

“Not Just Another Serial Killer Show: Hannibal, Complexity, and the Televisual Palimpsest”

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Thomas Harris’ Red Dragon (1981) introduced readers to the highly intelligent, articulate and cannibalistic serial killer Hannibal Lecter, albeit in his first outing restricted to his prison cell and serving as a reluctant consultant to the FBI profiler who captured him, Will Graham. The book was followed by three sequels in which Lecter takes an increasingly central place within the narrative: The Silence of the Lambs (1988), Hannibal (1999) and Hannibal Rising (2006). These novels have been source material for a total of five cinematic adaptations: Michael Mann’s Manhunter (1986), Jonathan Demme’s The Silence of the Lambs (1991), Ridley Scott’s

Hannibal (2001), Brett Ratner's Red Dragon (2002), and the prequel Peter Webber's Hannibal Rising (2007). According to Philip Jenkins, the influence of Harris' books in the construction of the image of the modern serial killer within popular media was "vastly enhanced by the release of the film versions," the success of which attracted many imitators with "some novels claim[ing] to be in the tradition of The Silence of the Lambs, or to have villains in the tradition of Hannibal Lecter" (1994, 89).

Bryan Fuller's serialised television series Hannibal (NBC 2013-15) stands as the sixth licensed text drawn from Harris' work, albeit one that presents itself as a prequel as well as an adaptation. The onscreen credits declare that it is "based upon the characters from the book Red Dragon by Thomas Harris" while the series' narrative is set before the events of the first three novels, and the subsequent films, when Lecter was working as a consulting psychiatrist for the FBI, alongside FBI Agent Jack Crawford and criminal profiler Will Graham (characters established in Red Dragon). Importantly, the series begins before anyone—but the audience—is aware that Lecter is a serial killer. Creator and showrunner Bryan Fuller states that despite it being a prequel, he wanted to "stay true to Thomas Harris, or the Thomas Harris-ian quality of the Hannibal Lecter tale," evoking notions of adaptation and fidelity (Fuller 2013). At the same time, however, Fuller has also described the series as a form of "fan fiction," a conceit that, in some ways, runs counter to notions of fidelity (Fuller 2014). While fan fiction is indebted to its source text, in which fans create fiction that fills in the narrative gaps within the story of a beloved text, it is also seen as a form of transformative writing, in which fans can rewrite or reimagine aspects of the text to suit their own desires. As such Fuller's approach to the series problematizes our understanding of adaptation, particularly within the context of the

contemporary television landscape, complicating storytelling and genre conventions by overtly blurring the lines between source text and adaptation.

The aim of this article, therefore, is to examine how Hannibal operates as an example of Jason Mittell's notion of "complex TV," complicating audience expectations of the Lecter stories, the serial killer genre and network television, alongside the conventions of Gothic horror (2015, 1). The article will consider how at a glance the show appears to be a linear telling of Hannibal's backstory, as alluded to in Red Dragon, filling in the narrative gaps with original material, while actually offering a complex reworking of the literary and cinematic Hannibal Lecter series. Fuller playfully integrates intertextual references to both the books and films, bringing moments from the later texts into this new narrative, while also interweaving the narrative with evocations of the grotesque and the Gothic, blurring the lines between fantasy and reality. As I will demonstrate, Hannibal challenges us to consider complex TV as a dialogue between texts and across media, a televisual palimpsest in which elements of previous adaptations, narrative and aesthetic, are embedded within the matrix of the series, reworking and transforming Harris' stories, not only making them suitable for television but signaling the changing face of twenty-first century TV.

Television Context

Hannibal was produced in a period that has seen, according to David Barnett, shifts in television production in which producers are once again turning to novels as the source material for long form serial drama. Barnett notes that while television has an established history of making literary adaptations, this move by producers marks a new creative relationship with source materials in which the source text is treated as a "Bible for TV producers to unfold in

directions that the author might never have dreamed of... using [it] as [a] springboard for even richer invention.” (2017) Barnett cites American Gods (Starz! 2017-)—season one of which was also helmed by Bryan Fuller—as well as Bruce Miller’s The Handmaid’s Tale (Hulu 2017-), as prime examples. This commentary taps into a changing approach on television, away from traditional quality adaptations such as Pride and Prejudice (1995 2005) or Bleak House (BBC 2005) in which the “original” source text is given primacy over the adaptation, to the changing landscape of Jason Mittell’s “complex TV.”

Mittell argues that, since the 1990s, a “new paradigm” for television has emerged that “redefine[es] the boundary between episodic and serial forms, within a heightened degree of self-consciousness in storytelling mechanics, and demanding intensified viewer engagement focused on both diegetic pleasures and formal awareness” (2015, 53). As he explains these narratives do not simply invite attentive viewing but, through their availability on DVD or via digital streaming, encourage rewatching and “liberal use of pause and rewind” to identify the range of intertextual references as well as “displays of craft and continuities” (2015, 38). This approach to television storytelling assumes that the audience is discerning and analytical, prepared to engage with an “unfolding story that builds over time” (2015, 18) and willing to be both immersed in the story while also standing back to appreciate the narrative and aesthetic spectacle. This new form of television complexity is not restricted to the diegesis of television series’ narrative, but can also be spread across multiple interrelated texts, encouraging the audience to read the narrative across its various platforms. This can take the form of Henry Jenkins’ transmedia storytelling in which “elements of a fiction get dispersed systematically across multiple delivery channels for the purpose of creating a unified and co-ordinated entertainment experience” (2011). While Jenkins argues that in this format, each element is equal in its contribution to the overall

narrative, Mittell argues for a notion of “unbalanced transmediality” in which the television series “serves as the core text,” narratively extended through a series of satellite texts (2015, 294). Maria Suliman similarly extends Mittell’s notion of complex TV beyond single texts in her examination of what she describes as “simultaneous seriality,” a narrative form that emerges in television series adaptations of ongoing source texts such as The Walking Dead (AMC 2010-). In her study of The Walking Dead, she considers how the adaptation of the ongoing graphic novel across multiple platforms (two television series and a serialized video game) facilitates serial storytelling and complex reading strategies. Each element of the franchise can be seen to be running parallel to the graphic novel, with narrative strands that sometimes converge and at other times go in notably different directions. Significantly she notes that audience’s entry into this story-world may be via different platforms and thus they read the elements of the narratives from the vantage point of these different texts. “Seriality,” as she explains “enables or forces these texts to interact with one another concerning developments of plot, characters or storyworlds” (2014, 133). The relationships between these crossmedia texts, she argues, must be seen “not as a fixed configuration but rather as an ongoing process in which [they] occupy different positions, imitating, supplementing, contrasting or competing with one another” (2014, 133).

Hannibal offers an equally distinct and instructive example of this new paradigm of television production, in which the manner it approaches adaptation is part of its complexity. Hannibal was co-produced by the DeLaurentiis Company, who hold the rights to Red Dragon, Hannibal and Hannibal Rising, and Gaumont International TV (GIT), an independent company that was launched in 2011 (Dawn 2014, 88). Martha De Laurentiis notes that when she realized that Harris had completed the series of novels, and therefore no new stories would be forthcoming, she began “to think about its potential for television. So much of what makes

Hannibal itself would have been unimaginable on network television even a decade ago, but with the recent renaissance in television, a lot of the rules have fallen away or evolved, offering great potential for serialized storytelling” (2015, 7). Acknowledging the changing televisual landscape, she approached the new television wing of Gaumont who recognized the potential for this project to meet their plans for producing “TV for the 21st Century” (Dawn 2014, 88). According to GIT CEO Katie O’Connell, their “niche is to bring high-end talent to the fore, with ideas that have an essential brand inside the idea, and to hopefully excite the marketplace with those offerings... We handcraft our shows; we put together the auspices, the markets and look at the best partner on each of these projects”(Dawn 2014, 88). The brand embedded within this series is, of course, the character Hannibal Lecter, as well as the iconic films based upon these novels. The partners included Bryan Fuller, who possessed a clear vision for his interpretation of Harris’ novels, and NBC, for whom the collaboration with GIT made solid financial sense and “limited risk,” as NBC’s expenditure on the series would be minimal (Dawn 2014, 88).

Ostensibly the three-season series tells the linear story of how FBI Profiler Will Graham came to meet and capture the serial killer Hannibal Lecter, concluding its final season with a retelling of Harris’ first book Red Dragon. To reduce the series to its linear plot is an oversimplification of its complex mechanics. As Mittell notes, the series embeds references to the novels and films within its storytelling, rewarding the attentive viewer, as well as lending the text ironic humor through the “knowledge differential” in which the audience, familiar with the Lecter stories, are in possession of more information than any character except Lecter (Mittell 2015, 173-4). This allows the series to highlight its “operational aesthetic” as how the story unfolds and interacts with its literary and cinematic precursors is as important as the events conveyed (Mittell 2015, 173-4). Maria Ionita, however argues that Mittell’s “operational

aesthetic” or “metareflexivity” are generally too “distancing” to encapsulate Hannibal (Ionita 2014, 28). Instead she argues that the series demonstrates that metareflexivity is not purely “narrative driven” as the show functions on an emotional or sensory level rather than an intellectual one (2014, 24). In this manner, she compares the series to opera through its “profound interest in heightened feelings, theatricality and violence” (2014, 28). Andrew Scahill also examines Hannibal through Mittell’s operational aesthetic as a means of understanding the relationship of the series to what he describes as the show’s original film text The Silence of the Lambs. His primary aim is to examine the text as prequel to and reboot of the film, what he refers to as a “preboot” (Scahill 2016, 318) As he explains, “the operational aesthetic... is to marvel at the sophisticated play of references, the modes of reflection, and the interaction between the known narrative (‘now’) and newly constructed narrative (‘then’)” (2016, 320). The aim of this dialogue between series and film, he argues, is to use the “preboot as a first draft to confirm the original as complete and coherent” (2016, 333).

Of course, this argument is based upon a reading of the film as the original source text, but without acknowledging Harris’ books or the textual influence of any of the other films. For instance, season three is, in many ways, a fusion of Hannibal and Red Dragon, the third and first novels respectively, with visual references to the film version of Hannibal and narrative elements of Hannibal’s backstory taken from the final novel, Hannibal Rising. Finally, Shannon Wells-Lassagne similarly examines Hannibal as adaptation and prequel with a focus upon the series’ debt and deviation from The Silence of the Lambs. Through her insightful analysis she considers how the show’s reimagining of source text(s) and its dialogue with the horror genre and cinema history is mobilized to establish and privilege the authorship of the televisual creator and “artistic nature of television, of horror, and of adaptation” (2017: 140). Bryan Fuller acknowledges that

his primary approach to adapting Harris' work to television was to construct a "DJ mash-up style that not only reinvented the universe of the novels but also fit neatly with the 'Harrisian' theme of transformation" (qtd in McLean 2015, 8). Fuller privileges transformation through his mash-up style, which draws upon layers of imagery from the books and the films, as well as other cultural forms, and calls attention to their presence, inviting Mittell's engaged audience to recognize, identify and re-read these moments in the service of the show's reimagined narrative. This embodies what Katrin Oltmann refers to as the "cultural unfinished business" found "in the remake's palimpsest-like layering of memories of earlier films" (qtd by Kathleen Look 2014, 83, emphasis in original). In this case, the notion of the palimpsest is particularly significant for an understanding of Hannibal's relationship to its literary and cinematic precursors. As Gerard Genette explains, the palimpsest is a form of art in which "one text becomes superimposed upon another, which it does not quite conceal but allows to show through" (1997, 398-9). He uses the analogy of the palimpsest to explore how texts "invite us to engage in relational reading... reading two or more texts in relation to each other" (1997, 399). Fuller's reference to "the 'Harrisian' theme of transformation" evokes Genette's examination of "transtextuality" and offers a useful lens through which to unpack Hannibal's operational aesthetic (1997, 1). In particular Genette defines the "hypertext" as "any text derived from a previous text" either through "transformation" or "imitation" – two themes that permeate the narrative and formal diegesis of Hannibal (1997, 7). So while Jenkins, Mittell and Suliman explore how contemporary television narrative is spread outwardly across multiple texts, whether in the form of transmedia or simultaneous seriality, Fuller's mash-up style evokes the palimpsest, as Hannibal's narrative is read through a layering of textual references, imitations and transformations of Harris' original novels and its cinematic adaptations. With this in mind, the subsequent sections examine the

show's complexity through an analysis of key mechanisms through which the audience are invited to read Hannibal as a palimpsestuous adaptation of the novels and films.

Visualizing horror – Tableau-style

In the first two of Harris' books, Hannibal Lecter is an enigma. A cannibalistic serial killer, captured by the FBI and imprisoned in the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane, he is the killer that serial killers both admire and are afraid of, that psychiatrists long to analyse, and to whom the FBI come for advice. As such when he escapes in The Silence of the Lambs, there is a need to present his actions as truly warranting the mystique that has come to surround him. In the novel this comes in the form of various passages that outline how he maneuvers his escape and brutally murders the two officers who are guarding him. Effectively, he beats them to death and their bodies are described in some detail as follows:

Jacobs passed Tate, slipping on the bloody floor as he went into the cell. He bent over Boyle, still handcuffed to the table leg. Boyle, partly eviscerated, his face hacked to pieces, seemed to have exploded blood in the cell, the walls and the stripped cot covered with gouts and splashes (Harris 2009, 278).

In the film, director Jonathan Demme transforms Harris' bloodbath into a spectacular and horrific tableau. The tableau is an artistic term, coined in the 18th Century by Denis Diderot, for a style of composition in which characters are precisely arranged for dramatic or pictorial effect but without demonstrating any seeming awareness of the viewer. According to Jay Caplan, "in Diderot, it seems that every tableau is a virtual narrative... the beholder of this story is not only excluded from it but also required to lose himself in it" (1986, 89). In The Silence of the Lambs

this tableau is presented as the SWAT team enter the room in which Lecter had been imprisoned to discover Sergeant Boyle's body eviscerated, hanging from the top of Lecter's cell, with his arms spread out in crucifixion fashion and tied to the bars with red, white and blue banners that extend from his body like large angel wings; a *mise-en-scène* of horror described by Yvonne Tasker as "Arty Slasher" (2002, 32). This is an iconic image from the film that skillfully conveys the horror, as well as the artistic sensibility that lies within Lecter. Following the success of The Silence of the Lambs, the presentation of the murdered corpse as a form of art-horror tableau has become a trope of the serial killer genre, as demonstrated by the "seven deadly sins" killings in Se7en (David Fincher 1995) and the copycat killings in Copycat (John Amiel 1995), as well as other TV series such as Bron/Broen (SVT 2011-), True Detective (HBO 2014-) and The Following (Fox 2013-15). In each case, the dead are carefully positioned in a form of artistic tableau, inviting the audience's horrified gaze.

Hannibal continues in this tradition and overtly alludes to this "arty slasher" moment from The Silence of the Lambs quite early on in its first season in the episode "Coquilles"(1:5). In "Coquilles", however, the body that is found in an angelic composition, similar to Sergeant Boyle, is not one of Lecter's victims but rather the "killer-of-the-week," referred to as "The Angel-Maker." This killer mutilates his victims by skinning their backs and extending the flesh out from their bodies to emulate wings. In one scene a body is found in an alley in full Angel-form, draped from the bars of scaffolding, a shot that deliberately echoes Lecter's crime scene in the film The Silence of the Lambs. This scene establishes a visual connection between the show and the film and in so doing a connection between Lecter and the Angel-maker. It also signals to the audience the importance of this tableau aesthetic to the series' *mise-en-scène*. These are killers with an aesthetic vision, and thus this layering of imagery introduces a theme that will

recur throughout the show's narrative. This image strategically establishes a template for crime scenes in which the dead are repeatedly presented as figures of macabre beauty. In addition to referencing The Silence of the Lambs, the increasingly elaborate presentation of grotesque spectacle in the series adds a further layer of meaning to the imagery by associating the representation of the dead with established traditions of gothic horror in theatre and art.

For instance, the show's artistic design and display of the corpses calls to mind images from Grand Guignol theatre, featuring weekly macabre images such as a human totem pole made out of dismembered corpses ("Trou Normand" 1:9); a human honeycomb where a man's skull has been emptied and filled with a beehive ("Takiawase" 2:4); a human cello ("Fromage" 1:8) in which the corpse is transformed into a cello and presented on a stage, and the Tree of Life and Death ("Futamono" 2:6), in which a body is "pinned to a tree, vines twisting through his body like veins... and his chest is split open and organs replaced with assortments of poisonous flowers" (McLean 2015, 108). The series shares Grand Guignol's penchant for macabre design. More specifically, the show includes overt references to Gothic art, particularly in "Mukozuke" (2:5) when FBI forensic specialist Beverley Katz is murdered by Lecter, her body frozen and then sliced into vertical sections and displayed in glass slides. The slicing of her body and its display simultaneously evokes Hirst's Mother and Child Divided (1993), in which the bodies of a cow and its calf are split in two from nose to tail and displayed in two glass tanks positioned a few feet apart so that patrons can walk between them, as well as Gunther von Hagens' Body Worlds exhibition of "dissected and elaborately displayed corpses" (Spooner 2006, 59). Like Hirst's and von Hagens' work, these crime scenes blur the lines between science, art and macabre display, particularly when examined through the eyes of Hannibal Lecter.

Beyond simply offering an aesthetic layering of horror, these visual citations invite the audience to share Hannibal's perspective while reflecting upon the serial killer genre's propensity for aestheticizing murder. They also offer a layering of information through which the audience is invited to decipher the narrative and the *mise-en-scène*, highlighting how complex TV tasks its audience to engage with its multi-layered storytelling. For instance, the show repeatedly references the "Wound Man" illustrations from the middle ages, drawings which were used as anatomical guides for trainee surgeons. These drawings featured a human figure, "covered in bleeding cuts and lesions, stabbed and sliced by knives, spears, and swords of varying sizes, many of which remain in the skin, protruding porcupine-like from his body" (Hartnell n.d.). These images were designed as a guide to cures and treatments for particular injuries and ailments but stand as a gothic reminder of the horror and wonder evoked by the evolution of modern medicine. There is a beauty and violence to their design. This illustration is first introduced in the episode "Entrée," (1:6) when Will Graham and Jack Crawford arrive at the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane to investigate a murder by an inmate, Dr. Gideon, that suggests he may in fact be the serial killer, The Chesapeake Ripper. As Graham and Crawford enter the medical examination room, they find the body of a nurse repeatedly impaled by medical bars and surgical tools in a mocking recreating of the "Wound Man." That this display is in fact the calling card for the Chesapeake Ripper is later established in a flashback showing Crawford and FBI trainee Mirium Lass examining a victim of the Ripper. Like the nurse, the body has been left on display, this time in the victim's workshop, with an array of blades, saws and other tools protruding from his body. These mirror image crime scenes link Gideon with the Chesapeake Ripper while another flashback, in which Lass visits Hannibal Lecter's office and finds a beautifully rendered pencil illustration of the "Wound Man" on

Lecter's desk, confirms to the audience and Lass that he is the Chesapeake Killer. Lecter's homage to the "Wound Man," in the form of the drawing and the crime-scene as installation art, is then recreated by Gideon in the present-day narrative, suggesting a palimpsest-like layering of recreations of the "Wound Man" through which the audience are encouraged to read this copycat narrative. This crime scene is once again restaged by Lecter in season two when he frames Gideon's Doctor, Dr. Chilton, for the crimes of the Chesapeake Ripper by murdering two police officers in Chilton's house and leaving one of the bodies displayed as the "Wound Man" yet again ("Yakimono" 2:7). Here the "Wound Man" is integrated with elements of The Silence of the Lambs through the character of Chilton. This sequence not only serves the plot by directing attention away from Lecter and towards Chilton, but adds another layer to the narrative by referencing the extra-diegetic antagonism between the men, which is largely exhibited in the novel and the film of The Silence of the Lambs rather than within Hannibal's own diegesis. This moment serves as an elegant retribution for Chilton's tormenting of Lecter while under his care in the film. This moment serves as what Mittell refers to as a "narrative special effect... when a program flexes its storytelling muscles to confound and amaze a viewer" (2015, 43). In this case the audience are invited to read the narrative palimpsestously through its evocation of The Silence of the Lambs and the "Wound Man" tableau in its visualization of horror.

Dialogue of Mise-en-scène

The show's complex narrative tapestry, its "narrative special effect" in Mittell's terms, goes beyond visual citation of scenes of grotesque beauty and gothic art, but rather it offers a structuring system in which Hannibal presents its serial narrative through a dialogue of mise-en-scène with the earlier cinematic adaptations of Harris' work. Much like the crime scenes are designed to allude to other texts as discussed above, there are also echoes of other recognizable

mise-en-scènes from the previous films. These echoes are integrated within the series with the intention of calling attention to their presence, in order to signal how the show is reworking familiar storylines from the books and the films and transforming them. This is in line with Genette's notion of "hypertextuality" (1997, 7), to suit Hannibal's new narrative; its new meaning. This is best illustrated through key scenes in Manhunter and The Silence of the Lambs in which Hannibal Lecter is interrogated. In both films, narrative and character-defining exchanges take place between Hannibal and the FBI investigators Will Graham and Clarice Starling: these moments have since become iconic. While there are notable differences in the aesthetic design of Manhunter and The Silence of the Lambs, there are certain elements that also link the films together, in particular the framing of the agents and killer through the bars to Lecter's cell that render the conventional shot counter shot structure more meaningful. For instance, while the Gothic dungeon-like cell in Silence stands in contrast to the bright modernist aesthetic of Mann's adaptation, the fourth interaction between Starling and Lecter takes place in a make-shift prison cell in the Tennessee Court House that has far more in common with the mise-en-scène of Mann's film. Hopkins' Lecter is dressed all in white like Brian Cox's "Lektor" while Starling, like Graham in Manhunter, is dressed in dark earth colors. More importantly while their initial encounters show them separated by glass, in the Tennessee location they are once again separated by bars. In both films the dialogue is presented through a standard shot reverse shot structure in which both characters are framed by the bars. As the conversation becomes more personal, the camera moves in closer and closer, with the symmetry of the bars, seemingly binding investigator and killer together, highlighting their emotional and intellectual connection. Lecter tells Graham, in the novel and film, that Graham was able to catch

Lecter because “they are just alike.” Lecter’s relationship with Starling demonstrates a similar kinship, reinforced by the *mise-en-scène*.

Hannibal first calls back to the interrogation *mise-en-scène* in the season one finale “Savoureux” (1:13) and while, as argued by Scahill, “part of the draw [is] the pleasure of recognition, or ‘getting’ the reference,” the scene also overtly calls attention to the dramatic rewriting of Harris’ narrative within the series: the season ends not with Lecter in prison, but rather Graham, who is framed for Lecter’s murders (Scahill 2016, 322). The revelation begins as Lecter enters the prison and is presented walking down the long corridor to the cell at the end, visually echoing Starling’s first walk down the same corridor to meet Lecter for the first time. The dark brick, dungeon-like walls link both scenes. When he reaches the cell and turns to see Graham sitting imprisoned, the sequence cuts back and forth between the two men in the same shot counter shot tradition of the cinematic interrogation scenes. In this scene, however, Graham is framed by the bars of his cell, a call back to Manhunter and Silence, highlighting his incarceration. In contrast, the bars are not included in the reverse shots of Hannibal, emphasizing his liberty. Significantly, this inversion of the scene from the films conveys, through the exchange of looks between the two men, Graham’s realization that Lecter has framed him for his crimes. This sequence confirms that Lecter knows Graham knows, and Graham knows Lecter knows he knows. These visual citations of the *mise-en-scène* from the earlier films are therefore used to both call attention to familiar imagery as well as the reimagining of the surrounding narrative, showcasing the narrative gymnastics that have brought the story to this inverted *mise-en-scène* and narrative climax, as well as the increasingly complex character relationships that have brought these men to this moment. In contrast to Scahill, who argues that these “inverted repetitions” serve to reaffirm the original text’s “known conclusions” (2016, 324), these narrative

moments signal the show's departure from its cinematic and literary precursors and the establishment of the show's distinct and televisual narrative trajectory.

Re-imagining the characters

While the mise-en-scène of Hannibal is structured around a layering of referents from its literary and cinematic precursors, the series also self-consciously reimagines characters familiar from the books and films. This is in part a repercussion of serializing the narrative over 39 episodes, and thus creating space for character development unavailable within more restricted formats like novels and films. It also, however, serves the “operational aesthetic” of the series in which variations and deviations from the original texts foster a form of relational reading, in which a character's development is built around the reading of their actions in the show in relation to their actions and behavior in other texts. This also encourages what Mittell describes as “forensic fandom,” an audience response to complex TV, in which fans are encouraged and rewarded as “amateur narratologists” to note “patterns and violations of convention, chronicle[*e*] chronologies, and [highlight] inconsistencies and continuities across episodes and even series” (2015, 52). In this manner audiences are encouraged to spot how characters are developed, rewritten or fused with other characters from previous texts to create new meaning or explore themes in new ways. While it is possible to watch the series without having read the books or seen the films, familiarity with these texts will reward the viewer through these self-conscious transformations, filtered through familiar visuals and narrative moments from the novels and films. While there are numerous characters who are reworked and re-imagined within the series in such a way as to reward this type of forensic fandom, including Alana Bloom, Jack Crawford, Freddie Lounds, and Mason and Margo Verger, the most significant is the character who is notable for her absence, Clarice Starling.

As DeLaurentiis did not hold the rights to The Silence of the Lambs, they could not include Starling. As such, the show introduced a series of substitutes that facilitate the telling of aspects of Starling's story within the matrix of its own serialized narrative, a reward for attentive fans. For instance, the FBI trainee Miriam Lass is introduced in flashbacks in season one, representing Starling as Crawford's protégée, assisting in the pursuit of a serial killer. Season three offers a more subtle and provocative Starling-substitute in the form of Dr. Bedelia Du Maurier, Lecter's psychiatrist who is played by Gillian Anderson. This casting choice is in itself a reference to Starling, as Anderson's most famous role was as FBI Agent Scully from Chris Carter's The X-Files (Fox 1993-2002, 2016-), a character that already evoked Starling's iconic female FBI agent, given that the The X-Files first aired only two years after the release of The Silence of the Lambs. While introduced in season one as Hannibal's psychiatrist and as a figure who possesses rare insight into Lecter's identity, season two concludes with the startling revelation that she leaves Baltimore with Hannibal, now revealed to all as a serial killer. Season three finds her living with Lecter in Florence, Italy, as is presented in a series of scenes that exhibit visual citations to Ridley Scott's adaptation of the book Hannibal, which also largely takes place in Florence. At this point in the narrative she is posing as Lecter's wife. Through this narrative, Fuller introduces one of the most controversial aspects of Starling's character in Harris' books—her apparent brainwashing by Lecter. Bedelia, like Starling in the book Hannibal, becomes complicit in his crimes, helping him maintain his charade as well as sanctioning his murders. Her complicity is a key factor in this season as it is in the book Hannibal, and therefore Bedelia's characterization both references and restages Starling's complicity.

The notion of complicity brings us to the most important Starling substitute—Will Graham himself. If fans of Harris' books were outraged by the decision to have Starling join

Hannibal—a decision that many argued was out of character for her—the TV series reorganizes the entire Hannibal Lecter plot to focus upon the transformation of Graham from investigator to accomplice. This occurs through Graham’s repeated dialogue with Lecter, who recognizes in Graham a kinship. Hannibal uses his therapy to groom Graham and transform him into the killer he believes lies within, which is effectively what happens to Starling in the final chapters of the book Hannibal. In fact, specific moments from the books and films are reprised with Graham in the Starling role, such as her conversation with Lecter in the film Hannibal in which he asks “you would deny me my life, wouldn’t you?” to which she responds “Not your life” a scene which is restaged between Lecter and Graham in “Mizumono.” (2:13) Similarly, in “Digestivo” (3:7) the image from the film Hannibal of Lecter saving Starling from Mason Verger’s farm by carrying her away in his arms is restaged, as Hannibal saves Graham from the same encounter and in the same manner. The series presents us with the seduction of Graham that many readers found so objectionable in relation to Starling. However, in the show this relationship is developed slowly across three seasons via the complex serial narrative of television and the show’s palimpsest-like layering of elements from various Harris texts. This format enables Fuller to knowingly rework this storyline so that it emerges organically from within the series, rewarding audiences able to decipher the clues and read the narrative as a culmination of a dialogue across multiple platforms. As such, Fuller’s palimpsestuous approach has been embraced and celebrated by many fans for the story’s moral ambiguity and emotional richness.

In conclusion, this approach to Hannibal opens up our understanding of the nature of adaptation, as the show blurs the lines between prequel, adaptation, remake and reboot. More importantly, it presents adaptation as a dialogue between texts and across media, a televisual palimpsest in which elements of the previous texts, narrative and aesthetic, are embedded within

the matrix of the series upon which Bryan Fuller has built his own televisual interpretation. This process of visual and narrative adaptation offers a rich reworking of the literary and cinematic Hannibal Lecter texts and exemplifies Mittell's complex TV, an approach to serialized narrative that demands intensified viewing strategies and rewards the discerning viewer by having its narrative unfold across a multitude of aesthetic layers. Produced in a broadcast landscape in which television is increasingly drawn from pre-existing texts that exist across multiple platforms—such as Bates Motel (A&E 2013-17), The Exorcist (FOX 2016-), Let the Right One In (A&E, In Production) and The Vampire Chronicles (In development)—Hannibal's palimpsestuous narrative provides a useful model that abandons the focus on fidelity and even the notion of an “original” text, in favor of positioning the serialised televisual text as a central prism through which an audience can engage with and reflect upon the interactions between the multitude of texts that comprise the story. It is through this layered narrative construction and complex reading strategies that Hannibal embodies a provocative approach to adaptation and exemplifies the narrative spectacle that underpins 21st Century television.

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