

**Teaching and Learning in *The Silence of the Lambs*  
Lecture 1**

Problem-solving is hunting; it is a savage pleasure and we are born to it (320).

**The first time we've seen a detective being educated.**

**1. Formal education: how knowledge is defined in an academic setting.**

- a. Values/goals of formal education:
  - i. objectivity - control of emotions: CS should not get involved with Hannibal Lecter.
  - ii. Hypothesizing - applying abstract theories to practical issues: Crawford hopes questionnaire results may help him build theory about "Buffalo Bill."
  - iii. generalizations based on formal data, data-gathering: "we've tried to custody, to build up a database for psychological profiling in unsolved cases" (4).
  - iv. assessment of progress on regular basis: she has to turn in her report ta 0900, and it will be accepted only if it's well written.
- b. Formal education: text opens with CS at FBI academy
  - i. She's learning skills: "she had grass in her hair and grass tains on her FBI academy windbreaker from diving to the ground under fire in an arrest problem on the range" (1).
  - ii. She's a good student: "your instructors tell me you're doing well, top quarter of the class" (2). CS angry at Crawford for having forgotten meeting her when he was a special lecturer at her undergraduate school, UVA.
  - iii. She's accepting an assignment from a teacher-figure: Crawford wants her to administer questionnaire to Lecter "mainly because you're available" (5). Starling says: "She smelled a job offer coming. . ." (4)
    - (1) Assignment threatens personal security - Lecter has already "cut up" an earlier protege of Crawford's, Will Graham.
    - (2) Assignment asks CS to obtain information in a variety of ways besides questionnaire - without revealing anything of herself. This will be her primary dilemma.
- c. Irony: novel rejects academic knowledge/formal education. For completing assignment, academic knowledge will be secondary if not useless; at best she will have to mix it with more practical, street-smart, informal-education kinds of knowledge.
  - i. Her job is not to give Lecter questionnaire, but to build relationship with him in which he helps her solve crimes by giving her information and insight.

- ii. Her teacher will not be Crawford, but Lecter.
- iii. She will have to become emotionally involved in order to get information from him: "tit for tat, Clarice," says Lecter.

**2. CS as student learns:**

- a. To know the limits of formal education. Success in school is less important than success in the field. "School's out, Starling" says Crawford as they land in WVA 77.
  - i. Ardelia Mapp is even more intelligent schoolwise than CS but doesn't get selected to interview Lecter.
  - ii. School is a big time-waster that pulls you away from more important things. Clarice stuck in class after Catherine disappears 116.
  - iii. CS's academic status always in jeopardy. Ardelia addresses her situation top of 122. Clarice misses classes, is isolated from peers "maybe they isolate you before you get the ax" 64. CS threatened with recycling after investigating Martin's apt.; her academic status in jeopardy till closure.
  - iv. CS is successful in school. Instructor Brigham pleased with her handgun control 34. But academic success doesn't guarantee success on the job. Crawford's previous protege, Will Graham, was destroyed by Lecter (6); Lecter inquires after Graham 19.

**b. To think carefully:**

- i. **not to assume** (JC deconstructs her assumption that Raspail owns only one car into make "ass of U and ME" 41; thereafter, CS struggles conscientiously not to use the word "assume" 75.)
- ii. **to read evidence carefully. Everything is potentially evidence.** Noticing Crawford's listerine breath 5. HL leaves her clues; JC authorizes her to pursue them.
- iii. **to approach problems creatively:** using car jack to open garage door 47.
- iv. **to generalize (but compare HL and JC).** JC's questionnaire ("blunt little instrument" of "dead religion of psychoanalysis 163) vs. Marcus Aurelius's more basic question "what is the nature of things?" Theory must be grounded in reality.

**c. To handle herself:**

**i. to protect herself** (JC and Brigham) Handling gun, lecture, own emotions.

**(1) rage (primary product of confusion/paradox) must be stuffed, rechanneled** - (at Chilton's incompetence 11-12; HC asks "how do you manage your rage?" 168, JC tells her "freeze the business with Chilton" 193; reprimand from Krendler for "mouth," threatened with typing pool 218). She seizes ID, peels rubber leaving parking lot 220.

**ii. to reveal herself.** Clarice agreeing to reveal important secrets about herself to Lecter in exchange for teaching.

**iii. to take calculated risks.** Throughout the novel she also takes risks, deliberately disobeying instructions and orders, in order to pursue the case.

**3. CS's education conditioned by her Other status:**

**a. women are victims of serial (repeated) violence**

**i.** "Buffalo Bill" kills women. The violence is senseless and insatiable; it won't stop. "We can't hope for a suicide" says Crawford early in the investigation.

**ii.** Other women affected - Senator Martin: (Lecter's breastfeeding verbal assault on Senator Martin, followed by "love your suit" 202).

**iii.** Sexism. Harassment from Chilton; Miggs throws semen at her, police officers in WVA stare at/exclude her 79, reporters in Baltimore disrespect her, Noble Pilcher hits on her, Krendler threatens her with typing pool. People hint she's sleeping with Crawford and/or Lecter. Press accuses CS of being "bride of Frankenstein" to HL 64.

**b. Clarice identifies both with the male detectives and with the female victims.**

Starling walked up and down. "Hold on, girl" she said aloud. She said it to Catherine Martin and she said it to herself. "We're better than this room. We're better than this fucking place," she said aloud. "We're better than wherever he's got you. Help me. Help me. Help me." 159

**i.** disadvantage: fear; no amount of training makes you male, invulnerable, tough enough; Clarice a genderless hybrid.

**ii.** advantage: knowledge because of experience and respect. Identification **helps** as much as it hinders.

**(1)** Compare Barney - manages HL well because he respects him 171; warns losers "they better pay attention" 188 to Will Graham, earlier [male] protege of JC whose face was destroyed by HL (assault/tragic decline of descr 6; HL ironically inquires after 19; Graham as "casualty" of JC's pursuit of serial killers 71).

- (2) C understands/interprets the nail polish, leg wax on "floater" and is able to handle the situation because of her female status, not in spite of it (throwing the deputies out of the room, assuming role of midwife).

**4. Clarice learns from everyone, but has two major teachers: Crawford and Lecter.**

- a. JC and HL doubles for each other; the bureaucrat and the doctor; the chaser and the criminal; both father figures (HL hates discourtesy to CS); envy and hate one another, compete for CS's attention/affections. Lecter, before asylum, completed psychiatric evaluations of many criminals 128. Both repress emotion - but Lecter the most effectively (dissociations 172, 200).

**5. Crawford, the conventional teacher, gives Clarice a chance rather than shows her how to use it.**

"Crawford, ever wary of desire, knew how badly he wanted to be wise. He knew that a middle-aged man can be so desperate for wisdom he may try to make some up, and how deadly that can be to a youngster who believes him. So he spoke carefully, and only of things he knew" (192).

- a. Gives CS breaks: sends CS to Baltimore; "go feel the fruit, if there is any" 41; takes CS with him to West Virginia 66; gives CS BB file: "take a pew and read" 69.
- b. Socializes her into system: "do your job" 6 "carry on in the prescribed manner" 6; "you don't have to feel any way about it" 40
- c. Protects and defends CS: has defended CS against Chilton's criticisms 39
- d. Challenges CS: upbraids CS for assuming Raspail had only one car 40; takes apart "assume" 41;
- e. Listens to Starling, uses her effectively, learns from her: upbraids JC for sexism in WVA 95; when he listens, he converts her; "She would have killed for him then" 96 (foreshadowing).
- f. Makes mistakes:
- i. At "life": Emotionally weakened by his wife's illness, JC drinks alka-seltzer constantly; cries on sidewalk after Bella's death.
- ii. At his work: he brings in Starling because he knows his methods aren't working, and that he has no access to Lecter.
- iii. At teaching: he was Starling's teacher at UVA, but ignored after she came there (failed mentor); Will Graham destroyed by Lecter while Crawford's student; sexism of dismissing Starling from discussion in WVA 81;

**6. Lecter, Starling's unconventional teacher, teaches her how to think.**

- a. **To learn from the predator.** When CS says "I'm looking for an animal that feeds on tears," she's talking about HL as well as "Buffalo Bill."
- i. C sits in school desk; calls him Dr.; his title, publications confer authority.

- ii. name encodes combination of barbarian conquerer and Latinate intellectuality.
  - iii. "tit for tat" - he requires emotional tuition for education. 151. "Lamb" episode 230-1. "Flays" her emotionally; feeds on her pain.
- b. To reconsider all premises:** classical reasoning tradition of Aristotle. Marcus Aurelius: "What is it in itself, in its own constitution? What is its causal nature?" Also, "coveting" - "we covet what we see every day."
- c. To consider everything as evidence:** Lecter supplies CS with many clues (example, drawing of Florence from the Belvedere 18-19 later connected to Belvedere OH 296; connected both with his desire for a view and with his desire to get CS to VIEW correctly).