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Adaptation as Fan Fiction Practice in Serialized Narratives

Abstract

The article explores how an official and prestige TV adaptation effectively uses creative practices typical for fan generated content, using a close reading of the series *Hannibal* (2013–2015, NBC, Bryan Fuller) as an example. The focus lies in serialized narratives, where two different types of source material are identified: the external, pre-existing source and the adapted series itself as it spans several seasons. The objective of the article is to propose a framework for analyzing contemporary adapted works that engage with their source material in a transgressive and/or revisionist manner.

Keywords

adaptation, fan fiction, TV series, queer, *Hannibal*

Klíčová slova

adaptace, fan fikce, TV seriály, queer, *Hannibal*

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In summer 2021, showrunner Bryan Fuller tweeted a picture of real-life friends as well as former co-stars Mads Mikkelsen and Hugh Dancy casually meeting up and it drove a certain corner of the internet into a frenzy. Instagram, Twitter and tumblr fan accounts engaged in spinning playful narratives that fit the photo in an imaginary possible version of season four of the cancelled TV show *Hannibal* (NBC, 2013–2015, Bryan Fuller), where Mikkelsen and Dancy portrayed the dual protagonists Hannibal Lecter and Will Graham, whose fate remains open since the cancellation and as plans for a possible fourth season are discussed in interviews but have not yet materialized.

Fuller and the show stars' engagement with dedicated fans of the series, the self-proclaimed *Fannibals*, has been a staple of *Hannibal's* appeal and it has continued for years af-

ter the cancellation. Felix Brikner attributes the “unlikely survival” of *Hannibal* on the NBC network for three full seasons, despite low audience ratings, to the attention and power of Fannibals during the airing.¹⁾ In 2021, the revival campaign was trending with the hashtag #HannibalDeservesMore and what might happen in that elusive fourth season is teased by the creators in current media appearances,²⁾ while many versions have been written by fans and uploaded to fanfiction sites fanfiction.net, archiveofourown.org and others.

The practice they are engaging in, from Bryan Fuller himself to the anonymous administrator of the *hannimeme* Instagram account, can be best described with Rebecca Williams’ term post-object fandom — continued practices after a show has been taken off air.³⁾ They are creating a variety of paratexts in different media forms, multiple variants of season four of *Hannibal*. The driving force of fan generated content is to both celebrate the characters and take them, narratively, where the creators did not, for whatever reason, venture. And the practice continues after the elemental object of their devoted creativity has been discontinued.

In the pilot episode of the series, the ever-cranky Will Graham quips at Hannibal Lecter: “I don’t find you that interesting.” He gets a self-assured reply with a smirk: “You will.” This short exchange of dialogue serves as a self-fulfilling prophecy as well as a rather ominous foreshadowing for the rest of the series, given who Hannibal Lecter is and the destruction their mutual fascination will wreak on both characters’ lives. It may also be read as a plea or promise to the audience, given that in 2013 the Hannibal Lecter franchise, counting four novels and five feature films, has been exploited to the death, especially after the Hannibal Lecter origin story novel and film, *Hannibal Rising* (Peter Webber, 2007), that the author Thomas Harris was allegedly blackmailed into writing by the producer Dino De Laurentiis.⁴⁾

This essay aims to explore how the TV series created by Bryan Fuller attempted to resurrect it, using techniques commonplace in fan fiction rather than those used in more conservative adaptation. The goal of the text is to offer an example of a possible analytical approach that crosses over the gap between fan studies and adaptation studies, based on close reading of the material, in order to illuminate the rising trend of writers and show-runners treating pre-existing source material as basis for its re-imagination as officially sanctioned *fan fiction*.

1) Felix Brinker, “NBC’s Hannibal and the Politics of Audience Engagement,” in *Transgressive Television: Politics and Crime in 21st-Century American TV Series*, eds. Birgit Däwes, Alexandra Ganser, and Nicole Poppenhagen (Heidelberg: Universitätsverlag Winter, 2015), 303–328.

2) E. Alex Jung, “Mads Mikkelsen, In Conversation,” *Vulture*, April 20, 2021, accessed October 1, 2021, https://www.vulture.com/article/mads-mikkelsen-in-conversation.html?utm_medium=s1&utm_source=tw&utm_campaign=vulture.

3) Rebecca Williams, *Post-Object Fandom: Television, Identity and Self-Narrative* (New York and London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2016). See p. 195 for a conclusive definition of the phenomena.

4) Daniel Fierman, “Hannibal Lecter Meets His End,” *Entertainment Weekly*, February 16, 2007, accessed October 1, 2021, <https://ew.com/article/2007/02/16/hannibal-lecter-meets-his-end/>.

Hannibal as Fan Fiction of the Source Material

Hannibal is, according to the show’s credits, based on the *characters* of the first Thomas Harris novel *Red Dragon*. The distinction, compared to being based simply on the novel itself, is telling and presents a major pointer to understanding the the series’ adaptation approach. It is not until the second half of the series’ third season that the plot of the novel, namely hunting the titular serial killer, is adapted. To further complicate matters, the series uses and remixes plot, characters, and various elements from all the four Thomas Harris novels and their feature film adaptations⁵⁾, threading carefully on the verge of copyright breach around *The Silence of the Lambs* (Jonathan Demme, 1991), as that is owned by a different entity.

publication/ release	Thomas Harris novel	feature film adaptation	Hannibal Lecter actor	
1981	<i>Red Dragon</i>			
1986		<i>Manhunter</i>	Brian Cox	Hannibal Lecter is incarcerated. Will Graham consults the Red Dragon case with him.
1988	<i>The Silence of the Lambs</i>			
1991		<i>The Silence of the Lambs</i>	Anthony Hopkins	Hannibal Lecter is incarcerated. Clarice Starling consults the Buffalo Bill case with him. Hannibal escapes.
1999	<i>Hannibal</i>			
2001		<i>Hannibal</i>	Anthony Hopkins	Hannibal Lecter on the run in Italy, returns to the US kidnapped by Mason Verger. Reunited with Clarice Starling.
2002		<i>Red Dragon</i>	Anthony Hopkins	
2005	<i>Hannibal Rising</i>			
2007		<i>Hannibal Rising</i>	Gaspard Ulliel (Aaran Thomas)	Hannibal Lecter as a child and young man in Europe, taking revenge on men who murdered his family and made him eat his sister. Sets off for the US.

Table 1: Hannibal Lecter novels and feature film adaptations

	<i>Hannibal (TV) season 1</i>	<i>Hannibal (TV) season 2</i>	<i>Hannibal (TV) season 3</i>		
<i>Hannibal Rising</i>				<i>Red Dragon</i>	<i>The Silence of the Lambs</i>
					<i>Hannibal</i>

Table 2: Hannibal Lecter chronology

5) Shannon Wells-Lassagne in her analysis terms *Hannibal* “a sustained allusion rather than adaptation” and writes about an “echo chamber” of motifs and images. See: Shannon Wells-Lassagne, “The ouroboros of television prequels: endings and beginnings in *Hannibal* (NBC, 2013–2015),” in *Adapting Endings from Book*

In order to highlight what the series does in terms of adapting its claimed source material, a short summary is necessary: In the novel as well as both the feature film adaptations, *Manhunter* (Michael Mann, 1986) and *Red Dragon* (Brett Ratner, 2002) Will Graham is pulled out of early retirement to aid the FBI in hunting a serial killer who calls himself the Red Dragon. To do that, he consults with the psychiatrist and cannibal serial killer Hannibal Lecter, incarcerated at the Baltimore State Hospital for the Criminally Insane. It is revealed that it was Graham himself who exposed Lecter and managed to get him arrested, while getting gutted in the process. This piece of backstory spans roughly three pages of the novel, as Graham recaps it to a curious policeman. *Manhunter* alludes to it in dialogue and *Red Dragon* shows the revelation and Graham getting gutted by Lecter in a pre-opening credits scene. The series uses the key turning points of this brief backstory (Graham consults with Lecter, he figures out Lecter is a serial killer and Lecter guts him, Lecter ends up behind bars) but spans them into 33 episodes of serialized storytelling, while putting a substantial spin on these events, deepening, and expanding the relationship between Will Graham and Hannibal Lecter.

Bryan Fuller summarized the approach in an interview thus: “So much of this show is really fan fiction. ‘Oh, what if Hannibal and Will were friends? Let’s explore that relationship and how complicated it could be.’ It was kind of the oil that lubricated the adaptation.”⁶⁾ This goes back to the series being based on the characters primarily, as they are lifted from the novel, and exploring the *what if* in an original setup, namely Will Graham attending regular therapy sessions with Hannibal Lecter as his psychiatrist as well as consulting his cases with him as their relationship develops. This paper highlights the key decisions of the adaptation process specifically, but the essential turnabout is determined right here: the attitude of *what if* in approaching the material, marking the shift from a dutiful adaptor to fanfiction creator eager to explore the previously unseen variabilities. Bluntly in the words of Bryan Fuller: “The book has been adapted twice so if we did the same thing, we’re assholes.”⁷⁾

Another layer of the adaptation process that goes against the grain of adapting the material as faithfully as the medium would allow and one that was a crucial element in Fuller’s pitch is apparent from examining the source material’s chronology. *Hannibal Rising*, written simultaneously as a novel and a screenplay for the eponymous feature film, is the latest installment of the franchise, an origin story of the Hannibal Lecter character that explores his childhood and youth, ending with Lecter in his early twenties leaving Europe for the USA. Chronologically, the *Red Dragon* novel and film adaptations follow, finding

to Screen: *Last Pages, Last Shots*, eds. Armelle Parey and Shannon Wells-Lassagne (London and New York: Routledge, 2020), 101–111. Lori Morimoto tracks details such as bits of dialogue transposed from the feature film adaptations into the TV series and engages in the discourse of “fanboy adaptation” when referring to Bryan Fuller’s approach. See: Lori Morimoto, “Hannibal: Adaptation and Authorship in the Age of Fan Production,” 2019, accessed October 10, 2021, https://www.academia.edu/44622990/Hannibal_Adaptation_and_Authorship_in_the_Age_of_Fan_Production.

6) Emily VanDerWerff, “Hannibal Creator Bryan Fuller Looks Back at That Finale and His Show’s Last Season,” *Vox*, August 30, 2015, accessed October 1, 2021, <https://www.vox.com/2015/8/30/9224313/hannibal-finale-recap-bryan-fuller>.

7) “*Hannibal at PaleyFest 2014*,” YouTube, accessed October 1, 2021, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=hKWhRIaIacA>.

the character already exposed and incarcerated. *Hannibal* covers a period in the character's timeline that represents a gap which has never been explored in the source material: Hannibal Lecter as an adult man with a successful psychiatry practice, member of the sophisticated high society in Baltimore, hosting elaborate dinners where he serves the guests meals made from his victims' flesh. And no one in this world, apart from his victims, is aware of his cannibal serial killer identity — yet.

As Henry Jenkins describes in the chapter “Ten Way to Rewrite a Television Show” of his seminal book,⁸⁾ recontextualization through filling the chronological and narrative gaps of the material and the expansion of its timeline, often in order to deepen the emotional background of characters' relationship, constitutes a principal component of fanfiction. What *Hannibal* does is that it takes this tenet and expands it throughout the series.

In screenwriting terminology, the setup of the audience's superior knowledge over the characters' is known as *dramatic irony* and as Paul Gulino describes its function, it “pushes audience attention into the future because it creates anticipation about what is going to happen when the truth comes out.”⁹⁾ However superfluous the audience's familiarity with the source material might be, Hannibal Lecter being a cannibal killer is such a well-established pop cultural reference that it was a safe assumption on part of the creative team to take it for granted. Andrew Scahill, writing about both *Hannibal* and *The Bates Motel*, establishes the neologism pre-boot, a combination of the terms *prequel* and *reboot*, for the shows that chronologically precede their source material while taking liberties with it, “to retroactively rewrite or reimagine elements of the original and create new and unexpected plot twists” but concedes that “for all the stories' machinations, the characters' fates have already been written.”¹⁰⁾ The audience, unlike the characters, knows Hannibal Lecter's identity and also his future: he will end up in that cell behind glass with an anti-bite mask and Will Graham will be his undoing. *Hannibal* employs two fanfiction tropes here: First, the *slow-burn* strategy,¹¹⁾ delaying the inevitable plot-point as far as possible while dwelling on the slowly unfolding emotional development of the characters. Second, the *role-reversal* or *role-swap* trope,¹²⁾ reversing the setup in which the characters find themselves compared to the source material. In the final scene of season one, it is Will Graham who ends up incarcerated, falsely accused of Hannibal's murders and Hannibal visits him, using the same dialogue lines as in the source material's iconic scene, only with their positions flipped.

And while we may consider, as Scahill does, *Hannibal* as a prequel or preboot to *The Silence of the Lambs* (Jonathan Demme, 1991), his notion that the series reaffirms the cinematic text(s) that precede it in production and follow it in the narrative timeline,¹³⁾ is questionable. The aptly titled finale of season three, *The Wrath of the Lamb*, quite literally

8) Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture* (London and New York: Routledge, 2005, e-book edition).

9) Paul Gulino, *Screenwriting: The Sequence Approach* (New York and London: Continuum, 2004), 9.

10) Andrew Scahill, “Serialized Killers: Prebooting Horror in *Bates Motel* and *Hannibal*,” in *Cycles, Sequels, Spin-Offs, Remakes, and Reboots: Multiplicities in Film and Television*, eds. Amanda Ann Klein and R. Barton Palmer (Austin: University of Texas Press, 2016), 323.

11) See “Slow Burn (trope),” accessed December 6, 2021, [https://fanlore.org/wiki/Slow_Burn_\(trope\)](https://fanlore.org/wiki/Slow_Burn_(trope)).

12) See “Role Swap AU,” accessed December 6, 2021, <https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/RoleSwapAU>.

13) Scahill, “Serialized Killers,” 333.

throws the continuity in the air as in the final scene Will Graham embraces Hannibal and pulls them both over a cliff edge into the roaring Atlantic Ocean below.

The fanfiction vocabulary offers three terms that we can find useful at this point: *canon-compliant*, *canon-divergent*, and *post-canon*, *canon* standing in for the official, established version of the narrative and crucial in terms of continuity and coherence of the fictional world.¹⁴⁾ *Hannibal* skirts the edge of compliant and divergent in a way that is both illuminative and provocative in its storytelling strategy. The major divergencies include restructuring the timeline by incorporating characters and events from the post-*Red Dragon* novels and films into the pre-*Red Dragon* storyline (Verger siblings and Hannibal's time in Italy after fleeing the USA) and the contextual shifts which maintain the key plot twists while rearranging the characters' motivations. Still, on the macroscopic level, the series remains tethered to the canon in the crucial continuity checkpoint that its re-imagined Hannibal Lecter, for all the divergencies, is headed to an underground cell where he would await the appearance of Clarice Starling and the plot of *The Silence of the Lambs*. Scahill and other authors writing on the subject of re-boots argue, the audience's foreknowledge of the characters' fate constitutes a major part of the viewing pleasure. The series allows for this outcome and thus the possibility of canon-compliance, until the finale that constitutes a possible point of departure from the *canon*.

Hannibal and Will go over the cliff and as the camera follows them, there are no bodies to be seen. A post-credits scene strongly suggests, though does not confirm, that they have both survived. The openness of the ending creates an intriguing conundrum in terms of the place *Hannibal* holds in the canon continuity and highlights options the series could have taken for the next season as well as decisions in the creative process:

A) reveal that even with the prison break and cliff dive, it remains *canon-compliant* regarding the crucial plot points. Thus, Hannibal Lecter survives the fall and will immediately or eventually get caught again, consulting with Clarice Starling on the Buffalo Bill case from behind bars. This hypothetical continuation branches out into two distinct directions.

A1) The first variant offers season four of *Hannibal* adapting *The Silence of the Lambs*, as with Hannibal Lecter alive there is no major continuity dissonance to do so. There are two problems with this hypothetical, one legal and one creative. The Hannibal Lecter franchise is subject to a peculiar copyright situation, as different subjects hold rights to the characters from the *Red Dragon* and *The Silence of the Lambs* novels. Bryan Fuller repeatedly mentioned in interviews that there were negotiations with the rights holders to the Clarice Starling character and hinted at plans to incorporate the events from the novel into *Hannibal* but these plans have not worked out. And even if there were a season four of the series, a deal that would allow using the character seems very unlikely, as the network CBS released a procedural crime series *Clarice* (CBS, Jenny Lumet and Alex Kurtzman, 2021) in 2021, with Clarice Starling as the protagonist investigating crimes. Due to the copyright

14) See "Canon — Fanlore," accessed October 1, 2021, <https://fanlore.org/wiki/Canon>.

"Canon — TV Tropes," accessed October 1, 2021, <https://tvtropes.org/pmwiki/pmwiki.php/Main/Canon>.

situation, the name Hannibal Lecter cannot be uttered in the series. As we are thinking through hypotheticals, we may circumvent the copyright issue and question what this continuation would yield creatively for *Hannibal*. The real *story engine* of the series is the relationship between the dual protagonists Hannibal Lecter and Will Graham. Will Graham is merely a footnote mentioned in passing in *The Silence of the Lambs* novel and non-existent in the feature film.

- A2) The second variant would have Hannibal Lecter surviving the fall, most likely due to reasons described above, alongside Will Graham, who would be incorporated into *The Silence of the Lambs* plotline.
- B) An ultimate canon-divergence in that Hannibal Lecter dies in the series finale (or is never apprehended again.) Given that there is no season four of *Hannibal* and the cliff dive constitutes the ending to the series, taken to its conclusion, this perspective would retroactively render the series an *AU* — *alternate universe* scenario in fan fiction terminology.
- C) Setting the following season(s) as *post-canon*, a continuation that expands beyond the source material. This interpretation would require that we understand the character arch of Clarice Starling has been adapted in the series, even though her name has not been uttered due to copyright reasons. The arguments for such a reading are available: the character distilled and split into the original characters of Miriam Lass and Bedelia du Maurier, while the main weight of mutual fascination and/or possible love interest incorporated into the character of Will Graham.¹⁵⁾ This option would find both Hannibal Lecter and Will Graham alive and on the run together. In his engagement with the fandom, this scenario is the one Bryan Fuller playfully confirms as the current state of affairs for the characters. And it is not surprising that some of the most popular, rated by hits, bookmarks and kudos, fanfics on archiveofourown.org offer their *post-canon* takes on what happens after the finale: *What We Talk About When We Talk About Blood* by damnslippyplanet,¹⁶⁾ *Two Solitudes* by emungere¹⁷⁾ (by available metrics, one of the most celebrated writers in the fandom) and a fanfiction with the most kudos on the site, *The Shape of Me Will Always be You* by MissDisoriental.¹⁸⁾

15) See Bryan Fuller's commentary on the substitution of Clarice Starling's storyline elements by Will Graham – Emma Dibdin, "Hannibal: Bryan Fuller Talks Season 4, Sexual Fluidity, and How Will Became Clarice Starling," *Digital Spy*, September 6, 2015, accessed October 1, 2021, <http://www.digitalspy.com/tv/ustv/a667077/hannibal-bryan-fuller-talks-season-4-sexual-fluidity-and-how-will-became-clarice-starling/>. See the analysis by Mat Daniel, focusing on the gender-swapping and queering of the characters: Mat Daniel, "Hannibal: Beginning to Bloom," in *Queer/Adaptation: A Collection of Critical Essays*, ed. Pamela Demory (Syracuse and Clemson: Palgrave Macmillan, 2019), 67–86.

16) "What We Talk About When We Talk About Blood," accessed October 1, 2021, <https://archiveofourown.org/works/4960567>.

17) "Two Solitudes," accessed October 1, 2021, <https://archiveofourown.org/works/10673940>.

18) "The Shape of Me Will Always Be You," accessed October 11, 2021, <https://archiveofourown.org/works/5367389>.

***Hannibal* as Fan Fiction of Itself**

The *post-canon* fanfiction works mentioned in the previous section, as well as many others, use the *slow-burn* strategy building up to an admittedly romantic and sexual relationship between Hannibal and Will. Fictional characters are presumed to be heterosexual unless it is explicitly stated otherwise. The rising acceptance, on the legislative as well as public opinion level, of LGBT+ people in the Western cultural space has brought on a distinctive shift in the treatment of popular characters' identities. J.K. Rowling outed Dumbledore as gay on Twitter, Marvel Comics recently featured two of its male characters wedding on the cover of the issue, the star actors portraying two fan-favorite characters in the newest *Star Wars* installment publicly complained about their relationship not having been taken further than friendship. The conceptual axis, where fictional characters' sexuality and its perception by the audience oscillates, can be denoted by Adrienne Rich's *compulsory heterosexuality* on one end, posing heterosexuality as the implicit and enforced norm,¹⁹⁾ and Alexander Doty's *queer reading*, opening the possibility that any characters and relationships can be read as queer by the audience, regardless of the text itself or the creator's intent.²⁰⁾

Bryan Fuller did not set out to queer the Hannibal Lecter/Will Graham characters or their relationship, known in the fandom under the portmanteau name *Hannigram*; he describes the process as an organic development of a friendship-turned-antagonist dynamic into a love story,²¹⁾ acknowledged by the creators. Fuller as well as Mat Daniel in his analysis²²⁾ track the development of the subtext into text over the course of three seasons.

Reframing a canonically heterosexual relationship as a queer one has been a cardinal drive in fanfiction, traced back to *Star Trek's* (NBC, Gene Roddenberry, 1966–1969) pairing of Captain Kirk and Spock, denoted by the slash sign that gave the name to the genre as *slash fiction*. Henry Jenkins sums up the structure of *slash* thus:

The narrative formula of slash involves a series of movements from an initial partnership, through a crisis in communication that threatens to disrupt that union, toward its reconfirmation through sexual intimacy. These conventions represent both the dystopian dimensions of conventional masculinity and the Utopian possibility of a reconstructed masculinity. Dramatic moments occur around boundaries within the continuum of male sexual and social desire; emotional intensity surrounds those moments when the men finally confess their feelings to each other. Here, sexual scenes merely confirm the partners' acceptance of these revelations as a basis for their new commitments.²³⁾

19) Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Signs* 5, no. 4 (1980), 631–631, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3173834>.

20) Alexander Doty, *Flaming Classics: Queering the Film Canon* (New York and London: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2000, e-book edition).

21) Dibdin, "Hannibal: Bryan Fuller Talks Season 4, Sexual Fluidity, and How Will Became Clarice Starling."

22) Daniel, "Hannibal: Beginning to Bloom," 67–86.

23) Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*, 211.

The relationship in *Hannibal* does not turn explicitly sexual, although a possibility of the characters sharing a kiss in the season three finale has been brought up.²⁴⁾ What qualifies the series as a *slash fiction* in the paradigm formulated by Jenkins and what the many fan-generated paratexts make explicit, is the emotional intensity and acknowledgment within the text of the TV show that re-structures its key plot points around the relationship: Hannibal Lecter guts Will Graham in the season two finale not as an attempt to evade escape but as punishment for a perceived betrayal and when he finally gets arrested in the mid-season finale of season three, it is of his own volition in order to have Will Graham know where he can find him after Will has rejected him. The factual content and narrative outcome of these scenes is identical to the source material, *canon-compliant* on the surface, but what changes is the context and emotional charge in terms of character motivation and development. As Jeff Stone writes in his review of the episode: “It’s a big deviation from the source material, but one that definitely works in the context of the show. ... You don’t get to call the shots in this relationship, Will!”²⁵⁾ In further reviews, the same author cheekily refers to Hannibal’s manipulations of Will in the Red Dragon storyline as “passive-aggressive ex stuff.”²⁶⁾ The characters within the show refer to their murderous back-and-forth as foreplay or seduction and the tabloid journalist character nicknames the duo *murder husbands*, a moniker that became widely popular among the Fannibals. And Henry Jenkins would likely have punched the air with the visual reference of the characters touching the glass of Hannibal’s cell that separates them, in an explicit reference to the famous *Star Trek* scene.²⁷⁾

Hannibal developed over the course of three seasons from a monster-of-the-week procedural series that used the Hannibal Lecter/Will Graham dynamic as its overall narrative arch to a series that explicitly posits the relationship as its main dramatic situation, an impossible love story. As was quoted above, this was not the author’s intention in the beginning. And in this sense, a multiple-season series offers intriguing material to analyze because the standard process, for television as well as SVOD content, entails a built-in evolution of the material in time. When the creator presents the pitch for a series, it usually includes a rough outline of the potential continuation, in case the series proves successful and is renewed for a next season. However, the renewal is always uncertain, and the screenplays are written only after the confirmation. Thus, the preceding season functions as source material for the next one. And with this framework, *Hannibal’s slash fiction*

24) Jung, “Mads Mikkelsen, In Conversation.”

25) Jeff Stone, “Review: ‘Hannibal’ Season 3, Episode 13, ‘The Wrath of the Lamb’: Over The Edge | IndieWire,” *Indiewire*, August 30, 2015, accessed October 1, 2021, <https://www.indiewire.com/2015/08/review-hannibal-season-3-episode-13-the-wrath-of-the-lamb-over-the-edge-58783/>.

26) *Ibid.*

27) Henry Jenkins wrote a widely reproduced note, titled “Confessions of a Male Slash Fan,” in 1993: “The glass, for me, is often more social than physical; the glass represents those aspects of traditional masculinity which prevent emotional expressiveness or physical intimacy between men... One of the most exciting things about slash is that it teaches us how to recognize the signs of emotional caring beneath all the masks by which traditional male culture seeks to repress or hide those feelings.” See: Henry Jenkins, “What’s Behind ‘The Glass’?,” *Henry Jenkins*, May 8, 2008, accessed October 1, 2021, http://henryjenkins.org/blog/2008/05/the_glass.html.

treatment of the central relationship is not a queering of the pre-existent source material but of the series itself over time.

John Bryant writes of adaptations in general:

As an announced retelling of an earlier work, an adaptation cannot exist without its tether to its originating source. When audiences lose their hold on this tether, the adaptation becomes at best a retelling only, like a fairy tale whose Ur-text cannot be found. And if readers were to forget as well, the original story it retells, the adaptation would become perhaps an originating textual identity of its own, a text without a link to a defining past or originating source.²⁸⁾

Hannibal does not lose its tether to the originating source and due to the pop-cultural relevance of its titular character, does not let its audience lose the hold of that tether. However, it does become an originating textual identity in its own right, as fanfiction text of both its source material and itself.

Conclusion

In the pilot episode, Hannibal warns the killer Gareth Jacob Hobbs, whom the FBI is about to arrest, with a phone call, saying only: “They know.” The warning puts in motion a massacre of Hobbs’ family that is ended by Will Graham, who fatally shoots Hobbs. As he is dying on the kitchen floor, he utters “You see?” at Will. In the season two finale, the situation is mirrored and reversed, as Will calls Hannibal, about to be arrested by Jack and says “They know.” If we interpret the whole series with the lens of Will Graham’s character development, it is pointedly bookmarked by the “You see?” question that puts his evolution in motion and the answer in the series finale, as Will answers affirmatively to Hannibal asking him by using exactly the same phrase, before throwing them off of the cliff while *Love Crime* by Siouxsie Sioux, composed for the show, plays over the credits.

The series *Hannibal* offers a creative and transformative approach in adapting its extensive source material, employing practices familiar in fanfiction, while over the course of three seasons engages with developing dynamics and building on motifs it has established independently from the source material.

This paper offered a perspective of approaching officially sanctioned serialized adaptations through the lens of fan studies, specifically identifying the creative techniques that are perceived as a staple of fan generated content and analyzing how they are functionally used in adapting pre-existing works, bringing original and fresh perspectives to seemingly fixed canons. For further enquiries in this direction, a considerable paradigm is presented in bridging the gap between adaptation studies, focused exclusively on official adaptations, and fan studies, examining fan-generated content as it relates to the hierarchically

28) John Bryant, “Textual identity and adaptive revision: Editing adaptation as a fluid text,” in *Adaptation Studies: New Challenges, New Directions*, eds. Jørgen Bruhn Gjelsvik, Anne Hanssen, and Eirik Frisvold (London and New York: Bloomsbury, 2013, Kindle edition).

removed canons. In the contemporary television and film industry,²⁹⁾ especially in the commencing era of *streaming wars*, there is an apparent increase of the ever-present tendency to expand and adapt existing properties in a way that will keep the established fan-base as well as attract new audiences and examining how the adaptation practice uses fan-fiction techniques presents a useful perspective.

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Biography

Lucia Kajánková graduated from the Faculty of the Arts, Charles University in Prague (FFUK) master program in Philosophy and Film Studies with the thesis *Sexual Identity as Cinematic Subversion: The Discourse of New Queer Cinema*, awarded the ‘Illuminace Award’ by the Czech Society for Film Studies (CEFS) and from the Film and TV School of the Academy of Performing Arts in Prague (FAMU), where she is currently both a PhD candidate and a senior lecturer at the Department of Screenwriting and Dramaturgy. She is a festival programmer and consults as a script editor on individual projects as well as for Czech Television’s Film Centre. Her web series as showrunner and director *TBH* (2022) won the Best Web Series Award at the Serial Killer festival and premieres on Czech Television’s online platform in February 2022.