of every night he fell asleep. The presence of the event only through his dreams, indicate that he lives in repression, because dream itself is the unconscious process of mind which occur during one's sleep (eNotes; 2009).

b. Denial is probably one of the best known defense mechanisms, used often to describe those who seem unable to face reality or admit and obvious truth. Denial is refusal to accept or acknowledge an anxiety - producing piece of information (SparksNote, 2010)

c. Identification with the aggressor is the type of defense mechanism in which the subject focusing on adopting the value or even physical appearance of the 'aggressor'. The value adopted is more to the negative than the positive. Hannibal in this story, unconsciously resemblance himself to the Hiwis who killed his Sister "Paul's faceis clean and pale, his lips are intact, but his cheeks are missing and a little



blood has leaked from his mouth into the flower vessel, where blood stands like the water beneath a flower arrangement” (Rising 48).

d. Sublimation is the process of changing the impulse in the form of anxiety, anger, sadness, regret or another guilty feeling into positive and productive outcome in which society believe as something on accord. In this type of mental process, the subject tries to make something valuable in attempting to be accepted in society. Lecter is a talented forensic doctor “Dr. Lecter, you’re an experienced clinical psychiatrist” (Silence 14), an artist “After an afternoon of sketching boats on the pond, Hannibal was thinking about water, the problems of depicting water. He thought about Turner’s mist and his colors, impossible to emulate, and he went from picture to picture looking at the water, the air over the water” (Rising 62), and also ““Dr. Lecter had a big psychiatric practice for years before we caught him for the murders,” (Silence 80) while he himself had never enter a psychiatric school for whole his life.

On the contrary Jame Gumb a.k.a Buffalo Bill has never show any distinctive feature in which Lecter has. Bill is long for happy settle life. The hard childhood period had cause some self-defense mechanism in Buffalo Bill, such;

a. Denial in the Buffalo Bill may appear in his aim to create a coat made of woman skin, as if when he wears it, he could fulfill the perfect woman persona he describes,his mother in particular.Bill deny the fact that he was born as man. Based on his childhood experience, he has never met his father, or lack of man figure during the early year that could impacted on his sexual preference. On the basic psychoanalysis, Bill’s dream about making a woman skin-made suit is the representation of his deepest desire to unite with his mother. In the outer world, he feels insecure, and alone. Bill’s obsession to transform into woman may trigger by the fact that he has no rule model, other than his mother. His admiration of his mother proofs in the way he keeps watching his mother’s tape while she was on the pageant.

Unconsciously, he create the perfect figure of how does he supposes to look alike. He manages to actualize his drive by killing woman then skinning. This action is an attempt of his to accomplish his drive to be a complete woman, and to ‘unite’ with his mother to achieve secure feeling.

b. Buffalo Bill also reach the sublimation. He is able to reach sublimation, but not in the form where public acknowledge it as form of smartness, yet still he could manage his desire into a positive form. Just like Hannibal Lecter, Buffalo Bill is also smart in his own way, in tailor “Tulare Vocational Rehabilitation taught Gumb to be a tailor during his years at the psychiatric hospital. He demonstrated definite aptitude for the work” (217)

### **Sublimation Comparison between Hannibal Lecter and Buffalo Bill**

At a glance, Hannibal Lecter might seem like any other serial killer character, but if we put more attention, apparently Hannibal is the only character that reach the sublimation, as the only ‘success’ form of self-defense mechanism. Buffalo Bill is a smart person. Proven by his exquisite ability in tailoring “Tulare Vocational Rehabilitation taught Gumb to be a tailor during his years at the psychiatric hospital. He demonstrated definite aptitude for the work.” The smartness which Gumb shows can be classified as a success sublimation. Sublimation itself means as a process of changing the impulse in the form of anxiety, anger, sadness, regret or another guilty feeling into positive and productive outcome in which society believe as something on accord. In this type of mental process, the subject tries to make something valuable in attempting to be accepted in society.

On the contrary, Hannibal Lecter shows that he could reach the sublimation. Lecter gains his position in society because he deserves that. He is a talented forensic doctor “Dr. Lecter, you’re an experienced clinical psychiatrist” (Silence 14), an artist “After an afternoon of sketching boats on the pond, Hannibal was thinking about water, the problems of depicting water. He thought about Turner's mist and his colors, impossible to emulate, and he went from picture to picture looking at the water, the air over the water” (Rising 62), and also ““Dr. Lecter had a big psychiatric practice for years before we caught him for the murders,” (Silence 80) while he himself had never enter a psychiatric school for whole his life. Lecter channels the drive of killing, into the form in which society regard it as smartness.

## D. CONCLUSION

After analyzing psychological condition of the two main characters in the two novels in a purpose to compare their psychological development, the sublimation in particular, the writer can find the traumatic experience and about kinds of self-defense mechanism. Based on the life of Hannibal Lecter, his mentality suffer for traumatic experience after undergoing and seeing his sister being cannibalized. This traumatic experience causes his character changing in the later years. Hannibal Lecter, a smart, genuine, and compasionate kid turns into a cannibalistic serial killer. In fulfilling the drive to take revenge, he manage himself to be a wellknown and welleducated person, who has name among the society. Lecter only entered medical faculty, but he also known as a respective psychologist eventhough he never learn formally in school. His aptitude capability in finding himself in the society is the form of succesful sublimation.

Buffalo Bill on the other hand, has undergone several bad experience during his life; lefted by his parents, not knowing his biological father, living in orphanage, fostered by his grandparents which later killed, jailed and living in mental institution. Buffalo Bill, however can show his definite work in sewing. His ability in sewing, can be classified into the form of sublimation, because sublimation itself define as the process of changing the impulse in the form of anxiety, anger, sadness, regret or another guilty feeling into positive and productive outcome in which society believe as something on accord or valuable.

## BIBLIOGRAPHY

Abrams, M.H. *A Glossary of Literary Terms*. 7<sup>th</sup> ed. USA: Heinle&Heinle, a Division of Thompson Learning.

Adinda, Tiara. *The Psychoanalysis on the Main Character of Robert Louis Stevenson's The Strange Case of Dr. Jeckill and Mr. Hide*. Unpublished Thesis: Andalas University Padang. 2009.

Baumeister, Roy F, et all. *Journal of Personality*. Oxford: Blackwell Publisher. 1998.

Bogdan, Michael and Robert Biklen. Qualitative Research for Education. London: Oxford University Press,1982.

Fitria, Novi. *Psychological Analysis on Tom Wingfield's Attempt to Escape in Tennessee*

Freud, Sigmund. *An Outline of Psychoanalysis*. Trans. By James Strachey. New York, London: W.W. Norton & Company. 1970. Print.

Guerin, Wilfred L, et all. *A Handbook of Critical Approach to Literature*. New York: Oxford University Press. 1992.

Harris, Thomas. *Hannibal Rising*. New York: Delacorte Press. 2006.

Harris, Thomas. *The Silence of the Lambs*. New York: Yazoo Inc. 1988.

*Introductory Lectures on Psychoanalysis*.(The Standard Edition). Trans. James, Strachey. New York: Liveright Publishing Corporation, 1973. Print.

Klarer, Mario. An Introduction to Literary Studies 2nd Edition. New York: Routledge,2004.

Mayasari.Halida.*The Domination of Superego Toward Id as seen in Thomas Hardis's Jude the Obscure*. Unpublished Thesis: Andalas University Padang. 2005.

Nurdiyanto, Burhan. *TeoriPengkajianFiksi*. Yogyakarta: GadjahMada University Press. 2009.

Tyson, Lois. *Critical Theory Today-A User Friendly Guide 2<sup>nd</sup>*.ed. New York  
*William's Play The Glass Menagerie*. Unpublished Thesis: Andalas University Padang. 2004.

Wright, Elizabeth. *Psychoanalytic Criticism*. New York. Methuen & Co. 1984.

Emerson, Ralph Waldo. eNotes. 15 November 2012. <http://www.enotes.com/hannibal-rising-text/hannibal-rising>

Bruno, Anthony. trutv. 10 January 2013.  
[http://www.trutv.com/library/crime/serial\\_killers/weird/lecter/2.html](http://www.trutv.com/library/crime/serial_killers/weird/lecter/2.html)