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Saving Innocents: Tracing The Human Monster Hunter's Hetero-Normative Agenda From The 1970s To Today

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SAVING INNOCENTS: TRACING THE HUMAN MONSTER HUNTER'S HETERO-NORMATIVE AGENDA FROM THE 1970S TO TODAY

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DEDICATION

I dedicate this project to my mother and sister. Thank you for enduring my absence during the holidays and my years away from home. Your understanding and patience allowed me to fully devote my energies to writing and completing this dissertation.

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INTRODUCTION

"*The monsters of horror…breach the norms of ontological propriety presumed by the positive human characters in the story…the monster is an extraordinary character in our ordinary world*."[1]

I: The Human Monster Hunter and Supernatural Themed Television

Noel Carroll's seminal definition of horror focuses on the emotions it elicits from the audience, yet recognizes a binary set up where monsters are seen as breaching the lives of "positive human characters"—the monsters implicitly embody a negative. However, Carroll's definition also hints at the ways the binary opposition breaks down in light of the monster's "extraordinary character." While monsters represent a negative to the norm, they also function as exceptional figures who speak to various societal anxieties concerning fear and death. These anxieties include fears of untamed sexuality (vampires), one's inner beast (werewolves), and science's defilement of nature (Frankenstein's monster). In this positioning of monsters as an extraordinary negative that can speak to a variety of issues, humans then represent horror's *ordinary* positive. Despite needing to be brave enough to face-off with the supernatural, humans are overshadowed by monsters because we're rather dull in comparison.

However, the human characters operating as formidable opponents to monsters are exceptional in their own way. They still embody a positive force that clashes with the negative monsters, and therefore seek to alleviate various social anxieties. The most noteworthy positive human characters are the human monster hunters: figures who suffer a terrible loss at the hand of supernatural creatures and make it their life's mission to kill monsters and protect the social norm. Within horror narratives, the human monster hunter is fundamentally tied to maintaining social values. As the genre's exemplary positive force, this figure re-establishes the status quo through slaying monsters who threaten the social order. In particular, I am interested in exploring how this figure develops within the televisual medium –

[1] Noel Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror: Or, Paradoxes of the Heart* (New York: Routledge, 1990), 16.

a mode of storytelling that draws its viewers in on a week-to-week basis to motivate audiences into wanting to see how their characters grow and change from one season to the next.[2] From the occult detectives in *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* (1974-1975), *The X-Files* (1993-2002), and *Grimm* (2011-present), to the demon slayers in *Brimstone* (1998-1999), *Angel* (1999-2004), and *Supernatural* (2005-present), there has been no shortage of positive human characters fighting to maintain the norm in supernatural television.

Whereas horror films have historically aimed to create a sense of panic and dread by having audiences jump with fright and tension at the prospect of the monstrous invading our everyday world, supernatural television programs center on the premise of the paranormal being transposed onto the mundane as a way to explore the effects that modern society and supernatural creatures have upon one another, and to explore the personal relationships between humans and the supernatural. This is not to say that supernatural TV is completely divorced from horror films. Both share a presumption of certain forms of normalcy – that "normal" is white instead of not-white, heterosexual instead of homosexual or bisexual, young instead of old, wealthy instead of poor, etc.[3] – with the monster embodying a rejection or failure to adhere to these norms.

The main impetus for horror films and supernatural television lies in the threatening of the "normal" by bringing societal repressions to the surface: bisexuality, homosexuality, and female desires are all figured as threats to an existing order that encourages and even requires heterosexual reproductive sexuality. For example, Robin Wood makes an inherent connection between *Frankenstein*

[2] David Thorburn "Television Melodrama," in *Television as a Cultural Force* (New York: Praeger, 1976), 80.
[3] Scholar Robin Wood discusses, at length, the process by which people are conditioned to take up certain roles within a culture. He is interested in the ways in which a particular culture condition people to believe that there is a state of normalcy towards which they should aspire and that if they fall short of it, there is something wrong with them. See Robin Wood, *Hollywood: from Vietnam to Reagan…and Beyond* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003).

(1931) and fears of repressed homosexuality.[4] Horror narratives, then, essentially rely on three key variables: 1) defining what is the norm within the given society at a given time; 2) defining the monster; and 3) defining the monster's disruption of the norm.[5]

The purpose of this project is to demonstrate that the televisual human monster hunter exemplifies a fourth key variable for the genre: the human monster hunter functions within horror to *restore* the societal norm. With most of the scholarship on horror preferring to focus on the monsters as archetypal figures, and only a handful of texts examining the hunter specifically, I seek to argue that this figure is a vital (and yet often overlooked) component in horror. This has bigger implications within the televisual medium because as posited by John Fiske and John Hartley, television's narratives serve as our society's major storyteller, reflecting our values and defining our assumptions about the nature of reality.[6] With television presenting its audience with accessible stories of heroes and villains, viewers delight in seeing these characters grow and change week after week, season after season.[7] Seeing the monster hunter restore the status quo every week conditions the audience into perceiving the white male body as heroic. Through winning these weekly battles against villainous monsters, the televisual monster hunter validates his normative principles as essential and as something that we should all be rooting for.

Thus, television serves as my key focus because its use of character development and continuous stories uniquely constructs the human monster hunter's progression. I see this figure as a

[4] The basis for this correlation lies in the fact that the doctor's decision to create his monster coincides with the exact moment that he decides to be engaged.
[5] See Robin Wood, "The American Nightmare: Horror in the 70s," in *Horror, The Film Reader*, ed. Mark Jancovich (New York: Routledge, 2002), 31.
[6] John Fiske and John Hartley, *Reading Television* (London: Methuen, 1978), 85.
[7] For some of the seminal analyses of television's narrative impact see: Horace Newcomb, *TV: The Most Popular Art* (Garden City: Anchor Press, 1974); Robert C. Allen, *Speaking of Soap Operas* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1985); Sarah Kozloff, "Narrative Theory and Television," in *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled*, ed. Robert C. Allen (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1992), 61-100; John Ellis, *Visible Fictions: Cinema, Television, Video* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1982); and Jane Feuer, "Narrative Form in American Network Television" in *High Theory/Low Culture*, ed. Colin MacCabe (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1986), 101-114.

pressure valve, insuring that the horror genre remains conservative rather than subversive. The human monster hunter's recurrent representation and actions on television, from the 1970s to today, further conveys a subtext for trusting in the white middle-class male (as the societal savior) and the government (for its invaluable resources). This study begins with the 1970s and *Kolchak: the Night Stalker* because it is the first American television series to feature the human monster hunter as a program's lead character. Also, in order to trace the most current depictions of the figure, I will be working my way up chronologically to shows such as *Supernatural* and *Teen Wolf*. In these contemporary shows, audiences are provided with innovative representations of the human monster hunter (as African American and female, respectively) that might seem to challenge my initial claim but that only *seem* to be broadening representations of "positive humanity."

II: The Human Monster Hunter's 19th Century Beginnings and Academic Scholarship

19th-century monster hunting narratives are the best place to start in tracing the modern development of the human monster hunter on television, because the 20th-century depictions of the figure heavily rely on the figure's traits established within gothic literature. One of the most important representations of the human monster hunter is found in the gothic novella *Carmilla* (1872), by Joseph Sheridan Le Fanu. The hunter within this narrative is Baron Vordenburg, who is an authority on vampires because his ancestor was a well renowned vampire killer. In the novella, Vordenburg assists General Spielsdorf and the narrator, known only as "Laura," in locating the eponymous vampire's tomb and destroying her. Vordenburg's role as the hunter is fairly typical for the figure: just as the monster endangers the safety of others, the hunter's sole mission is to protect society – and Vordenburg does so by helping to slay the threat. However, even though Vordenburg is the first monster hunter figure in the gothic tradition, the success of Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* (1897)[8] situates Abraham Van Helsing as the more familiar hunter to audiences.

[8] Which itself is based in part on *Carmilla*.

In *Dracula*, Abraham Van Helsing is a Dutch hematologist called upon for his medical expertise and knowledge of the paranormal in order to aid the other characters in diagnosing Lucy Westernra's illness, rescuing Mina Harker, and eliminating Count Dracula. Like Baron Vordenburg, Van Helsing is a typical hunter through his role of leading people to combat the monster and restore the norm. Whereas Baron Vordenburg is one of the earliest representations of the human monster hunter, Van Helsing can be seen as the figure's definitive depiction within the public consciousness. Van Helsing's popularity is largely due to the fact that *Dracula* has been the focus of countless adaptations. Within just cinema alone, *Dracula* has been featured in more than 200 films.[9] In these endless adaptations of *Dracula*, the figures most frequently represented are the Count, the Harkers, and Van Helsing. Thus, with constant filmic and televisual depictions of the Van Helsing figure, it's not hard to see why the public views him as *the* vampire hunter.[10]

In fact, scholars frequently cite Abraham Van Helsing as the definitive example of the monster hunter. Andrew Tudor, Nina Auerbach, Heather L. Duda, and Christopher Justice all refer to Van Helsing as the prototypical and ideal representation of the monster hunter because of his knowledge of the

[9] *Carmilla* has been the narrative focus in only a handful of films, and such *Carmilla*-centered films include: *Vampyr*, directed by Carl Theodor Dreyer, performed by Julian West, Maurice Schutz, and Rena Mandel, Tobis-Filmkunst, 1932; *Blood and Roses*, directed by Roger Vadim, performed by Mel Ferrer, Elsa Martinelli, and Annette Stroyberg, Films EGE, 1960; *Terror in the Crypt*, directed by Camillo Mastrocinque, performed by Christopher Lee, Adriana Ambesi, and Pier Anna Quaglia, MEC Cinematografica, 1964; and *The Vampire Lovers*, directed by Roy Ward Baker, performed by Ingrid Pitt, George Cole, and Kate O'Mara, Hammer Film Productions, 1970.

[10] Aiding in Van Helsing's prominence as a household name are the various well-known actors cast to portray the character: John Gottowt in *Nosferatu*, directed by F. W. Murnau, performed by Max Schreck, Gustav von Wangenheim, and Greta Schröder, Prana Film, 1922; Edward Van Sloan in *Dracula*, directed by Todd Browning, performed by Bela Lugosi, Helen Chandler, and David Manners, Universal Pictures, 1931; Peter Cushing in *Horror of Dracula*, directed by Terence Fisher, performed by Christopher Lee, Peter Cushing, and Melissa Stribling, Hammer Film Productions, 1958; Anthony Hopkins in *Bram Stoker's Dracula*, directed by Francis Ford Coppola, performed by Gary Oldman, Winona Ryder, and Anthony Hopkins, Columbia Pictures, 1992; and Hugh Jackman in *Van Helsing*, directed by Stephen Sommers, performed by Hugh Jackman, Kate Beckinsale, and Richard Roxburgh, Universal Pictures, 2004. And Van Helsing's reputation is even furthered in television, with Frank Finlay in *Count Dracula*, directed by Philip Saville, performed by Louis Jourdan, Frank Finlay, and Susan Penhaligon, BBC, 1977; Thomas Kretschmann in *Dracula*, created by Cole Haddon, NBC, 2013-2014; and David Warner in *Penny Dreadful*, created by John Logan, Showtime, 2014-2016 being just a few of the actors to play him.

supernatural and his embodiment of Victorian masculinity.[11] It is Van Helsing's expertise, whiteness, and masculinity that serve as hallmarks of the human monster hunter figure that are refashioned and upheld with its various televisual incarnations even today.

Despite Abraham Van Helsing's and other human monster hunters' countless appearances in supernatural narratives, the figure hasn't received much scholarly attention. One of the few scholars to devote an analysis solely to the monster hunter is Heather L. Duda. In her book, *The Monster Hunter in Modern Popular Culture*, Duda covers the multiple media representations (television, film, and graphic novels) of the hunter, using a trauma/posthuman and feminist lens in her study. She sees the figure as evolving from a good guy to a *monstrous* good guy. Yet, Duda is primarily interested in the supernaturally-powered variations of the figure, as either the male monster hunter (who is himself a monster on a quest for redemption) or the female monster hunter (who has a personal connection to the monster and access to its power). Two such figures that Duda concentrates on are Blade (*Blade*, 1998) and Buffy Summers (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, 1997-2003) – the former is an African American vampire who hunts other vampires and the latter is a Slayer, a supernatural creature who originally obtains her powers by merging with a demonic essence. The key importance of the monster hunter in Duda's eyes is this figure's two-fold message: that nothing is guaranteed (as can be seen with the hunter never being done with the job) and that the monster is capable of making it out of the abyss to regain its humanity.[12]

Duda cites Andrew Tudor and Nina Auerbach as some of the rare horror scholars to pay any attention to hunters. Both Tudor and Auerbach are especially interested in Abraham Van Helsing, who has, in Tudor's words, "all the traditional qualities of the anti-vampire expert: knowledge,

[11] See Andrew Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists: A Cultural History of the Horror Movie* (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991); Nina Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (Chicago: University Of Chicago Press, 1997); and Heather L. Duda, *The Monster Hunter in Modern Popular Culture* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2008).
[12] Duda, *The Monster Hunter in Modern Popular Culture*, 61.

resourcefulness and will-power."[13] In Auerbach's estimation, Van Helsing is "an interdisciplinary expert…equipped in scientific, superstitious, theological, criminological, legal, and geographic lore."[14] In both instances, there's a focus on Van Helsing's role as an "expert," which suggests that human monster hunters are expected to study, prepare, and use their rational minds to combat the supernatural. This sentiment reflects a very 19th-century frame of mind, by suggesting that there's nothing we can't explain away or battle if we study enough.

In particular, in Tudor's analysis of the horror genre, he notes that the monster hunter represents "the expert," a recurrent type of "pursuer" in horror usually found among the police, scientists, and the military.[15] Tudor describes the expert as a heroic figure whose importance in horror narratives is typically overshadowed because the monster invites a level of "anthropomorphic sympathy."[16] Tudor contends that the expert "operates at the periphery of events" due to the figure seeing the world, morally and emotionally, as existing in blacks-and-whites.[17] While Tudor's analysis is apt, I will argue that the human monster hunter—at least as it has been presented on television over the last forty years—is not as flat as he suggests.

Besides Duda and Tudor, most other academic analyses of the monster hunter have usually only come in the form of articles and essays. For instance, Christopher Justice's article, "Ecological Narrative or Imperial Exploitation: What's the 'Monster' in Animal Planet's *River Monsters*?" looks at the monsterization of fish species, with an interest in examining the misrepresentation of fish and the exploitation of indigenous people on the reality TV show.[18] The monster hunter plays a role within this analysis because Justice likens the host of *River Monsters* (2009-present), Jeremy Wade, to the monster

[13] Tudor, *Monster and Mad Scientists*, 171.
[14] Auerbach, *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, 65.
[15] Ibid., 113.
[16] Ibid.
[17] Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists*, 115.
[18] Christopher Justice, "Ecological Narrative or Imperial Exploitation: What's the 'Monster' in Animal Planet's *River Monsters*?" in *Words for a Small Planet: Ecocritical Views*, ed. Nanette Norris (New York: Lexington Books, 2010), 63.

hunter in horror narratives. Just as the hunter is an expert on monsters, Justice points out that Wade exudes expertise in dealing with these monstrous fish species.

More importantly, Justice identifies a key factor in the human monster hunter's makeup: the hunter's connections with Victorian culture, and in particular the values of a good education and being a good mentor, father, and friend.[19] Basically, these are the qualities necessary for bringing order to a society under the threat of foreign danger, whether that danger takes the form of a person or pathogens, or both. Justice asserts that *River Monsters* puts forward the belief that communities in disarray need someone to emerge from outside of their culture in order to save them, reflecting the colonial rhetoric of the cultured improving the life of the savage.[20] Drawing from Justice's work, I seek to discuss the human monster hunter's embodiment of a savior-like persona, which becomes problematic when the figure is consistently represented as a white, middle-class male.

Even though both Duda and Justice expand the academic conversation on monster hunters by going beyond just labeling them under the expert archetype, there is still a gap within this discussion. Yes, Duda specifically addresses monster hunters, but she primarily focuses on supernaturally-powered hunters. While her discussion of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Blade* adds much to the discussion of gender and race as it relates to the hunter, those discussions point to specific figures as opposed to unpacking the hunter archetype as a whole. Justice's text explores the monster hunter as it relates to a reality television host, yet the analysis only accounts for how contemporary reality TV utilizes the monster hunter trope, without identifying the televisual origins of the figure. Essentially, there is a lack of a true historical tracing of this figure, especially one that focuses on iterations within a specific media.

[19] Justice, "Ecological Narrative or Imperial Exploitation," 52.
[20] Ibid., 161.

III: Human Monster Hunter Mythos 101

Within most televisual supernatural narratives, the human monster hunter starts out as an average adult living the white picket fence life: having a spouse, children, and by all appearances living the "American dream." This person conforms to living the ideal normative life by having a family, being gainfully employed, and being a member of an extracurricular organization (such as a book club or country club). The person is signified as average through their status as white and middle-class. Inevitably, this person encounters a traumatic loss when a supernatural creature murders their loved-one.

After this devastating event, the person gives up living a 'normal' life to exact revenge. This vengeance usually involves the person becoming obsessed with learning as much as he can about supernatural creatures (especially the ones that killed his loved-one), as a means of finding the creature's weaknesses, tracking it, and killing it. Following Van Helsing's example, the human monster hunter seeks out expertise on the supernatural to better confront the monster. This vision of the monster is one with no sympathy, and thus is not nuanced in the way Carroll and others have seen it. Rather, the monster and monster hunter are depicted in black and white terms: the monster is evil and the monster hunter is good.

The human monster hunter ultimately seeks to protect the normative lifestyles of other people, since his has been irreparably shattered. At its core, the story of the human monster hunter embodies the fear of the sudden loss of a spouse, child, or parent through a brutal murder. At the same time, it expresses a more general fear about the destruction of normative life. The human monster hunter is thus living the nightmare that someone or something will prevent one from being able to live a (hetero) normative life anymore.

Within horror fiction, hunters have been both humans and other magical creatures/monsters. However, by focusing on the *human* monster hunter (the flawed yet average person facing the

supernatural) as opposed to a monster hunting other monsters, or a person imbued with magical power to face supernatural creatures, I can draw attention to a character struggling to overcome his *human* failings. Harkening back to Carroll's "humans as positive characters," I'm most interested in exploring the lengths human characters go to in order to preserve social norms. Using humans as a focal point is beneficial, first, because they are at a disadvantage against a supernatural creature (which has access to powers humans don't have), and second, because the back-story to the human monster hunter is all about the loss of the "American dream," the ideal middle-class existence (the norm). This is not necessarily the case with the supernaturally powered hunter, whose life is already situated outside of the norm. As I trace the human monster hunter's development within television, I am specifically interested in exploring the desire for stasis and the normative agenda that underlies the figure. In a subgenre that is open to fantastic possibilities in the form of the monster, the televisual human monster hunter articulates an underlying socio-political message encouraging viewers to trust in white masculinity and the government and its resources.

IV: Seeing the Human Monster Hunter as Highly Adaptable

As mentioned earlier, horror's monsters are extraordinary negatives who embody various social anxieties. Scholars such as James B. Twitchell, David J. Skal, and Rick Worland observe Frankenstein, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde,[21] and Dracula as the genre's most "iconic characters," whose "tales have since proved highly adaptable to evolving historical trends."[22] Although there are many other theorists who have examined horror's monsters,[23] the works of Twitchell, Skal, and Worland are the most relevant to

[21] However, both Dr. Jekyll & Mr. Hyde and the Werewolf/Wolf Man are frequently referenced interchangeably; due to their correlating embodiments of the body being in a man vs. inner beast struggle.
[22] Rick Worland, *The Horror Film: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 30.
[23] A few of the most seminal examinations include: Barbara Creed, "Horror and The Monstrous-feminine: An Imaginary Abjection," *Screen* 27.1 (1986): 44-70; Carol J. Clover, "Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film," *Representations* 20 (1987): 187-228; Julia Kristeva, *Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982); and Noel Carroll, *The Philosophy of Horror*.

my analysis. All three scholars offer novel connections between monsters, on the one hand, and adolescent sexuality and underlying social anxieties, on the other.

James B. Twitchell contends that incestuous themes are at the core of horror, with horror films in particular preparing adolescents for the "anxieties of reproduction."[24] Twitchell notes that adolescents within horror narratives make horrible reproductive mistakes that result in confrontations with monsters. The monsters key to Twitchell's examination are embodied in three motifs: the vampire, the "hulk-with-no-name" (such as Frankenstein's monster), and the transformation monster (such as The Wolf Man or Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde).[25] He demonstrates how the Dracula, Frankenstein, and Wolf Man stories, as developed in 1930s' cinema play out the "family romance" of incest and instruct adolescents (the primary audience for horror movies) about the dangers of improper sex.[26] Twitchell's analysis then, posits the horror narrative's connections to societal anxieties surrounding sex and focuses on interpreting the monsters as symbols of dangerous teenage sexuality.

David J. Skal's *The Monster Show: A Cultural History of Horror* charts the rise of horror as popular entertainment from the 1930s to the '70s. Skal considers *Dracula* (1931), *Frankenstein* (1931), and *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* (1931) as the key archetypes of horror. Rather than correlating the monsters with sexuality, though, Skal addresses how they embody anxieties surrounding real-world events. For instance, he posits connections between Dracula and the Great Depression (and subsequent fears of class warfare), between Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde and the Third Reich (fears of scientific sadism), and between Frankenstein's monster and Cold War brainwashers.[27]

Rick Worland's *The Horror Film: An Introduction* provides a historical survey with close readings of seminal horror films, covering much of the same territory as Skal. However, while Skal explores how

[24] James B. Twitchell, *Dreadful Pleasures* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985), 66.
[25] Twitchell, *Dreadful Pleasures*, 258.
[26] Ibid., 42.
[27] David J. Skal, *The Monster Show: A Cultural History of Horror* (New York: Faber and Faber, 1993), 159, 226, and 397.

horror films reveal an underlying anxiety connected to real-world events, Worland pays attention to the Freudian and psychosexual aspects that horror films communicate. Worland points out that the three major monster tropes of classic gothic novels persist as the basis for present-day monsters: Frankenstein's monster signifies human attempts to control nature through science, Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde represent the struggle between civilized and animal nature, and Dracula embodies unbridled eroticism.

Skal, Twitchell, and Worland are fairly typical in their focus on the monsters and reinforce Carroll's assumption of the monster having an exemplary nature. Yet, my concern isn't to just simply acknowledge the special features to the ordinarily positive human. Instead, my concern is to analyze the human monster hunter's distinctive impact on supernatural horror and suggest that the televisual variant of the human monster hunter is not as flat as scholars suggests. As this figure develops on TV, the human monster hunter's role and actions uniquely reinforce normative values within both the narrative and our society.

V: Dissertation Chapter Breakdowns

As one of the first substantial studies to historically trace the human monster hunter's role in American supernatural television, this project argues that the human monster hunter functions in a role more complex than pursuer or expert. Rather, the figure's representation throughout the past four decades reveals a complex figure who reifies the "American dream" and is fraught with conservative undertones. Time and time again, the hunter is presented as someone who loses an ideal middle-class experience and pushes back by stepping outside the law to protect that experience for others. Yet, in showing how the hunter pushes back, the televisual representations of this figure repeatedly carry problematic racial and gendered implications, which render non-white and non-male hunters as reckless and predatory.

This dissertation is structured around four main chapters. Each chapter will pick up on these threads of the hunter's links to authority figures, race, and gender. Chapters One and Three will address the authoritative and masculine threads, while Chapters Two and Four explore the racial and gendered dynamics of televisual monster hunting. Each chapter will focus on what could be called the "canon" of the genre—exploring some of the most influential shows that subsequent programs copy and emulate.

Chapter One addresses *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* and *The X-Files*' roles in establishing the hunter on television. *Kolchak* represents the first series devoted to the monster hunter, and *The X-Files* is one of the most popular programs for the figure. Each of these shows presents the hunter as fixating on the supernatural because of curiosity or personal loss. Both shows structure truth-seeking as a response to 1970s' concerns about government accountability. Lastly, both programs were also instrumental in popularizing the Monster-of-the-Week television format, which serves to embody the hunter's perpetual confrontation with the supernatural.

The respective hunters of these shows, Carl Kolchak and Fox Mulder, present the hunter as someone who values finding the truth and helping others over his own work and leisure. More importantly, both men seek to uphold the values of the social order in two ways: by confronting authority, in order to obtain information that they are withholding from the public, and by confronting supernatural creatures, in order to prevent them from killing civilians. In the end, Kolchak and Mulder establish the monster hunter as not being opposed to the government, but as figures whose position on the outside of authority allows them to see that the government fails to live up to its intended promise: to be an institution that protects its people and has the citizens' best interests at heart. Ultimately, these two shows illustrate that the monster hunter would not have a problem with the government if it were open and honest about supernatural creatures.

Both *Kolchak* and *The X-Files*, and many shows that followed their blueprint, established the human monster hunter as a white male. Chapter Two explores departures from this standard

representation of the hunter as white. Charles Gunn from *Angel* and Gordon Walker from *Supernatural* are African Americans, but this racial shift in representation is problematic. Neither of these characters is the main character of the television show in question, and both Gunn's and Walker's appearances on their respective shows serve to highlight how a white-male monster—in both cases, the primary focal point of the series—seeks redemption. This results in blackness being made into a reckless foil to whiteness, with Gunn and Walker being pressured into eradicating their cultural identities and prioritizing the white hegemonic view of happiness. Similar to Fox Mulder, these two characters confront the supernatural because of personal loss. However, their search for resolution presents them as prejudicial to the supernatural in a way white characters are not and forces them to conform to the protagonist's way of life (and the norm), or be killed. Thus, this chapter's discussion on Gunn and Walker introduces racial rules for the hunter. With the monster hunter's role being to exterminate the repressed and restore the normative status quo, *Angel* and *Supernatural* impart the underlying message that it is possible to have a non-white hunter, but only if they fall in line with the (white) status quo. Monster hunters that do not fall in line die.

Chapter Three furthers the discussion of the relationship between the hunter and monster. Whereas Charles Gunn and Gordon Walker are prejudiced against the supernatural — something each of their shows ultimately sets up as short-sighted — *The Vampire Diaries*' Alaric Saltzman forms a bond with the monster who killed his wife. While this bond appears to erase the difference and prejudice between humans and monsters, it is formed around and reinforces stereotypical notions of gender identity: positioning manipulative women as destroyers of the men's normative lives and suggesting that men need to perform hypermasculine behaviors, such as killing monsters and drinking alcohol, in order to repair their damaged masculinity. The relationship between Alaric, the vampire Damon Salvatore, and the series' protagonist Elena Gilbert also suggests that women need to be molded into figures who inspire and rely on the active male body. In correcting Gunn's and Gordon's mistakes of

being close-minded towards the supernatural, Alaric's bond with Damon allows for the hunter and monster (who are both white men) to accept each other as equals in restoring the status quo. Though in order to do this, *The Vampire Diaries* reinforces gendered stereotypes and ultimately suggest an underlying theme of women needing to accept the male as their protectors and not seek out their own agency.

Chapter Four examines a significant challenge to the hunter's status quo, with Kate Argent (a werewolf hunter from *Teen Wolf*) taking on a role that is usually coded as masculine. Yet, just as Gunn and Gordon encounter the implicit racial rules of monster hunting, Kate faces problematic gendered rules. As a hunter, Kate displays excessive violence and predatory sexuality. The latter connotes a unique connection between Kate and the largely female audience of *Teen Wolf*, with Kate's sexuality being reflected by female viewers in their countless Tumblr and Pinterest posts about the show. Both Kate and *Teen Wolf*'s fans are connected by their shared obsession over the male bodies in the series. With Kate Argent, not only is the monster hunter represented as a female, but she also presents a type of monster hunter that embodies the complex relationship between television programs, program developers, and fans. This marks the hunter as not only an agent of stabilizing the status quo, but also integrates the fan within the narrative. However, while linking Kate to *Teen Wolf*'s fans appears to be a move towards eliminating the male hetero-normative bias of monster hunters, Kate's predatory sexuality and her ultimate demise warns fans that their own obsessive sexual compulsions towards the show will have consequences. Therefore, it ends up reinscribing the masculinist discourses of the previous iterations of the human monster hunter.

At the center of the televisual human monster hunter narrative is a unique embodiment of authoritative institutions, racial representation, male bonding, and female sexuality. And I see this often-ignored figure being just as important as the monsters that horror scholarship prefers to examine, functioning well beyond the roles of monster-pursuer and victim-savior. The monster hunter personifies

Noel Carroll's positive human character, whose actions and values seek to quell various anxieties plaguing society. At the same time, the hunter also imparts racial and gendered ideologies that (as it develops over time) propagates a conservative frame of mind both within the televisual narrative and to its audience.

CHAPTER 1 "'I'M AN ANNOYANCE TO MY SUPERIORS, A JOKE TO MY PEERS…SHOUTING TO ANYONE WHO WILL LISTEN': *KOLCHAK* AND *THE X-FILES*' MODERNIZATION OF THE TELEVISUAL MONSTER HUNTER"

I: Introduction

Cars stalling while the monster slowly approaches, women tripping over branches as they flee the monster, and teenagers having sex only to be inevitably murdered by the monster – these are just a few of the clichés that we come to expect when watching horror narratives. Another fundamental cliché of the genre is the depiction of adult authority figures as being useless to the young heroes. From a young woman telling people about an undead serial killer stalking her in her dreams, to a young boy telling his parents that his seemingly innocent doll is a killer, and a young man calling the police to inform them that his neighbor is a vampire,[28] these scenarios all end in the same way: no one believes the scared young people, until it is too late. Parents and the police see them as crazy, dismiss their warnings, and leave the young people to save the day on their own. This cliché of warning negligent authority and confronting the supernatural on one's own is not only central to horror more broadly but is significant to tales of the televisual human monster hunter as well. However, the difference in these programs is that there is an adult who's actually effective in combating the monstrous.

Kolchak: The Night Stalker (1974-1975) and *The X-Files* (1993-2002) embody the 'no one believes me' view, yet they shift the attention onto an older male figure; in this case, two of the most influential televisual hunter figures, Carl Kolchak and Fox Mulder. ABC's *Kolchak the Night Stalker* revolves around Carl Kolchak (Darren McGavin), an Independent New Service (INS) reporter struggling to publish articles about various fantastic monsters invading the city of Chicago. *Kolchak*'s single season focuses on Kolchak's encounters with a variety of monsters and his subsequent arguments with his

[28] As seen in *A Nightmare on Elm Street*, directed by Wes Craven, performed by Heather Langenkamp, Johnny Depp, and Robert Englund, New Line Cinema, 1984; *Child's Play*, directed by Tom Holland, performed by Catherine Hicks, Chris Sarandon, and Alex Vincent, United Artists, 1988; and *Fright Night*, directed by Tom Holland, performed by Chris Sarandon, William Ragsdale, and Amanda Bearse, Columbia Pictures, 1985.

editor Tony Vincenzo (Simon Oakland) on the legitimacy of his investigations into the supernatural. Kolchak's need to utilize police resources has him frequently interacting with figures such as Police Captain Warren (Ken Lynch), who overtly dislikes Kolchak, and the morgue attendant Gordy Spangler (John Fiedler), who Kolchak regularly bribes for information when the police keep him out of the loop. In contrast to everyone else, who are either negligent or ignorant of the existence of monsters, Kolchak embraces the supernatural as a real threat and fights to warn the public that monsters exist and are dangerous.

FOX's *The X-Files* centers on Fox Mulder (David Duchovny), who is an FBI agent on a quest to find the truth behind his sister's, Samantha (Vanessa Morley), alien abduction. *The X-Files*' nine seasons primarily depict Mulder relying on his partner Dana Scully (Gillian Anderson) for her medical expertise to support his investigations and FBI assistant director Walter Skinner (Mitch Pileggi) to sign off on his paranormal cases. Mulder's position in the FBI and quest to solve Samantha's disappearance puts him on the radar of the Syndicate, a clandestine government organization led by a man only known as 'The Cigarette Smoking Man' (William B. Davis). However, while the Syndicate is made up of government officials aiming to derail Mulder's investigations, it also includes officials who provide him with inside information, such as 'Deep Throat' (Jerry Hardin) and 'The Well-Manicured Man' (John Neville). Mulder's investigations have him encounter skeptical FBI colleagues, corrupt government officials, and paranormal threats. While a majority of the bureau denies the existence of extraterrestrials, Mulder embraces the supernatural because of his firsthand experience and loss from it.

Within both *Kolchak* and *The X-Files*, the main characters are the only ones in their respective worlds to actively pursue the truth behind supernatural mysteries, even if it puts their careers and lives in danger. Like the aforementioned ignored young people, Kolchak and Mulder warn authority figures to no avail. However, unlike those young people, these men have access to police and federal resources, which lightens the burden placed on them. In frequently challenging authority within their quests to

combat the supernatural, Kolchak and Mulder reconfigure the monster-hunting qualities established by *Dracula*'s (1897) Abraham Van Helsing.

As mentioned in the introduction, Van Helsing is *the* monster hunter in academic explorations of the figure and in the public's imagination, and his character embodies an "unquestioning faith in the legitimacy of established authority in the face of [supernatural] threats."[29] Kolchak and Mulder stay true to Van Helsing's depiction of the hunter as an agent charged with restoring normalcy, but they also subvert Van Helsing's personification of the hunter as an unquestioned and trusted authority figure. In having to deal with authority figures who actively hide the existence of the paranormal, Kolchak and Mulder reconfigure Van Helsing's 19th-century literary representation of the figure and modernize it for television. While not all TV monster hunters express Kolchak and Mulder's ignored expert position, they do go to great lengths to use institutional resources properly – illustrating that authoritative resources are instrumental in the fight against paranormal threats. Such an obstacle/reliance dynamic makes authority the bane and the blessing of the human monster hunter, and today's TV hunters continue this complicated relationship with their authority figures.

Kolchak and Mulder help to establish the televisual human monster hunter as someone who fixates on the supernatural, because of either professional curiosity or personal loss. They also establish the human monster hunter as a truth-seeker who challenges deceptive authority figures, choosing to use their resources in the right way, and both shows popularize a television formula that results in the hunter's perpetual confrontation with the supernatural.[30] Kolchak's and Mulder's conflicts with the supernatural are never-ending. The end of one case just results in the emergence of another threat, thus

[29] See Andrew Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists: A Cultural History of the Horror Movie* (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991), 220.

[30] Rather than continuing the anthologized formats of *The Twilight Zone*, created by Rod Serling, CBS, 1959-1964 and *The Outer Limits*, created by Leslie Stevens, ABC, 1963-1965; these two programs famously explored sci-fi, horror, and fantasy themes in standalone episodes, wherein every episode covered a different set of characters and settings.

trapping this ignored expert in a perpetual loop of confronting the supernatural and authority with no end in sight.

II: Kolchak and Mulder's First Impressions and Lasting Consequences

Prior to *Kolchak* and *The X-Files*' depictions of the figure, the early representations of the monster hunter, such as *Carmilla*'s (1872) Baron Vordenburg and *Dracula*'s Abraham Van Helsing, embody an expertise required to defeat supernatural threats and reassert society's dependency on authority. Put simply, the traditional monster hunter is equivalent to the police and military, with his infallible and unambiguously heroic nature suggesting that those very qualities are also intrinsic to authoritative institutions. Carl Kolchak and Fox Mulder establish the television monster hunter as different from the 19th-century literary incarnations by defining the character as in conflict with authority. They ask authority figures the difficult questions. They usher in the TV monster hunter's motivation as arising out of either curiosity or loss. Lastly, their actions end up legitimizing the importance of authority's resources. These qualities are best illustrated by Kolchak's and Mulder's introductions within the pilot episodes of their respective series, "The Ripper" and "Pilot."[31] In looking at Kolchak's and Mulder's first scenes, their readiness to take up cases, and the recurring outcomes of these cases, I will lay the groundwork for how these first episodes define the key qualities of the televisual human monster hunter.

1) Tearing Ties with Authority and Seeing the Fantastic as a Possibility

Carl Kolchak's first scene in "The Ripper" has him arguing with his editor, Tony Vincenzo, regarding his methods for covering a previous news story. While covering a bank robbery, Kolchak "acted like a police commissioner" by commandeering a private automobile and placing six people under arrest. Kolchak sees his actions as a reporter's clever ingenuity, while Vincenzo calls it high-

[31] *Kolchak: The Night Stalker*, "The Ripper," ABC, September 13, 1974, written by Rudolph Borchert; and *The X-Files*, "Pilot," FOX, September 10, 1993, written by Chris Carter.

handed lunacy. Vincenzo makes it clear that Kolchak's actions managed to "tear asunder the many ties" the INS has with the Chicago police department and Captain Warren (Ken Lynch) "who hates [Kolchak]…a lot." Through this conversation, the audience understands Kolchak's history of overstepping his boundaries as a reporter, as well as the ire he draws from police officials and his own editor because of it.

Fox Mulder's introduction in "Pilot" similarly conveys his superiors' distaste for his investigations and serves as a topic of conversation between agent Dana Scully and FBI Section Chief Scott Blevins (Charles Cioffi). In a meeting to assign Scully as Mulder's new partner, Blevins describes Mulder as having a "consuming devotion to an unassigned project outside the bureau mainstream." Blevins requests that Scully debunk Mulder's x-files work with proper scientific analysis. When Scully first meets with Mulder afterwards, he identifies himself as the FBI's most unwanted and comments that while their superiors ignore cases labeled as 'unexplained phenomena,' he believes that "when convention and science offer us no answers [why not] turn to the fantastic as a plausibility?" In these interactions with Blevins and Mulder, Scully and the audience are introduced to Mulder as an agent who believes in the fantastic and works outside of the mainstream. Like Kolchak, Mulder is an investigator who embraces the unconventional, which disconnects him from superiors who wish to discredit his work.

Kolchak's and Mulder's opening scenes thus introduce them each as having an intrepid nature and as willing to upset authority figures for the sake of a case. With the audience coming into these narratives in the midst of things, there's the notion that Kolchak and Mulder have been butting heads with authority over paranormal cases for years. Unlike other monster hunters, who we meet as they transition into becoming monster hunters, Kolchak and Mulder are presented as already in the middle of challenging authority. In the moments following the above introductory scenes, both Kolchak's and Mulder's willingness to go against authority figure and see the fantastic as plausible allows for them to step-in for colleagues who are unable to properly investigate the supernatural.

2) Asking the Difficult Questions and Noticing What Others Miss

The *Kolchak* episode "The Ripper" focuses on the return of the original Jack the Ripper, whose murder spree in Chicago begins with a local masseuse, Laura Moresco. Moresco's murder is assigned to Ron Updyke, a fellow INS reporter, but he is unable to even look at the victim's body[32] and instead refers to another reporter's details in his write up of the murder. With Updyke unable to put up with the case's violence and requesting to go home, Kolchak takes the case and proceeds to question Police Captain Warren at a press conference. Kolchak asks Warren to explain how the suspect escaped the police by surviving a four-story fall and making scrap metal out of a patrol car. Warren's reply: "Don't *you* worry about our patrol cars. As I think Mr. Vincenzo explained to you, you're not the police commissioner." Despite knowing that Warren hates him, Kolchak sticks with a line of questioning, which stresses the suspect's unusual nature, and this pays off because another reporter shares more strange details with him.[33] In his willingness to bear the case's gruesome nature and ask difficult questions to an authority figure who hates him, Kolchak further establishes his nature as one of the only people prepared to expose supernatural threats.

In *The X-Files*' "Pilot," four Oregonian teenagers from the same graduating class die under mysterious circumstances. Mulder suspects this to be the work of extraterrestrials, due to the presence of strange marks and an unknown synthetic protein in the latest victim, Karen Swenson. When Scully notes that the case has already been investigated by other agents, Mulder points out that those agents were called back to the bureau after a week without explanation, and the case was buried in the x-files. In digging up the case, Mulder notices something that the other agents missed: "The autopsy reports of the first three victims, show no unidentified marks or tissue samples. But those reports were signed by a

[32] Updyke was unable to handle gruesome details such as Laura Moresco's throat being cut, with her head nearly severed from her body.
[33] Jane Plumm (Beatrice Colen), a competing reporter whose newspaper received a letter from the Ripper that included details withheld by the police – such as the murderer cutting out her kidneys, just like the original Ripper.

different medical examiner than the latest victim." The omission of the marks and synthetic protein, present in the Swenson autopsy, suggests that the medical examiner of the first three victims concealed information. It is off of this detail that Mulder pursues the case and unearths what appears to be an extraterrestrial corpse in the process.[34] Like Kolchak, Mulder's aptitude for picking up cases mishandled by his colleagues and acquiring valuable evidence in the process shows that his unconventional nature is necessary for uncovering threats to society that others miss or attempt to hide.

Because Kolchak and Mulder refuse to acknowledge their superiors' orders, both men are able step up and expose the truth of supernatural dangers when others cannot or will not. In their willingness to endure the gore and pick up on subtle clues, both Kolchak and Mulder prove to be the public's best chance of investigating the truth behind supernatural threats. Both *Kolchak* and *The X-Files* treat the paranormal as real, and Kolchak and Mulder' introductory episodes also establish their motivations for pursuing these supernatural cases and bringing their findings to light. This is important because it means that the audience automatically understands that Kolchak and Mulder are *right* and that the authority figures who stand in their way are *wrong* — and the audience learns this from the get go.

3) Motivations of Finding the Big Scoop or an Abducted Loved-One

In "The Ripper" Kolchak warns Police Captain Warren that the killer "doesn't just think he's the Ripper, he *is* the Ripper!" When Warren ignores Kolchak and calls him crazy, Kolchak begins rattling off the details of his research on the case: reviewing Jack the Ripper's history (with dates), the failed attempts to kill the Ripper, and all of the strange happenings in Chicago. *Kolchak* proposes that the murderer is the real Jack the Ripper, and indications of his supernatural nature are provided when Kolchak first observes the murder suspect surviving a four-story fall after being riddled by police bullets.

[34] This occurs when Mulder and Scully exhume one of the other victim's body, to see if they can get a tissue sample to match the unknown protein found in Karen Swenson's body.

Kolchak begins suspecting that Chicago is being threatened by the real Ripper when Jane Plumm, a rival reporter, shares a letter written by the suspect with a bizarre rhyme[35] about removing the victim's kidneys. This prompts Kolchak to research ripper-style murders in recent history, and the show eventually shows us that Kolchak is right to suspect the original Ripper as the murderer. These facts and details are not only meant to convince Captain Warren of the monster's threat to the city, they show off Kolchak's dogged work-ethic and the glut of research he's done to get all of the facts on this possible big scoop.

By the episode's end, Kolchak vanquishes the Ripper, but also loses all his evidence in the process.[36] This final scene shows the value of Kolchak's intrepid nature, with his curiosity resulting in the elimination of a supernatural threat. However, his defeat of the monster also leads to the destruction of property and loss of any tangible evidence to validate his actions. Later episodes continue to illustrate Kolchak's professional curiosity and zeal as being a double-edge sword, with him frequently defeating supernatural threats only to end up losing all evidence needed for his article.[37] Thus, *Kolchak* sets up its lead character as being right, but never able to get anyone to believe him.

Fox Mulder's interest in the supernatural extends far beyond a need to satiate professional curiosity. After he and Scully obtain an X-ray and genetic samples from the body they unearthed in "Pilot," proving an alien connection to the murders, Mulder confides his interest in the paranormal to Scully: "I was twelve when it happened. My sister [Samantha] was eight. She just disappeared out of her bed one night. Just gone, vanished. No note, no phone calls, no evidence of anything." With Samantha's disappearance tearing his family apart, Mulder uses the x-files' resources to provide him with any

[35] With that rhyme being: "And now a pretty girl will die, so Jack can have his kidney pie."
[36] He does so through luring the Ripper into a pool and dropping a live wire in it – which causes an electrical box to overload and destroy the house the Ripper was using as a hideout.
[37] These occurrences include him accidentally breaking his own camera as he escapes a zombie, as seen in *Kolchak*, "The Zombie,", ABC, September 20, 1974, written by Zekial Marko; having a succubus' remains turning to dust, as seen in *Kolchak*, "Demon in Lace," ABC, February 7, 1975, written by Stephen Lord; and having the cold gas ruining the film of his camera when he defeats a Native American bear-spirit with it, as seen in *Kolchak*, "The Energy Eater," ABC, December 13, 1974, written by Arthur Rowe.

possible leads on her abduction. In his search for the truth, Mulder notices that someone at a higher level within the government is classifying information and protecting something. Despite this attempt at secrecy, for Mulder "nothing else matters" outside of finding Samantha, and this case in Oregon "is as close as [he's] ever gotten to" finding the truth. This suggests Mulder has an all-or-nothing approach, which shows that his stake in investigating the supernatural is a personal one.

In losing Samantha and fervently investigating any and all related cases, Fox Mulder establishes himself as being driven by the loss of a loved one, a central theme for the monster hunter to this very day.[38] However, his pursuit of cases that government higher-ups wish to suppress results in the loss and confiscation of any evidence he collects.[39] By the end of "Pilot," Mulder and Scully report that the victims were subjected to tests by aliens, with a metal implant as their only piece of evidence.[40] The very last scene shows the Cigarette Smoking Man taking Mulder and Scully's case file from the FBI to an undisclosed room in the Pentagon.

The X-Files' first episode not only sets up Mulder's belief in the supernatural as stemming from a traumatic experience at a young age, but it also validates his paranoia of the government, setting the tone of Mulder being successful in collecting evidence only for the Syndicate to find a way to take it from him. Like Kolchak, Mulder's evidence goes missing. But in this case, it isn't Mulder's over-zealous nature, as is the cause with Kolchak. Instead, it's the *active interference* of the government. Also like

[38] The loss of a female loved-one is a frequent trope to the 'birth' of a monster hunter, with sisters, wives (*Angel*, created by Joss Whedon and David Greenwalt, WB, 1999-2004), mothers (*Supernatural*, created by Eric Kripke, WB and CW, 2005-present), aunts (*Grimm*, created by Stephen Carpenter, David Greenwalt and Jim Kouf, NBC, 2011-present), and girlfriends (*The Vampire Diaries*, created by Kevin Williamson and Julie Plec, CW, 2009-present); all serving as victims turned or killed by a monster – and this becomes that which fuels the hunter's mission.

[39] The Syndicate's surveillance of Mulder in future episodes include: having Mulder find listening devices in his apartment, as seen in *The X-Files*, "E.B.E," FOX, February 18, 1994, written by Glen Morgan and James Wong; having an agent spy on and work against Mulder, as seen in *The X-Files*, "Sleepless," FOX, October 7, 1994, written by Howard Gordon; and having audio surveillance being conducted in his bureau office, as seen in *The X-Files*, "Little Green Men," FOX, September 16, 1994, written by Glen Morgan and James Wong.

[40] Following Mulder telling Scully about his personal interest in the supernatural, someone (presumably a Syndicate agent) steals the body they unearthed and burns down the hotel they were staying at (destroying all of the X-rays and computer data they acquired).

Kolchak, *The X-Files* positions Mulder as inherently right in assuming there is a paranormal threat, but he is never able to prove it because of governmental higher-ups like the Cigarette Smoking Man.

4) The News Reporter and FBI Agent's Unique Outlook on Authority

Within "The Ripper" and "Pilot," both Kolchak and Mulder are introduced as outsiders because of their interest in the unconventional. Like Christopher Justice's discussion on the colonizing impulse of the monster hunter,[41] both men reinforce the need for outsiders to come in and civilize. But in *Kolchak* and *The X-Files*, instead of civilizing people, their lead characters are civilizing the government by doing things the right way. They properly investigate the supernatural cases that their colleagues are ill-equipped to cover. Yet, Kolchak and Mulder's professional curiosity and personal loss also put them in the crosshairs of authority figures, who display an outright hatred or agenda to obstruct their investigations. While this strongly suggests that Kolchak and Mulder embody public fears of authoritative negligence and deception, positioning the two men as 'what if the conspiracy theorists are right' models,[42] I am more interested in the complicated relationship they share with authority.

Instead of reading Kolchak's and Mulder's difficulties with the police/government officials as establishing the monster hunter as being opposed to authority figures, their access to and position within authoritative institutions provides them with a unique outlook. Kolchak and Mulder establish the hunter as someone who values finding the truth and seeks to uphold the social order. They confront the police and government in order to obtain information on the supernatural and prevent monsters from killing civilians through their positions as reporter and FBI agent respectively. Through this complicated

[41] See Christopher Justice, "Ecological Narrative or Imperial Exploitation: What's the 'Monster' in Animal Planet's *River Monsters*?" in *Words for a Small Planet: Ecocritical Views*, ed. Nanette Norris (New York: Lexington Books, 2010), 37-56.

[42] For analyses which treat The X-Files as a conspiracy narrative, see scholars such as Douglas Kellner, "The X-Files and the Aesthetics and Politics of Postmodern Pop," *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism* 57.2 (1999): 161-175; Charles Soukup, "Television Viewing as Vicarious Resistance: The X-Files and Conspiracy Discourse," *The Southern Communication Journal* 68.1 (2001): 14-26; and Leroy G. Dorsey, "Re-reading The X-Files: The Trickster in Contemporary Conspiracy Myth," *Western Journal of Communication* 66.4 (2002): 448-468.

relationship with authority, both shows aren't anti-authority, but are anti authority-not-doing-its-proper-job.

This complicated relationship taps into a quintessential function of classical monster hunters, as observed by Andrew Tudor. As the unambiguous heroes in horror narratives, "the powers of disorder are always defeated by expertise and coercion, [with] the genre world's authorities – whether those of science or of the state – remaining credible protectors of individual and social order."[43] Simply put, the hunter's expertise ultimately seeks to re-impose authoritative order through killing the monster. Kolchak's and Mulder's stance as not being opposed to authority—Kolchak isn't attempting to topple the police department and Mulder works for the FBI after all—but willing to take action if officials fail to protect the people maintains this need for preserving authoritative order's effectiveness. Kolchak and Mulder would not have a problem if their superiors were open and honest about supernatural creatures; since they're not, both men take the necessary action of finding out the truth and reinforce authority's credibility as societal protectors.

III: Kolchak and Mulder's Connection to the Watergate Era

From their introductions in "The Ripper" and "Pilot," Kolchak's and Mulder's complicated relationship with the police and government positions both groups as a hindrance and vital to their investigations. This is a marked shift from their literary predecessor, Abraham Van Helsing, who embodies the monster hunter as an inherent authority figure deserving unquestioning faith from his fellow citizens.[44] Kolchak and Mulder revise Van Helsing's authority-figure-as-perfect model, in that their frequent confrontations with the police and government acknowledge a need to not just blindly follow

[43] Andrew Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists: A Cultural History of the Horror Movie* (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell, 1991), 214.

[44] For some of the seminal examinations of Van Helsing as an embodiment of the moral standard, see scholars Anne McWhir, "Pollution and Redemption in 'Dracula,'" *Modern Language Studies* 17.3 (1987): 31-40; Randy Loren Rasmussen, *Children of the Night: The Six Archetypal Characters of Classic Horror Films* (Jefferson: McFarland 2006), 84-85; and Andrew Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists: A Cultural History of the Horror Movie* (New Jersey: Wiley-Blackwell 1991), 165-171.

the authority figures in power: rather, there is a right way and a wrong way for authority to be expressed. Both shows maintain that those currently in charge are doing it wrong. In this sense, *Kolchak* and *The X-Files* are both heavily influenced by the Watergate Scandal, a defining moment of the 1970s which plays a central role in *Kolchak*'s timeline and the development of *The X-Files*.

Robin Wood famously acknowledges that the 1960s and '70s are significant to the evolution of the American horror film.[45] According to Wood, the monstrousness of the Vietnam War undermined the people's faith in their governmental leaders, which then gave rise to the production of gruesome and violent horror films, all of which convey a lack of any kind of happy ending. The Watergate Scandal plays to this era's nihilistic attitude and mistrust of the government, because it resulted in a severe blow to the public's confidence in authority with the revelation of deceit at the highest levels of the government. This ugly moment in America's history runs concurrently with *Kolchak*'s televisual run in 1974-75: as Kolchak investigated the supernatural, President Nixon's role in the Watergate conspiracy had come to light, and he had resigned from office. Kolchak's position as a reporter dealing with uncooperative police officials as they ridicule him about his speculative paranormal theories suggests a reflection of the immediate times, with Kolchak serving as a Woodward and Bernstein figure in the program.

One of *Kolchak*'s most noteworthy episodes to speak to the 1970s cultural atmosphere is "The Devil's Platform."[46] In this episode, senatorial candidate, Robert W. Palmer (Tom Skerritt), sells his soul to win a state election and transforms into a hellhound in order to kill the threats to his campaign.[47] As Kolchak investigates and suspects Palmer's connection to the hellhound, he attempts to explain his theory of Palmer being evil incarnate to Tony Vincenzo. Yet, when Vincenzo leaves the office

[45] See Robin Wood, "The American Nightmare: Horror in the 70s," in *Horror, The Film Reader*, ed. Mark Jancovich (New York: Routledge, 2002), 29.
[46] *Kolchak*, "The Devil's Platform," ABC, November 15, 1974, written by Tim Maschler.
[47] In the course of the episode, Palmer murders his ex-campaign manager, his former mistress, and an incumbent senator while in his hellhound form.

unconvinced, Kolchak responds with: "that's what's wrong with this country. Nobody cares. You try to warn them. Do they listen? No. Nobody listens. Nobody cares."

Considering the show's 1974 time period, Kolchak's frustrations with the difficulty of bringing to light a dirty politician is quite apt. Kolchak's 'nobody cares' attitude dually conveys a sense of not only cynicism and mistrust, but also an apathy towards having to deal with yet *another* dirty politician. Therefore, amongst his conflict with the police, this episode clearly illustrates that Kolchak is willing to push back against any authority figure who would misuse their power for selfish reasons.[48] Intriguingly, there's also a realization that Kolchak might be doing this dogged work for an audience resigned to the fact that things are happening without their knowledge – and like Kolchak, the audience may also be overwhelmed by the revelations of even more conspiracies.

Whereas *Kolchak* takes place during the 1970s, the Watergate scandal was also key to *The X-Files* from the program's very inception. Chris Carter, the program's developer, is on record as stating that he was inspired by *Kolchak* and that the Watergate trials were a formative political experience for him and influenced his development of the series.[49] Carter's implementation of the Watergate trials is best expressed in the role it plays with Fox Mulder's history and his early investigations. In "Little Green Men,"[50] a flashback reveals that Samantha was not only abducted in 1973, but this event also occurred as Mulder was watching a news report on the 18-minute gap in the taped conversation between President Nixon and Chief of Staff H.R. Haldeman. This transformative moment of familial loss, sparking Mulder's obsession with the supernatural, is explicitly tied to a key moment in the Watergate scandal.

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[48] A theme that is revisited when a Senator attempts to impede Kolchak's investigation into a rampaging robot created by the US military, as seen in *Kolchak*, "Mr. R.I.N.G.," ABC, January 10, 1975, written by L. Ford Neale and John Huff.

[49] A 1994 interview with *Sci-fi Entertainment* has Carter state "'I was inspired by the show *Kolchak, The Night Stalker*…It had really scared me as a kid and I wanted to do something as dark and mysterious as I remembered it to be.'" Lisa Maccarillo, "A Conversation with *The X-Files*' creator Chris Carter," *Sci-Fi Entertainment* (December 1994); and in a 2014 interview with *mentalfloss.com*, Carter notes that "I always liken myself to a child of Watergate, and that's where I developed my kind of distrust of the government…and *The X-Files* capitalized on that." Rick Marshall, "Q&A: Chris Carter on *The X-Files* and 'The '90s: The Last Great Decade'," *Mentalfloss* (July 3, 2014).

[50] *The X-Files*, "Little Green Men," FOX, September 16, 1994, written by Glen Morgan and James Wong.

Chris Carter's parallel use of the disappearance of Samantha and the disappearance of time on the Nixon White House Tapes creates a double loss of innocence. These events shattered both a 12-year-old boy's sense of family and America's faith in the President. Together, they foreshadow the political corruption that Mulder will have to eventually confront in his search for the truth.

In the aforementioned Chris Carter interview, Carter also notes that Mulder and Scully were created to resemble Woodward and Bernstein, with their penchant for unraveling conspiracies.[51] Like Woodward and Bernstein, Mulder has his own mysterious inside source using the moniker 'Deep Throat.' In the episode "Deep Throat,"[52] a member of the clandestine organization (the Syndicate) takes a special interest in Mulder's search for the truth and offers him inside information. Like his Watergate-namesake, Deep Throat supplies Mulder with various governmental secrets.[53] Even though the character is murdered by the end of *The X-Files*' first season,[54] he starts a long line of Syndicate informants who supply Mulder with various pieces of government information.[55] Key to *The X-Files*' use of the Watergate era is not just an integration of mistrust of the government within the series; there's also a push for understanding that there are inside sources who will aid truth-seekers in their mission to expose the truth. Therefore, the program's allusions to the era suggest that along with the corrupt officials and agents, there are government officials willing to put their careers and lives on the line to expose the truth.

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[51] Marshall, "Q&A: Chris Carter on *The X-Files* and 'The '90s: The Last Great Decade.'"

[52] *The X-Files*, "Deep Throat," FOX, September 17, 1993, written by Chris Carter.

[53] He passes along information such as: the Department of Defense's interest in a computer programmer, as seen in *The X-Files*, "Ghost in the Machine," FOX, October 29, 1993, written by Alex Gansa and Howard Gordon; that a UFO has been retrieved by a secret government quick-response unit, as seen in *The X-Files*, "Fallen Angel," FOX, November 19, 1993, written by Howard Gordon and Alex Gansa; information on the eugenics research for breeding soldiers, as seen in *The X-Files*, "Eve," FOX, December 10, 1993, written by Kenneth Biller and Chris Brancato; and the US government's bargaining with a serial killer for advanced alien research, as seen in *The X-Files*, "Young at Heart," FOX, February 11, 1994, written by Scott Kaufer and Chris Carter.

[54] *The X-Files*, "The Erlenmeyer Flask," FOX, May 13, 1994, written by Chris Carter.

[55] These other informants include: The Well-Manicured Man in *The X-Files*, "The Blessing Way," FOX, September 22, 1995, written by Chris Carter; Marita Covarrubias in *The X-Files*, "Herrenvolk," FOX, October 4, 1996, written by Chris Carter; Mr. X in *The X-Files*, "Unusual Suspects," FOX, November 16, 1997, written by Vince Gilligan; and General Edward Wegman in *The X-Files*, "Dreamland," FOX, November 29, 1998, written by Vince Gilligan, John Shiban, and Frank Spotnitz.

With their incorporation of the 1970s mistrust in authority via references to Watergate, both *Kolchak* and *The X-Files* utilize the era as a way to further stress the monster hunter as a truth-seeker: one who confronts the misuse of power on the part of the government (local in Kolchak's case and federal in Mulder's case) and uses authority's resources in the right way. Between Kolchak's role as a reporter working with morgue attendants and Mulder's reliance on Syndicate informants, both characters find a way to circumvent authority figures who purposely deceive the public. Kolchak and Mulder position the human monster hunter as someone who is both part of and separate from authoritative institutions. Their respective positions as reporter and agent situate them as outside and inside of the law, but both equally use the law's resources to aid them in saving people from monsters. However, in the end, the police and the Syndicate have greater access: they have the power to cover up and steal evidence. This means that even though Kolchak and Mulder use their authority correctly, they must be resigned to never being able to get the last laugh. This positioning of the monster hunter as a figure either separate from or part of the law remains a significant feature to this day for programs that feature law enforcement agents as hunters[56] or people using the law's resources in their missions to save others.[57]

IV: *Kolchak* and *The X-Files*' use of the Monster-of-the-Week Format

In presenting Carl Kolchak and Fox Mulder as truth-seekers uniquely positioned within authority and pushing back against their negligent superiors, both men set the tone for the televisual human monster hunter as valuing the safety of citizens over their own well-being. Just as both men deviate from the Van Helsing script of embodying an unquestioning faith in authority figures, so too do their

[56] As seen with characters such as Chicago detective Nick O'Malley (*Special Unit 2*, created by Evan Katz, UPN, 2001-2002), FBI agent Olivia Dunham (*Fringe*, created by J.J. Abrams, Alex Kurtzman, and Roberto Orci, FOX, 2008-2013), Portland detective Nick Burkhardt (*Grimm*, created by Stephen Carpenter, David Greenwalt and Jim Kouf, NBC, 2011-present), and New York Police Lt. Abbie Mills (*Sleepy Hollow*, created by Phillip Iscove, Alex Kurtzman and Roberto Orci, FOX, 2013-present).

[57] Which is the case with shows such as *Angel*, created by Joss Whedon and David Greenwalt, WB, 1999-2004; *Supernatural*, created by Eric Kripke, WB and CW, 2005-present; and *Teen Wolf*, created by Jeff Davis MTV, 2011-present; where the heroes find creative ways to obtain case evidence, such as falsifying government identification to gain access to important information.

televisual narrative structures define how the hunter's protection of the norm functions as a tireless undertaking. Whereas Van Helsing operates within a closed narrative and achieves closure in his mission, Kolchak and Mulder function in an open narrative structure. This open structure further pushes their inability to find closure in their respective missions and suggests that they are exiled within a perpetual state of conflict.

As one of the ways to assemble a story, the closed narrative structure tends to have its characters overcome the obstacle, solve the mystery, and find closure by the story's end.[58] It makes sense that this occurs in novels and films, which are traditionally closed narratives. For example, Bram Stoker's novel *Dracula* ends with the Count destroyed and the normative order restored. By the novel's end, Van Helsing is rewarded with a happy ending. The epilogue portrays him as living with the Harkers, and serving as a grandfather-like figure for their son Quincey.[59] Van Helsing's representation as a force for good with an infallible nature suggests that his happy ending embodies the Christian undertones of the figure: rewarding his purity and noble actions with a patriarchal role in a family structure. This ending for Van Helsing conveys the idea that any threat to normality will eventually be vanquished, and the person who restores the normative order will be rewarded.[60] In having Kolchak and Mulder shift away from this hunter-as-pure-and-infallible model, the televisual hunter moves away from such a moment of closure, suggesting that Kolchak and Mulder aren't pure enough to deserve a happy ending, so they put themselves in danger without thought of being rewarded with one.

In an open narrative, such as serial television programs, questions and mysteries are left unresolved as a means of carrying over tension into the next episode and season.[61] A narrative formula that *Kolchak* uses to continually deny closure for its main character is the Monster-of-the-Week (MOTW)

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[58] Robert C. Allen, *Channels of Discourse, Reassembled: Television and Contemporary Criticism* (Chapel Hill: UNC Press, 2010), 107.
[59] Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (New York: Doubleday, 1897), 590.
[60] Tudor, *Monsters and Mad Scientists*, 214.
[61] Allen, *Channels of Discourse*, 107.

format. The MOTW format does exactly as it says: on a week-to-week basis, each episode features a different monster to threaten normality. In the twenty-episode span of *Kolchak*, each episode presents a new monstrous threat for Kolchak to face, from battling stock horror creatures (vampires and werewolves), to taking on the less familiar monsters of different cultures (the Hindu Rakshasa and Helen of Sparta).[62] Through having Kolchak go from confronting a succubus in one week to a mummy in the next, [63] the MOTW formula suggests that the normative order can only be restored temporarily. This narrative feature conveys that there is always going to be a new threat lurking around the corner, hiding within various parts of society. Kolchak's week-to-week dealings with various hidden threats in different locales across Chicago suggests that his job will never be done. He will never get the reward that Van Helsing gets and is thus resigned to uncovering *all* threats that would normally go unseen.

The X-Files' use of the MOTW format follows *Kolchak's*, but adds an extra layer of narrative to differentiate itself from it. *The X-Files* interweaves its MOTW episodes with episodes strictly focusing on Mulder's investigation into Samantha's disappearance, which are referred to as the Mytharc episodes.[64] Mytharc episodes focus on a sustained narrative over several different episodes rather than a single narrative within a stand-alone episode (as in MOTW). In any given season of twenty-plus episodes, there are only a handful of Mytharc episodes, with the rest being standalone MOTW episodes. The balancing between MOTW and Mytharc episodes allows for *The X-Files* to concurrently show the various threats lurking in society and also dig further into Mulder's progress in exposing the conspiracy.

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[62] As seen in "The Vampire," *Kolchak*, episode no. 4, first broadcast October 4, 1974 by ABC, directed by Don Weis and written by Bill Stratton; "The Werewolf," *Kolchak*, episode no. 5, first broadcast November 1, 1974 by ABC, directed by Allen Baron and written by David Chase and Paul Playdon; "Horror in the Heights," *Kolchak*, episode no. 11, first broadcast December 20, 1974 by ABC, directed by Michael T. Caffey and written by Jimmy Sangster; and "The Youth Killer," *Kolchak*, episode no. 19, first broadcast March 14, 1975 by ABC, directed by Doug McDougall and written by Rudolph Borchert.

[63] Which is the case with *Kolchak*, "Demon in Lace," ABC, February 7, 1975, written by Stephen Lord; and *Kolchak*, "Legacy of Terror," ABC, February 14, 1975, written by Arthur Rowe.

[64] A nickname given by the fans when show began packaging DVD sets which solely focus on the conspiracy episodes, which are called *The X-Files Mythology*.

For example, *The X-Files*' third season shows Mulder learning that his father was part of the Syndicate and he was the one who recommended Samantha's abduction and that Scully's season two abduction is connected to the U.S. government's recruitment of Japanese scientists to develop alien-human hybrids.[65] The six episodes in-between these two major developments were unconnected to the Mytharc episodes and had Mulder investigate a wide-variety of cases.[66] This is just one sample, but through the course of nine seasons, *The X-Files* refashions *Kolchak*'s MOTW formula by conveying the monstrous dangers lying across America and slowly developing its own long-term story-arc of Mulder's search for the truth. This arc promises that Mulder can possibly get personal closure, something that Kolchak has no real chance at.

With its Mytharc episodes being so spread out, *The X-Files* continually deters Mulder from the truth by adding more questions with each piece of new information. Having Mulder's father serve as a founding member of the Syndicate, the antagonists of the series, plays to the open structure's need to prolong a mystery for seasons on end. In fact, the Mytharc episodes position Mulder in such a deep-rooted manner that even when he is able to solve a central mystery to the series, it is immediately replaced with another one. In "Closure,"[67] Mulder is reunited with Samantha via a walk-in[68] and she tells him that she's dead and in a better place and that he can stop fixating on finding her. The episode ends with Mulder telling Scully "I'm free," suggesting that his obsession with the paranormal can finally end. Yet, with this episode only being in the half-way point of season seven, the show still has more MOTW

[65] As seen in *The X-Files*, "Paper Clip," FOX, September 29, 1995, written by Chris Carter; *The X-Files*, "Ascension," FOX, October 21, 1994, written by Paul Brown; and *The X-Files*, "Nisei," FOX, November 24, 1995, written by Chris Carter, Howard Gordon and Frank Spotnitz.

[66] These MOTW episodes include: a car mechanic who controls lighting in *The X-Files*, "D.P.O.," FOX, October 6, 1995, written by Howard Gordon; an insurance salesman with the psychic ability to foresee a person's death in *The X-Files*, "Clyde Bruckman's Final Repose," FOX, October 13, 1995, written by Darin Morgan; a resurrected death row inmate in *The X-Files*, "The List," FOX, October 20, 1995, written by Chris Carter; a mutant preying on overweight women in *The X-Files*, "2Shy," FOX, November 3, 1995, written by Jeffrey Vlaming; a quadruple amputee veteran with the ability to use astral projection in *The X-Files*, "The Walk," FOX, November 10, 1995, written by John Shiban; and a woman sharing a psychic connection with a kidnapped girl in *The X-Files*, "Oubliette," FOX, November 17, 1995, written by Charles Grant Craig.

[67] *The X-Files*, "Closure," FOX, February 13, 2000, written by Chris Carter and Frank Spotnitz.

[68] Walk-ins are the spirits of dead children transporting from the afterlife.

and Mytharc episodes to air. By season seven's finale,[69] Mulder becomes the one abducted by aliens, and an x-file for Dana Scully and assistant director Walter Skinner to investigate, thus highlighting how the open structure of televisual narratives in general ensnares Mulder into an endless web of the conspiracy.

Both *Kolchak* and *The X-Files*' MOTW and Mytharc episodes position their truth-seekers in a perpetual state of confronting the supernatural, suggesting that there is no end in sight for them. Such a state proposes that the monster hunter is continually locked in confrontation with monsters, and this can be likened to being stuck in a Sisyphean paradigm. Referencing the classical Greek figure, the Sisyphean paradigm is a state of being wherein an individual is unable to settle or be at rest.[70] This paradigm of a character being trapped in a condition of perpetual displacement pairs rather nicely with *Kolchak*'s and *The X-Files*' human monster hunters.

With their MOTW narratives, Kolchak and Mulder are perpetually faced with fighting authority figures and the supernatural on an endless week-to-week basis. However, a key difference between Sisyphus and these intrepid truth-seekers is that they *choose* to put themselves in a state of exile. Be it because of professional curiosity or personal loss, both men choose to put the safety of society ahead of their own personal and professional comfort. This self-sacrificing mentality becomes integral to the later televisual monster hunters, which creates a masochistic streak to the monster hunter that Abraham Van Helsing doesn't have. This becomes a standard for many contemporary supernatural programs, which incorporate the MOTW format and have their heroes choose to let their personal lives suffer in order to devote their lives to saving others.[71]

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[69] *The X-Files*, "Requiem," FOX, May 21, 2000, written by Chris Carter.
[70] Emma Cocker, "Over and Over, Again and Again," in *Contemporary Art and Classical Myth* (Farnham: Ashgate Publishing, 2010), 283.
[71] A couple of the most significant examples include shows like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, created by Joss Whedon, WB and UPN, 1997-2003 and *Supernatural*; in that both are well-known for their use of the MOTW formula and their heroes regularly confronting world-ending threats on a season-by-season basis.

V: Conclusion

Within *Kolchak* and *The X-Files*, Carl Kolchak and Fox Mulder's investigations into the supernatural allows for them to set the tone for three particular traits of the monster hunter: 1) motivation due to curiosity or loss when exposing the truth when others fail; 2) confrontations with authority figures and using their resources in the right way; and 3) the inability to attain narrative closure by choosing self-exile to protect society. From their introductory episodes, it is clear that Kolchak and Mulder are disconnected from other authority figures, who ridicule their belief in the supernatural and seek to undermine their investigations. However, despite their outsider status with their superiors, both men show that they are well suited to investigate the supernatural, even if they lose key evidence in the process. Both men enact the human monster hunter as being part of and separate from the police and government, since they rely on those institutional resources in order to defeat monsters and save citizens yet are never welcomed in as full members of authority institutions.

Kolchak's and Mulder's need for authoritative resources is best illustrated in their respective connections to the Watergate era. As seen with both programs, there are a variety of police captains and government higher-ups ignoring and covering up the supernatural, playing to the 1970s misgivings toward authority. With *Kolchak* taking place in that era and its focus on a reporter dealing with the supernatural and corrupt politicians, and Mulder's tragic past and use of inside whistle-blowers alluding to that era, both programs place further emphasis on the monster hunter as needing to confront their superiors and use their resources the right way. Both programs then reflect a deep-seated mistrust of the government that has had a lasting reach. Much of this Watergate subtext correlates to the revision of the human monster hunter as intrepid investigator, creating a connection between Kolchak and Mulder as figures willing to challenge authority and sacrifice everything for the truth. Therefore, audiences are told that the government lies to us and we can't trust it. But at the same time *Kolchak* and *The X-Files* reassure us that even with things being hidden, there are men out there who are doing the

right thing and protecting us from what we don't know and what the government doesn't want us to believe.

While Kolchak's and Mulder's actions of confronting the government are evident in their introductions and connection to the 1970s, their narrative format also plays a significant role in expressing their sacrifices. As television programs, *Kolchak* and *The X-Files* function as open narratives, since the medium demands that questions and problems remain unsettled in order to maintain dramatic tension on a week-to-week basis. In fact, Kolchak and Mulder function more like Sisyphus – the embodiment of a person being perpetually held in a state of exile, without any hope of achieving stability. Just as Sisyphus is unable to rest from rolling a stone uphill, *Kolchak* and *The X-Files* use the Monster-of-the-Week format as a way to express the hero's inability to gain respite for battling the supernatural or reconnecting with normality. Post-*Kolchak* and *The X-Files*, proceeding monster-hunter programs utilize the MOTW and over-arching story arcs to illustrate the hunter as choosing to exile themselves from the norm as a way of protecting society as a whole – with the Winchester brothers in *Supernatural* saving the world on a regular basis in its eleven seasons being a good contemporary example.

The ultimate take away from looking at Carl Kolchak and Fox Mulder is seeing how they set up the televisual human monster hunter. Following Noel Carroll's perception of humans as a "positive" force, Kolchak and Mulder are inherently less perfect than Abraham Van Helsing, but they are still positive in the way that they never give up. Both men choose this life without reward and perform authority correctly. *Kolchak* and *The X-Files* establish the human monster hunters as heroic figures for audiences to side with; they emphasize white males as the forces for good in the world, who selflessly devote their livelihood to maintaining the status quo for the rest of society.

CHAPTER 2 "'IT'S ALL BLACK AND WHITE…YOU FIND THE BAD THING, KILL IT': RACIAL REPRESENTATION IN *ANGEL* AND *SUPERNATURAL*"

I: Introduction

Earlier programs like *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* and *The X-Files* set up their hunter-heroes as valiant investigators who confront unrelenting ghosts and merciless extraterrestrials. But by the late 1990s, television shows began questioning the idea of the monster being innately evil. Programs such as *Brimstone* (1998-1999), *Charmed* (1998-2006), and *Roswell* (1999-2002) began positioning demons, witches, and aliens as humanity's champions, while the hunter became either non-existent or functioned as an obstacle to these non-human heroes. Yet, the monster hunter did not disappear completely. Rather, in *Angel* and *Supernatural* – with their human monster hunters – this shift of heroism between humans and monsters has taken on racial significance, juxtaposing flawed African-American hunters against sympathetic monsters.

The WB's *Angel* (1999-2004) is about the eponymous vampire (David Boreanaz) struggling to control his monstrous nature and regain his humanity. While Angel is, ostensibly, the primary monster hunter of the series, he is a supernatural creature and was once a monster himself. The program focuses on Angel's life in Los Angeles, where he leads Angel Investigations a team that frequently confronts demons and other supernatural entities. Early on, Angel relies on the half demon Francis Doyle (Glenn Quinn) to provide him with visions which identify the innocents in need of saving, a duty later taken up by Cordelia Chase (Charisma Carpenter), an aspiring actress who helps found Angel Investigations. Other members to join Angel include: the inexperienced Watcher[72] Wesley Wyndam-Pryce (Alexis Denisof), an aura-reading demon named Lorne (Andy Hallett), and the young physicist Winifred "Fred" Burkle (Amy

[72] Primarily a key figure to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, created by Joss Whedon, WB and UPN, 1997-2003; Watchers spend their lives devoted to researching and aiding Slayers, the young women imbued with supernatural powers and tasked with protecting the world. Wesley's inexperience stems from his Slayer rejecting him and him going out on his own.

Acker). Similar to Angel, when we first meet the character Charles Gunn, he also fights to protect L.A. as a vampire hunter, leading his own team of street teens.

The CW's *Supernatural* (2005-present) revolves around Sam (Jared Padalecki) and Dean Winchester (Jensen Ackles), brothers who travel through the United States hunting monsters and saving people. The program centers on the Winchester brothers' life on the road, as they search for Azazel, the demon who killed their mother.[73] Sam and Dean rely on figures like Bobby Singer (Jim Beaver), a fellow hunter who serves as their surrogate father-figure; Ellen (Samantha Ferris) and Jo Harvelle (Alona Tal), a mother and daughter who run a roadhouse frequented by hunters; and Castiel, an angel who befriends the brothers. Gordon Walker first appears in the series' second season, and his appearance adds the show's first African American hunter figure, one whose motivations and actions both parallel and contrast the Winchesters.

Key to both *Angel's* and *Supernatural*'s narratives is the portrayal of the main character as not fully human and being in search of a way to cleanse his supernatural nature. Angel seeks to redeem his century's worth of massacring humans as the vampire Angelus, by fulfilling a prophecy which promises to restore his humanity if he survives numerous trials.[74] Sam Winchester has the demon Azazel's blood in his body, which manifests as psychic powers and makes him part of an apocalyptic prophecy. Sam's goal is to rid himself of his demon blood before he becomes a danger to his brother and the world. Through having their respective protagonists seek a means of regaining their humanity, *Angel* and *Supernatural* center on non-human heroes undergoing missions to cleanse themselves of their paranormal impurities and protect innocents along the way. Therefore, both programs establish the non-human body as the heroic emotional center of their narratives and thus complicate the division

[73] The hunt for Azazel is a main plot point for seasons one and two of *Supernatural*.
[74] Also known as the Shanshu Prophecy, as introduced in *Angel*, "Blind Date," WB, May 16, 2000, written by Jeannine Renshaw.

between what it means to be human and monstrous. And this follows a pattern more generally towards more sympathetic portrayals of monsters in horror.

Fred Botting, Tim Kane, and Daniel O'Brien are just a few scholars to examine the monster's progression into a more sympathetic figure. In "Aftergothic: Consumption, Machines, and Black Holes," Botting acknowledges that whereas monstrous figures were "once represented as malevolent, disturbed, or deviant" they are now rendered as "fascinating, attractive, and more humane."[75] Kane similarly investigates this topic through examining how Barnabas Collins from the television series *Dark Shadows* (1966-1971) signifies one of television's earliest sympathetic monsters due to his "continual pursuit of a…lost love, reincarnated in the [narrative's] heroine."[76] O'Brien identifies that the vampire narrative is especially poignant when discussing the sympathetic monster, especially since recent vampire narratives tend to humanize the monster as a romantic, charismatic and seductive figure.[77] Altogether, Botting, Kane, and O'Brien suggest that humans and monsters are equally capable of good and having society's best interests at heart, and these are central themes to both *Angel* and *Supernatural*. Angel and Sam Winchester embody these sentiments of non-humans being compassionate, sympathetic, and charismatic, with both of them acting as the lead heroes in search of redemption for themselves and for other monsters.

Charles Gunn and Gordon Walker provide an intriguing departure from *Angel's* and *Supernatural*'s themes for seeing the monsters as capable of heroism. Staying true to predecessors such as *Carmilla*'s Baron Vordenberg and *Dracula*'s Abraham Van Helsing, Gunn and Walker observe that the best way to protect society is to eliminate the monstrous threat, not by allowing the monster redemption. Unlike Angel and Sam, Gunn and Walker view all monsters as evil and in need of being

[75] Fred Botting, "Aftergothic: Consumption, Machines, and Black Holes," in *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*, ed. Jerrold E. Hogle (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 286.
[76] Time Kane, *The Changing Vampire of Film and Television: A Critical Study of the Growth of a Genre* (Jefferson: McFarland & Company, 2006), 44-45.
[77] Daniel O'Brien, "Shadow of the Vampire: Dracula in (Mis) translation," *Screen* 30.2 (1997): 34.

eliminated. Within their respective programs, Gunn's and Walker's violent attitudes are conveyed as a form of bigotry towards the supernatural, which makes their devotion to restoring society's normalcy an obstacle for the non-humans who undertake that very same mission. This is kind of ironic, considering that both men are black, which suggests *Angel* and *Supernatural* offer up "see, black people can be racist too" narratives.

While both programs would seem to be somewhat progressive in offering up hunters who aren't white, Gunn's and Walker's violence towards anything non-human suggests that in these shows, blackness is reckless and dangerous. I am arguing that Gunn and Walker's introductions and roles in *Angel* and *Supernatural* challenge the notion that only white men can function as saviors. Yet, even though Gunn and Walker appear to be racially progressive representations of the hunter, they also problematically convey blackness as threatening to both monsters and society; both men are thus presented as short-sighted, irresponsible, and threatening foils to whiteness who need to prioritize the white hegemonic view of happiness, or risk being killed off if they fail to do so.

II: Charles Gunn's and Gordon Walker's First Impressions

Within their respective introductory episodes, Charles Gunn and Gordon Walker are presented as monster hunters who are enacting the hunter role in an 'improper' way,[78] and the main characters attempt to teach them how to behave appropriately. As the first significant people of color added to their programs, this notion of African American hunters needing the white man to instruct them is rife with racial issues. Although Gunn and Walker respond to the main characters in different ways, they similarly personify blackness as advocating the murder of anything that is not human – and thus serve as their programs' supernatural bigots.

[78] According to the dictates set forth by Mulder and Kolchak. However, they are actually enacting it in the "correct" way if we go back to Van Helsing.

1) Charles Gunn's First Episode

In the episode "War Zone,"[79] its teaser opens with an African American teenage girl walking through an alley at night. Three vampires follow and corner her in a dead end, but before they can attack, they hear footsteps behind them. One of the vampires turns around and says, "You." With the character Angel's violin-based leitmotif playing, the camera pans upward: showing black shoes, black pants, a long black coat, a sword, then the face of an African American teenage male wearing a black bandana (Charles Gunn). The young man proceeds to say, "You expecting somebody else?" as a pickup truck with teens armed with crossbows gathers around him. It then cuts to the show's opening credits. Within mere seconds, this teaser is establishing that Angel isn't the only hero to step-in and rescue innocents from monsters. Angel's all black apparel and violin theme have been present from the pilot episode[80] and all work together to set him up as the series' brooding dark hero. Therefore, the use of Angel's leitmotif and Gunn's costuming sets him up as an equivalent to Angel, and his line regarding expectations is a nod to the audience's understanding of such.

Despite his heroic entrance into the series, "War Zone" makes a point to show Charles Gunn as an improper hunter. Interactions with his sister, Alonna, and Angel spotlight how Gunn mishandles his hunter duties. From his sister's perspective, Gunn exhibits a desire to "get a little death in" and observes that he loves to hunt monsters and "won't quit until [he gets] as close to death as [he] possibly can."[81] This recklessness causes the death of a crew member and puts the whole group in danger. Contrary to the way that the teaser hints at Gunn's equivalence to Angel, Gunn's reckless actions have him fall just short of the lead character. When Angel first comes across Gunn and his group, he flat out states, "What are you people playing at? You're gonna get yourselves killed." These sentiments are repeated when

[79] *Angel*, "War Zone," WB, May 9, 2000, written by Garry Campbell.
[80] *Angel*, "City Of," WB, October 5, 1999, written by Joss Whedon and David Greenwalt.
[81] "Warzone."

Angel reconvenes with his colleagues Cordelia Chase and Wesley Wyndam-Pryce, he tells them that Gunn's group is "in over their heads [and] they're going to get themselves killed."

Both Alonna's sentiment that Gunn has a death wish and Angel's insistence that Gunn is in over his head completely undercut the teaser's allusion of Gunn being a heroic figure. By all appearances, Gunn's resolve to fight the supernatural and protect innocents from vampires suggests that he could be an effective monster hunter. Yet, "War Zone" reveals that his need to fight the supernatural is actually him playing out the stereotypical urban youth's violent approach to defending one's 'hood.'[82] Gunn's responses to Alonna's and Angel's concerns: "Everybody dies. I'm just trying to make sure that when we die, we stay dead… I do what I got to do" and "We're not playing… We're gonna get *you* killed first!" Gunn's statements express a nihilistic attitude ("Everybody dies") and aggressive posturing ("We're gonna get *you* killed first"), which tend to be associated with black urban youths.[83] Therefore, what really appears to hold Gunn back from being a hero is his racial identity. *Angel* presents Gunn as a stereotypical urban youth, who expresses a form of masculinity that hinges upon the use of slang and posturing in order to assert control in one's community.[84] With Gunn using hunting to reinforce his urban identity rather than keeping people safe, his focus on violence hampers his effectiveness as a hunter and this dependence on violence is furthered when Alonna is kidnapped by vampires later on in "War Zone."

When Gunn tracks Alonna down after she is kidnapped, she's already been turned into a vampire. In their reunion, Alonna tempts Gunn to become like her, promising that he will be able to keep "all [of his] rage and hatred" and to live for "just the hunt and the kill." Gunn's reply: "They killed

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[82] Michaela D. E. Meyer, "From Rouge in the 'Hood to Suave in a Suit: Black masculinity and the Transformation of Charles Gunn," in *Reading Angel: The TV Spin-off with a Soul* (New York: I. B. Tauris, 2005), 180.
[83] See Matthew Henry, "He is a 'Bad Mother *$%@!#': *Shaft* and Contemporary Black Masculinity," *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 30.2 (2002): 114; and bell hooks, *We Real Cool: Black Men and Masculinity* (New York: Routledge, 2004), 57.
[84] Richard Majors and Janet Mancini Billson, *Cool Pose: The Dilemmas of Black Manhood in America* (New York Lexington Books, 1991), 4.

you…I was never gonna let anything happen to you. I was supposed to protect you. You were my sister." Since Gunn references Alonna in the past tense and stresses his inability to protect her, it is clear that he sees Alonna as already dead and understands that the vampire standing before him is not her. The scene ends with Gunn seemingly allowing Alonna to bite and turn him, but instead he whispers goodbye right before pushing a stake through her heart.

What's interesting about this scene is that Alonna's attempts to lure Gunn into being a vampire call to mind her earlier observations – that he uses monster hunting as a means of getting a little death in. We can assume that because Gunn does not deny Alonna's claims, he is fully aware of and accepts that he kills monsters not out of heroism, but from an inner rage. This acknowledgment of being driven by hatred makes it even more apparent that Gunn is improperly handling the hunter mantle, with him using monster-hunting to feed his violent urges rather than wanting to protect innocents.

As established in Chapter One, with my discussion of Fox Mulder, the loss of a loved-one serves as a key motivator for the hunter's journey towards investigating the supernatural. The kidnapping and killing of a loved-one represents the hunter's loss of his normative life. In Mulder's case, his sister Samantha embodies his familial normativity, and this becomes ruptured the moment aliens abduct her. Alonna's kidnapping represents a similar rupture for Gunn; however unlike Mulder, Gunn is directly responsible for his sister's abduction because it was his recklessness that allowed the vampires to find the teens' hideout. As examined above, when seeing that Alonna has been turned into a vampire, Gunn's hatred and desire to kill monsters becomes directed at her: monstrosity outweighs family bonds.

At no point does Gunn consider finding some way to cure Alonna, despite just running into a vampire who fights on the same side as humanity. Instead, Gunn chooses to once again embrace his nihilistic notion that "everybody dies" and views vampire-Alonna as just another monster that he has to put down. In this moment, his aggressive urban identity has him embrace violence that usurps Gunn's familial devotion to Alonna. If placed in a similar circumstance, we could assume that Fox Mulder would

have searched to the ends of the earth to help Samantha, rather than outright kill her. As someone established to seek out truth in order to help people, Mulder embodies the 'proper' approach to monster hunting – with this emphasis on uncovering information as a way to help others.

Gunn, on the other hand, displays a reckless and violent nature, which once again suggests that his improper approach to monster hunting stems from his racial identity. With *Angel*, its lead vampire follows Mulder's example of prioritizing saving innocents, which reinforces whiteness as doing the hunter role right—even when the hunter is a monster himself. By the end of "War Zone," Angel offers Gunn a place on Angel Investigations. Such a proposal suggests that Angel will teach Gunn how to be a proper monster hunter and consequentially positions blackness as needing guidance from whiteness.

2) Gordon Walker's First Episode

The *Supernatural* episode "Bloodlust"[85] opens with a young woman running through the forest at night. As she runs, she trips and the camera shows a dark figure wearing a black raincoat and rain hat in the background. The woman gets up and hides behind a tree, with her pursuer running past it. Thinking she has successfully evaded her pursuer, the woman steps from the tree. A large hook appears and slices her head off. Following other *Supernatural* teasers, which provide viewers a glimpse of the monster that the Winchesters will confront that week, this scene suggests that the woman is just another human victim to a monster. However, the episode later reveals that this murdered damsel-in-distress is actually a vampire, and her pursuer is the monster hunter Gordon Walker.

Similar to "War Zone," this teaser for "Bloodlust" establishes Walker's persona in just mere seconds. Yet, while Gunn's teaser sets him up as a heroic equivalent to Angel, Walker's teaser positions him as a villain from the onset. Through presenting Walker as an ominous figure stalking and killing his prey in the teaser, "Bloodlust" is establishing that Walker is just as brutal as any monster the Winchesters have previously encountered. While Walker's identity is shrouded in the teaser, his

[85] *Supernatural*, "Bloodlust," CW, October 12, 2006, written by Sera Gamble.

introduction in the episode follows a similar trajectory to that of Gunn: observations are made by characters that expose Walker as violent and dangerous, he plays a role in the death of his sister, and the white protagonist calls out Walker's failure to properly enact the hunter role.

Initially, Walker refuses the Winchester brothers' help in taking down a Montana vampire nest. However, in the scene following that rejection, Walker is attacked by a vampire and this results in Sam pulling him to safety while Dean decapitates the vampire with an electric saw. After saving Walker, the three go to a bar and Walker tells Dean, "You gave that big-ass fang one hell of a haircut," and says it was "absolutely beautiful." When Sam calls Walker out for celebrating too much over killing a monster, Walker responds with "Oh, come on, man, it's not like it was human. You've gotta have a little more fun with your job."

Two interesting things come from this line of dialogue: 1) Walker's reference to the vampire as a "fang," which is the only term that he refers to vampires by and 2) his insistence that hunters should view killing non-humans as "fun." This notion of killing fangs for fun suggests that Walker embraces monster hunting not for the opportunity to save innocents, but for the indulgence in enacting violence upon anything that's not human. So once again, the African American human monster hunter is being presented as someone predisposed to violence and approaching monster hunting in the wrong way.

After Sam leaves the bar, Walker goes on to recount to Dean how he became a hunter. Walker describes that at the age of eighteen he was home alone with his sister,[86] and after hearing the window break in her room, he grabs their father's gun and attempts to shoot the vampire trying to take her. But the vampire proceeds to knock him out and kidnaps his sister. Walker leaves home, learns how to kill vampires, telling Dean "I found that fang – it was my first kill." When discussing these events, Walker expresses that losing his sister left him with a hole inside him and killing monsters temporally satiates

[86] The name of Walker's sister is never given.

that emptiness. Walker then says: "It's all black and white. There's no maybe. You find the bad thing, kill it. See, most people spend their lives in shades of gray. Is this right? Is that wrong? Not us."

Walker's recollection of his hunter origin returns to the two points brought about during his earlier 'fangs' and 'fun' dialogue. Unlike the Winchesters, who see monster-hunting as a job of "saving people, hunting things"[87] and who prioritize the saving people aspect, Walker's motivation focuses strictly on killing monsters. In referring to vampires as 'fangs' and finding it fun to kill them indiscriminately, Walker perceives of the supernatural in a derogatory way. His use of 'fang' appears to carry the same meaning behind offensive words such as 'nigger' and 'faggot.'

Just as the above terms convey a hatred and contempt for people with racial and sexual identities different from white heterosexual men, 'fang' marks the vampire as Walker's object of hatred.[88] Ironically, in using the same sort of rhetoric applied to African Americans, Walker's contempt for vampires positions the African American as denigrating monsters for their biological "impurity and references [them as] non-human animals."[89] Therefore, Walker's origin tale clearly advocates that vampires "have little [that is essentially] human and possess attributes that are quite similar to those of dumb animals" – which is the very argument that was used to justify why blacks could be used as slaves.[90]

To further illustrate the danger that Walker's prejudiced attitude poses, "Bloodlust" shows Sam calling Ellen Harvelle (Samantha Ferris) to gain information on Walker.[91] Ellen initially tells Sam that Walker's "a real good hunter," but upon learning that Sam and Dean are working with him, she immediately warns Sam with "don't do that." Ellen clarifies that Walker is a good hunter, just like

[87] The family motto of the Winchesters, first stated in *Supernatural*, "Pilot," WB, September 13, 2005, written by Eric Kripke.
[88] Jennifer Hornsby, "Meaning and Uselessness: How to Think about Derogatory Words," *Midwest Studies in Philosophy* 25 (2001): 128.
[89] Maria P. P. Root, *The Multiracial Experience: Racial Borders as the New Frontier* (Thousand Oaks: Sage Publications, 1996), 389.
[90] Ibn Khaldun, *The Muqaddimah: An Introduction to History* (New Jersey: Princeton, 1967), 117.
[91] As the owner of a roadhouse bar, Ellen knows and knows of many monster hunters and the Winchester brothers trust her because she serves as a surrogate mother figure for them.

"Hannibal Lecter's a good psychiatrist…he is dangerous to everyone and everything around him." The implication of Walker being similar to Hannibal Lecter is quite revealing. With Lecter being a serial killer most well-known for treating people as objects…and food,[92] this comparison makes it clear that Walker treats both monsters and people as objects – meaning he threatens that safety of *everyone* he comes into contact with.

"Bloodlust"'s final scene exemplifies Walker's bigotry towards vampires, through having Sam and Dean confront Walker as he tortures Lenore (Amber Benson), a vampire who only feeds off of cattle. Dean attempts to reach out to Walker with "That vampire that killed your sister deserved to die, but this one..." Walker laughs and responds with "Killed my sister? That filthy fang didn't kill my sister. It turned her. It made her one of them. So I hunted her down, and I killed her myself." He further explains: "It wasn't my sister anymore, it wasn't human. I didn't blink. And neither would you." In this moment Walker represents another black man who killed his "turned" sister, and both he and Gunn are the only televisual monster hunters to kill their loved-ones. I don't think that it's a coincidence that the African American males are the only hunters to do this.

In killing their sisters without hesitation, Gordon Walker and Charles Gunn embody the stereotypical ghetto thug who goes against family. With "the racist sexist white world seeing black women as angry bitches who must be kept in check," Gunn and Walker's violence against their own sisters presents black men punishing bodies that white men already consider as loathsome.[93] In these moments where their sisters have become supernatural (i.e. even angrier black women), Gunn and Walker appear to be justified in killing them, since their vampire natures now make them doubly threatening. Gunn's and Walker's resoluteness to kill family thus demonstrates bell hook's claim that black men are taught to believe that a real man is insensitive and blocks out all emotions[94] – as

[92] Brian Jarvis, "Monsters Inc.: Serial Killers and Consumer Culture," *Crime Media Culture* 3.3 (2007): 331.
[93] hooks, *We Real Cool*, 53.
[94] Ibid., 57.

evidenced by their statements "You were my sister" (Gunn) and "It wasn't my sister anymore…I didn't blink" (Walker).

Gunn's and Walker's respective introductions challenge the key theme of *Angel* and *Supernatural*: hunting evil, but leaving room to protect both harmless humans and monsters alike. Both men deviate from hunters like Fox Mulder, who did not necessarily hate supernatural beings but was more interested in solving the puzzle of his sister's disappearance. With Gunn and Walker, their hatred of the supernatural causes them to kill their own sisters, and in this way they presume that the taint of supernatural blood is irreversible.

I see both men as an intriguing blending of Abraham Van Helsing and the one drop rule. Similar to Van Helsing's view in *Dracula* that Lucy Westenra is beyond help and needs to be killed after she is bitten by the eponymous vampire,[95] Gunn and Walker share this very kill-to-save mentality when it comes to their sisters. However, Gunn's and Walker's motivations also reflect American racist rhetoric. Just as the one drop rule seeks to keep whiteness pure by stating "one drop of African blood makes a person black,"[96] Gunn and Walker perceive vampires as monstrous because they pollute humanity. In having African Americans enact such violence on their own family, and legitimate it with racist rhetoric, both programs position the non-white human monster hunter as the narratives' racists. What's most depressing: Gunn and Walker's actions ultimately reinforce black patriarchy as being just as misogynistic as white patriarchy—and yet still in the wrong—and they justify their actions with the very same rhetoric used to degrade real-world blackness.

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[95] Van Helsing makes it quite clear that Lucy is Un-Dead, and states that he "shall cut off her head and fill her mouth with garlic, and…drive a stake through her body" in Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (New York: Doubleday, 1897), 187.

[96] F. James Davis, "Defining Race: Comparative Perspectives," in *Mixed Messages: Multiracial Identities in the 'Color-Blind' Era* (London: Lynne Rienner Publishers, 2006), 29.

III: Charles Gunn and Gordon Walker as Narrative Foils

With Charles Gunn and Gordon Walker being represented as "bad" hunters in comparison to the "good" hunters, whom they actively threaten (just as a monster would), it would be easy to perceive them as the villains of *Angel* and *Supernatural*. However, despite their mentalities and methods, both men adhere to the monster hunter's primary objective of protecting society and saving people in the process. This presents an alternative path to the same goal scenario in *Angel* and *Supernatural* that firmly situates Gunn and Walker as the foils to Angel and Sam.

In relation to narrative, the foil is associated with a character who displays actions and personality traits which contrast that of the narrative protagonist.[97] Put simply, just as a foil literally increases a jewel's brightness, the narrative foil has experiences which reflect the protagonists' actions. The key difference is that the foil attains an undesired outcome, which makes the protagonist's decisions appear to be the better option.[98] The foil's 'path not taken' reflection deals with choice, due to the foil's actions serving as options readily available to the protagonist that aren't explored. When considering Gunn and Walker as the paths not taken for Angel and the Sam, racial identity serves as the key impetus for why they're differed in readily available options. Therefore, Gunn and Walker's positions as narrative foils also embody a problematic foiling of blackness to whiteness.

1) Gunn and Angel as Foils

The theme of past actions influencing a person's present day is central to *Angel*, considering that the program's premise is driven by Angel's attempts to redeem and rid himself of his Angelus persona. The greatest danger to Angel's mission of protecting the helpless lies within himself, with the

[97] C. Hugh Holman and William Harmon, *A Handbook to Literature*, 6th ed. (New York: Macmillan Publishing Company, 1992), 198.

[98] A couple of the most classical examples of a narrative foil are the dynamic between Hamlet and Laertes in William Shakespeare, *The Tragedy of Hamlet, Prince of Denmark* (Cambridge University Press, 1985); and Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson in Arthur Conan Doyle, *A Study in Scarlet* (Kessinger Publishing, 2004); both sets of men vastly differ when it comes approaching their respective situations: such as Laertes' reliance on hunches versus Hamlet's cautious approach, and Holmes' wild theories versus Watson's more conventional theories.

threat of Angelus resurfacing. The villainous Wolfram and Hart[99] look to exploit actions committed by Angelus as a means of derailing Angel's efforts. Two of the most significant examples include the law firm's recruitment of victims from Angel's past: from Drusilla (Juliet Landau), a nun he drove to insanity and then turned into a vampire; to Daniel Holtz (Keith Szarabajka), an 18th century vampire hunter whose wife Angelus raped and killed, infant son he murdered, and eight-year old daughter he turned into a vampire.[100] While these past transgressions were committed by a soulless Angelus, when these threats resurface, Angel takes responsibility and faces them head on.

Whereas Angel's past actions were made under his Angelus persona, Charles Gunn's past actions revolve around his "thug" persona as a street kid, one that he desperately seeks to escape from in his efforts to acclimate himself to Angel and his group. However, Gunn's attempts to disconnect from his past find ways to catchup to him and endangers Angel Investigations. One character to constantly receive the brunt of Gunn's bad choices is his girlfriend Winifred "Fred" Burkle. From being held at gun point by his old crew to being threatened by a demon Gunn sold his soul to,[101] Fred ends up in the crosshairs when it comes to Gunn's past. On a racial level, Gunn's placement of Fred into dangerous situations can be read as an embodiment of white patriarchal fears, in which the black male threatens the white woman (and thus the social norm) with his reckless nature. The most significant example of Gunn's decisions damaging Angel Investigations takes place in "A Hole in the World."[102]

One of Gunn's defining characteristics on the team is being the 'muscle,'[103] a one-dimensional role that Gunn despises. This muscle role plays to the problematic expectations of African American males being socialized to believe physical strength and stamina are their defining characteristics, and is

[99] An interdimensional law firm led by a cabal of demons, which serves as *Angel*'s primary villains.
[100] *Angel*, "Darla," WB, November 14, 2000, written by Tim Minear; and *Angel*, "Quickening," WB, November 12, 2001, written by Jeffrey Bell.
[101] *Angel*, "That Old Gang of Mine," WB, October 8, 2001, written by Tim Minear; and *Angel*, "Double or Nothing," WB, April 22, 2002, written by David H. Goodman.
[102] *Angel*, "A Hole in the World," WB, February 25, 2004, written by Joss Whedon.
[103] This is stated within the program, with Fred stating "Angel's the champion, and Wesley's the brains of the operation, and Gunn's the muscle and Cordy's the heart" in *Angel*, "Fredless," WB, October 22, 2001, written by Mere Smith.

akin to the 'Buck' racial stereotype which similarly associates violence and aggression with the black male body.[104] In hoping to escape his past, Gunn does everything he can to "smarten up" and avoid being the Buck for Angel Investigations. In this effort to become better, Gunn makes a deal with Wolfram and Hart and undergoes a medical procedure which enhances his mind and provides him with a comprehensive understanding of the law.[105] This transformation erases Gunn's urban qualities by improving his diction/voice and providing him with professional business suits.

By undergoing a procedure that negates his black dialect and street clothes, Gunn seeks an erasure from his past not in the form of helping innocents (à la Angel), but through abandoning his blackness and investing in the positive traits of white culture: superior legal knowledge and high-end fashion. Gunn's efforts to escape his past take on a selfish quality, with him seeking "the rewards and privileges of whiteness" for himself no matter the consequences.[106] In "A Hole in the World" Gunn's mental abilities begin to diminish and when he is offered a permanent mental upgrade just for his signature on a customs order, Gunn does not hesitate to sign. Gunn's self-interested drive becomes a fatal mistake for Fred, because the customs item is a sarcophagus containing an ancient god (Illyria), whose essence kills Fred and takes over her body. This decision to cling to an identity outside of the muscle not only leads to a white woman's death, it also leads to Gunn being ostracized from Angel Investigations, with Wesley stabbing and hospitalizing Gunn for his role in Fred's death.[107]

In thinking about Gunn foiling Angel, both characters represent the two pathways for taking steps in cleansing one's troubled past. On the one hand there's Angel, a vampire burdened by a monstrous past and encouraged to wipe the slate clean through saving society's innocents. Gunn, on the other hand, fails to live up to his heroic potential shown in his introductory teaser. Gunn's thug past

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[104] hooks, *We Real Cool*, 46; and Donald Bogle, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies, & Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Films* (New York: Continuum, 1989), 10-18.
[105] *Angel*, "Conviction," WB, October 1, 2003, written by Joss Whedon.
[106] George Lipsitz, *The Possessive Investment in Whiteness: How White People Profit from Identity Politics* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2006), 3.
[107] *Angel*, "Shells," WB, March 3, 2004, written by Steven S. DeKnight.

creates insecurities that have him do anything he can to avoid falling back into his muscle identity. Unlike Angel, Gunn is encumbered by a racial identity that others (Angel included) seek to use as a weapon.

In trying to break the bonds from his past, Gunn seeks a better racial identity, and this results in recklessness which kills Fred. As a foil to Angel, Gunn too desires to be free from his troubled past. However, because Gunn pushes to be better on a cultural level, he is denied and endangers the norm; Angel thus shines as the better (and selfless) hunter. Racially, Angel appears worthy of redemption because his 'helping the helpless' stance correlates to the white male as selfless, while Gunn's desire to smarten himself is shown as selfish and is denied because he is an African American male attempting to cross cultural boundaries.

2) Walker and Sam as Foils

Supernatural positions Gordon Walker and Sam Winchester as foils for one another on the topic of 'who's worth saving, family or humanity?' As a constant feature within the show's eleven seasons, the Winchesters tend to prioritize family above all else. Whenever a family member is in danger, they do anything to save that person. In fact, these family-oriented decisions serve as a key catalyst for *Supernatural*, with the death of Mary Winchester at the hands of Azazel occurring because she bargained her soul to the demon in order to resurrect a dead John Winchester.[108] The Winchesters' family-first mentality is reckless in itself, because in never giving up on one another, they frequently endanger the world by allowing a supernatural threat to remain. In "Devil's Trap,"[109] Azazel possesses John Winchester, presenting Sam with a chance to kill the demon and save countless lives, at the cost of his father's life. When John briefly gains control of his body, he urges Sam to kill him and end their quest for vengeance. Sam chooses to shoot John in the leg, and thus force the demon to flee, John

[108] *Supernatural*, "In the Beginning," CW, October 2, 2008, written by Jeremy Carver.
[109] *Supernatural*, "Devil's Trap," CW, May 4, 2006, written by Eric Kripke.

admonishes Sam with "killing [Azazel] comes first – before me, before everything." But both Sam and Dean tell him that nothing comes before family.

By the show's second season, Sam must reconcile with his own supernatural nature, and the season introduces several episodes that focus on the dilemma of 'what if the monster is the one who's innocent?' Lenore's (the cattle-draining vampire) introduction in "Bloodlust" marks the first time that the Winchesters have to consider monster-hunting as not just about killing monsters. The episode even presents the brothers deliberating over this newfound understanding in the final scene, with Dean asking Sam "What if we killed things that didn't deserve killing? You know? I mean, the way Dad raised us..."

After this introspective moment, season two continues to raise the brothers' awareness of what actually deserves killing with them saving a young woman from a werewolf, only for her to be turned into one and exhausting all options for a cure;[110] they also help a ghost, who doesn't know she's dead, to pass on.[111] The season-long arc of Sam learning about his psychic nature and his role in an apocalyptic prophecy results in *Supernatural*'s second season explicitly having the Winchesters confront the grey area of human and monstrousness through presenting opportunities for saving the monster.

With Gordon Walker's appearance in the series occurring on the heels of John Winchester's death,[112] he initially reflects the black-and-white mentality towards hunting that Sam and Dean were raised with, which can be read as old fashioned. As discussed earlier, Walker's approach to hunting revolves around simply killing anything that's not human, thus foiling the brothers' resolve for saving family and exhausting all options for saving humans and monsters alike. Walker's disposition can be summed up as "If it's supernatural, we kill it, end of story"[113] a mantra that Dean learned from his

[110] *Supernatural*, "Heart," CW, March 22, 2007, written by Sera Gamble.
[111] *Supernatural*, "Roadkill," CW, March 15, 2007, written by Raelle Tucker.
[112] In Winchester-fashion, John sacrifices his soul to Azazel to revive a dying Dean in *Supernatural*, "In My Time of Dying," CW, September 28, 2006, written by Eric Kripke.
[113] "Bloodlust."

father. In reflecting his father's sentiments, Walker is as much Dean's foil as he is Sam's, and the only difference between Walker and John Winchester is race.

While not fully adhering to the Buck, Walker's predilection towards an enjoyment of violence has him embrace the viciousness attributed to the stereotype. Through taking extreme actions like killing his sister, murdering an innocent psychic, and killing a fellow hunter in cold blood,[114] Walker marks the African American hunter as a doubly violent figure. In foiling the Winchesters, Walker embodies seeing the supernatural in black-and-white terms, while the Winchesters acknowledge the grey area that comes with properly doing the job. Walker's choice to kill his sister and attempts to kill Sam makes him an even more violent hunter than John Winchester (who sacrificed himself for family). As a foil, Walker strengthens the Winchester brothers' resolve for not giving up on family and allows them to cast away the shadow of their close-minded father. Racially speaking, whiteness is portrayed as having hope for the good in the supernatural, while blackness is shown to be excessively violent and close-minded.

In comparing Gunn's foiling of Angel to Walker's foiling of the Winchesters, both dynamics represent the African American monster hunter as being selfish and inherently violent, making them similar to, yet different from the Buck stereotype. For *Angel*, Gunn's refusal to be restricted to the team's muscle and desire to transform into something better, reflects the African American hunter's connections to the cultural stigmas of physicality and violence associated with blackness. With Fred's death and Gunn's banishment, there's a subtext that only the white male can wipe his slate clean. Within *Supernatural*, Walker's placement of vengeance over family and refusal to see the good in non-humans once again sets up African Americans as violent and prejudicial. In seeing what happens to a hunter when he abandons family and fails to tolerate the innocent, Sam and Dean gain a stronger resolve for being better than their father, and thus become more accepting because of Walker.

[114] "Bloodlust"; *Supernatural*, "Hunted," CW, January 11, 2007, written by Raelle Tucker; and *Supernatural*, "Fresh Blood," CW, November 15, 2007, written by Sera Gamble.

Charles Gunn and Gordon Walker position the African American as being irresponsible, one-dimensional, and threatening the harmony of society. Both Gunn and Walker share a history of enacting death-sentences to anything that is not human, even if it's a family member. As discussed earlier, both men approach their violent histories in different ways: Gunn desires to move past his thug-life and whiten himself for Angel Investigations, while Walker continually feeds his prejudice towards the supernatural, even after the Winchesters show him that not every monster deserves being killed. What's most troubling: even though Gunn and Walker take different approaches – working hard to fit in with the sympathetic monster versus working hard to kill the sympathetic monster – both men end up in the same place. With both men threatening the narrative's heroes, they are severely punished for doing so.

IV: Charles Gunn and Gordon Walker as Assimilationist and Pluralist Figures

From Charles Gunn's introduction in "War Zone" and Gordon Walker's in "Bloodlust," to their later appearances in "Conviction" and "Fresh Blood," both characters position the African American human monster hunter as the reckless alternative to Angel and the Winchester brothers. In foiling the white heroes, Gunn and Walker's racial identities reinforce the stigma of blackness as inherently violent, and thus they endanger both the main heroes and white hegemony. As mentioned earlier, Gunn and Walker take differing approaches to their program's lead characters: Gunn abandons his own crew to join Angel's team, and Walker refuses to follow the Winchester's example of sparing innocent monsters. Considering that both men end up on the verge of death (Gunn) or dead (Walker) for their racial difference, *Angel* and *Supernatural* illustrate problematic issues of racial representation by equally punishing men who took dissimilar paths.

In an argument which takes a critical look at the way in which television strategizes to frame and construct racial presence, Herman Gray proposes that African American representations in the medium can be anchored to three types of discursive practices: assimilationist (invisibility), pluralist (separate but

equal), and multiculturalist (diversity).[115] Each of these practices signify a variation for how the African American body interacts with the institutional hierarchies of privilege and power.[116] Both assimilationist and pluralist fit within this chapter's theme of the African American monster hunter needing to be taught how to properly protect the norm. Just as Angel and the Winchesters convey whiteness as selfless and open-minded, these practices privilege upholding white hegemony as the societal norm. Assimilationist representations situate the African American body as needing to blend in with the white cast, through separating from African American social life and culture. While the pluralist representation positions African Americans and whites as separate but equal, in their pursuits and acceptance of normative middle class ideals and values.

Both assimilation and pluralist function as discursive practices which define the hegemonic gaze of whiteness as the default goal for everyone. In other words, these practices make a point to nullify cultural difference and push for the white experience as normal. Gunn and Walker fit within these practices due to their approaches of cutting ties with one's culture (Gunn) and ignoring cultural difference by having black and white bodies mirror one another (Walker). As human monster hunters, Gunn and Walker inherently advocate and defend normative middle-class ideals, but as African Americans they integrate assimilationist and pluralist strategies within *Angel* and *Supernatural*. Gunn's attempts to assimilate lead to him reverting back to his urban persona moments before his eventual death, while Walker's efforts to remain separate-but-equal have him executed by Sam Winchester – and both shows punish these men for the threat they pose to the heroes and normality.

Along with Charles Gunn's function as a foil to Angel, is a character arc that centers on his attempts to abandon his cultural roots to better fit in with Angel Investigations. Like the assimilationist, Gunn's acceptance as a member of Angel's team hinges upon him abandoning people from his past as

[115] Herman Gray, "The Politics of Representation in Network Television," in *Watching Race* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 84.
[116] Herman Gray, "Black Cultural Politics and Commercial Culture," in *Watching Race* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1995), 10.

well as replacing his own muscle persona with intelligence and professional suits.[117] However, another key aspect to assimilationist practice is for the white body to serve as a voice of reason when prejudice is at play.[118] *Angel* presents its white characters, particularly Angel and Wesley, as the ones reining in Gunn's anger and bigoted attitude towards monsters. This is best seen in "That Old Gang of Mine," where the team investigates a rash of demon murders and Gunn's reaction is expressed in the following quips: "Is this really the kind of thing we should be spending our time on? I mean he was what he was, right?" and "Somebody killed a demon. Hello! We do that every day." Angel and Wesley's "*Merl* was harmless" stance positions the white body as a correcting agent, suggesting that whiteness is necessary for keeping the African American hunter in line.

On a visual and stylistic level, everything about Walker, save for his skin color, parallels Sam and Dean Winchester. Both Walker and the Winchesters share a Midwestern background[119] that was interrupted by the supernatural at a young age. They share a dress style of jeans and flannel shirts, and they own American automobiles decked out with a hidden weapons cache.[120] Their shared emphasis on the Midwest, flannel apparel, and American automobiles conveys a preference for rural American masculinity – which itself idolizes whiteness as the norm.[121] Similar to the pluralism practice, Walker conveys the African American as living a simple, one-dimensional life.[122] In Walker's case, his rigid stance towards purity and humanity conveys an inability to adapt and understand the complexities of good and evil. The Winchesters' capacity to change and learn conveys whiteness as being driven, and once again positions it as progressive in upholding society and resolving issues of saving family and innocents.

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[117] "That Old Gang of Mine" and "Conviction."
[118] Gray, *Watching Race*, 87.
[119] The Winchesters are from Kansas, and Walker is from Michigan.
[120] The Winchesters drive a Chevy Impala, while Walker drives a Chevy El Camino.
[121] See Laurie Palmer, "The Road to Lordsburg: Rural Masculinity in *Supernatural*," in *TV Goes to Hell: An Unofficial Road Map of Supernatural* (Toronto: ECW, 2011), 88.
[122] Gray, *Watching Race*, 88.

This consideration for Gunn and Walker as correlations of assimilationist and pluralist practices situates them as stereotypes who aren't fully developed characters but are there to serve white male needs. With Gunn and Walker acting as racial foils to white hunters, there's an inherent racial hierarchy to the hunter figure. Whereas Kolchak and Mulder butt heads with their superiors over the validity of their investigations, their elimination of supernatural threats goes unquestioned. Both Gunn and Walker are represented as doing hunting wrong, because of their reckless actions, one-dimensional thinking, *and* their status as black men.

In their failures to take on a non-selfish and non-prejudicial mindset in their jobs, both Gunn and Walker are punished and end up either on the verge of death or killed. By *Angel*'s series' finale, "Not Fade Away,"[123] Charles Gunn abandons his intelligence and professional suits as an act of penance for the role he played in Fred's death. In the episode's final moments, Gunn is dressed in his urban apparel, mortally wounded, and minutes away from bleeding to death. Before doing so, he stands with Angel and the others as a demon army approaches. Gunn proclaims that "[his] game was tight" and for his last minutes of life he declares "let's make 'em memorable." Paired with his return to his old dress style, Gunn's use of urban vernacular suggests that in these final moments he is finally accepting his role as a black man and the group's muscle, but this is too little too late since his actions have already resulted in Fred's death.

Gordon Walker's punishment for his racial difference takes on different levels within *Supernatural* and carries problematic connotations, with Walker's final appearance in "Fresh Blood." As noted earlier, the Winchesters' no-kill policy extends to humans, even if they pose a threat to the brothers. In dealing with Walker in previous episodes, when he became a danger to them, the Winchesters let the law deal with him.[124] However, in "Fresh Blood" a vampire turns Walker into a

[123] *Angel*, "Not Fade Away," WB, May 19, 2004, written by Jeffrey Bell and Joss Whedon.
[124] Such as calling in a tip to the police, which results in Walker being sent to prison ("Hunted") – which problematically reinforces the act of locking up a black man for something that the white men are doing.

monster, and his change into a supernatural creature gives Sam a green-light to kill Walker. Under normal conditions, *Supernatural* depicts the death of vampires via a swift beheading with a sharp blade, like a machete. However, with Walker being a dangerous threat *before* becoming a vampire, Sam enacts a unique killing method. In their final confrontation, Sam grabs a piece of cloth and an end of razor wire in each hand, he then wraps the wire around Walker's neck and pulls until he cuts all the way through and sends Walker's head tumbling. Such a gruesome execution is not just a punishment for Walker's threatening of the white body, but it also suggests that Sam brutally kills Walker as a means of reclaiming his superiority as a hunter and as a white man.

Between Gunn's acceptance of his cultural difference moments before his death and Walker's razor wire strangulation as a punishment for not siding with the Winchesters, both monster hunters are clearly being punished for failing to integrate themselves within their respective white worlds. In the end, Gunn and Walker are represented as being too reckless and dangerous to maintain their positions as societal defenders. With Angel's and Sam's representation as non-human white males seeking to protect society and regain their own normality, Gunn and Walker are being punished for not trusting in both the sympathetic monster and the white male. Both hunters' fates set up a new rule for the figure: while the hunter can be represented as an African American who eliminates societal threats, he cannot be unnecessarily violent, especially when the monster is a white male who also desires to maintain societal peace.

V: Conclusion

Within *Angel* and *Supernatural*, Charles Gunn and Gordon Walker's representations as monster hunters address topics such as sympathetic monsters, narrative foiling, and discursive practices for racial representation. Gunn and Walker diversify the normative racial makeup of the monster hunter. Rather than just perpetuating the stereotype of the monster hunter as a white male, and further promoting the idea of positioning whites as saviors, Gunn and Walker challenge this dynamic with their roles as the

first African American monster hunters on television. In their introductory episodes, Gunn is presented as a heroic equivalent to Angel and Walker has a grisly persona comparable to any of the monsters that the Winchesters have encountered. Yet this shift to the monster hunter script occurs synonymously within programs wherein the narrative is driven by non-humans protecting society as well.

As seen with both programs depicting their main characters as non-humans seeking to regain their humanity, *Angel* and *Supernatural* appear to suggest that white male monsters and humans are neither inherently good nor evil by nature. *Angel*'s depiction of humans and demons operating as both allies and enemies, and the Winchesters' tendency to save innocent humans and monsters promotes a marked shift from classical stories such as *Dracula*, where the monster is evil simply because of its supernatural nature. This shift in perception calls into question the black-and-white outlook of the human monster hunter, with both programs positioning the monster and hunter as equally invested in the hegemonic norm. Gunn's and Walker's tendency to kill anything that is not fully human not only endangers Angel and Sam, but also serves as a danger to family – a linchpin to normative living.

While Gunn and Walker function as narrative foils and ultimately suffer the consequences for it, they also provide poignant representations of televisual racial discourse. Their inclusions in *Angel* and *Supernatural* signify an expansion of minority representation for both the programs and the monster hunter figure as well. However, their representation is tethered to upholding white hegemonic values, and correlates with Herman Gray's assimilationist and pluralist discursive practices. Just as the assimilationist forgoes their cultural identity and people, Gunn too sheds ties with his former crew and pursues legal knowledge and professional suits to fit-in with his new cohort. Just as the pluralist conveys the African American body and experience as being separate-but-equal to the white experience, Walker's dress style, vehicle, and background reflects the mid-western persona of the Winchester brothers. Both men sacrifice their own cultural difference only to ultimately fail in their contrasting

attempts, illustrating a no-win outcome when it comes to abandoning one's culture in order to fit in with others.

In the end, Charles Gunn and Gordon Walker express a subversion of the monster hunter that *appears* to suggest that African Americans can be positioned as the human monster hunter along with the monster also being capable of fighting for societal hegemony. However, in order for the African American monster hunter to be "correct," he must respect and work with white-male monster hunters. If there's a failure to fall in line, the African American body will be punished for endangering the white body, suggesting that racial diversification of the hunter does have its limits. Yet this is not to say that Gunn and Walker only embody problematic racial undertones, because at the heart of their representations is the human monster hunter's difficulty to accept a world wherein the monster can be both threat and ally.

CHAPTER 3 "'YOU'RE A DICK AND YOU KILL PEOPLE BUT I STILL SEE SOMETHING HUMAN IN YOU. BUT WITH HER THERE WAS...NOTHING': ALARIC SALTZMAN'S MONSTROUS MASCULINE SOLIDARITY IN *THE VAMPIRE DIARIES*"

I: Introduction

Within classical horror, monsters live only to disrupt the norm and the human monster hunter's elimination of that threat serves two purposes. On the one hand, killing the monster restores the society's status quo. On the other hand, the act of killing the monster allows for the (often male) monster hunter to reassert his masculinity – focusing his aggression and domination onto a body that deserves to be eliminated. However, as introduced in my previous chapter, contemporary human monster hunter programs veer from seeing the monster in such a traditional black-and-white perspective. But, what happens when *both* the hunter and monster bond in asserting their masculinity? What becomes the societal threat? What are the consequences of having the human and monster embody patriarchal constructions of masculinity? All of these concerns are addressed in *The Vampire Diaries* (2009-present), a teen drama that positions humanity and the supernatural as equals.

The CW's *The Vampire Diaries* revolves around Elena Gilbert (Nina Dobrev), a human girl who must navigate a life in Mystic Falls, [125] a hometown populated by vampires, werewolves, and witches. The main narrative focuses on Elena developing romantic feelings for the vampire brothers Stefan (Paul Wesley) and Damon Salvatore (Ian Somerhalder). While this love-triangle headlines the series and garners the most attention, Elena and Damon also share a bond with Alaric Saltzman (Matt Davis), a high school history teacher by day and monster hunter by night. Within the first three seasons of the series, Alaric and Damon form an odd friendship despite Damon being the one responsible for the death of Alaric's wife, Isobel (Mia Kirshner). Ironically, it is the monster that begins the hunter's quest for vengeance who also serves as his closest ally in protecting the social norm.

[125] This is *The Vampire Diaries*' fictional Virginian town.

Key to *The Vampire Diaries* is an emphasis on the relationship between humans and supernatural creatures. Elena Gilbert has budding feelings for the Salvatore brothers and this plays out the familiar theme of human-supernatural love triangles found in other supernatural dramas such as *Twilight* (2008) and *True Blood* (2008-2014). Through having this romantic tension at the center, *The Vampire Diaries* focuses on an acceptance of the monstrous body. Similar to my previous chapter's discussion of Charles Gunn and Gordon Walker, this representation of the monster embodies a capacity for both good and evil – maintaining that monsters have a choice in whether they will comply to or challenge the social norm. While the choice being played out in *The Vampire Diaries* highlights Elena's decision between Stefan and Damon, she must also decide who to trust once she learns of her friends' and family's connections to the supernatural.

The Vampire Diaries' first season, in particular, focuses on Elena and her younger brother Jeremy (Steven R. McQueen) adjusting to high school life after a tragic car accident kills their parents. This season presents Elena's growing awareness of the supernatural in Mystic Falls, realizing that her best friend Bonnie Bennett (Katerina Graham) comes from a family of witches, her classmate Tyler Lockwood[126] (Michael Trevino) comes from a family of werewolves, and Elena's mysterious new classmate Stephan Salvatore and his older brother Damon are vampires. *The Vampire Diaries*' first season presents Alaric Saltzman as also adjusting to living in the town, with him seeking out the vampire who killed his wife.

What makes Alaric an intriguing figure is his departure from the standard representation of the monster hunter. As discussed in my previous chapters, the monster hunter's quest to protect the societal norm usually originates from the loss of a female loved-one. This loss fuels their passion for hunting the monster that took away that loved-one. The hunter's search for vengeance embodies an ideology that communicates the idea that humans must destroy *all* monstrous bodies in order to keep

[126] Tyler is also the son of the town's mayor.

society safe. Alaric's departure from the prototypical monster hunter lies with him forming a friendship with Damon Salvatore, the vampire who killed his wife. Thus, *The Vampire Diaries* provides a challenge to the notion that hunters must destroy all monstrous bodies through prominently featuring the hunter and monster as having one of the strongest bonds in the series.

In fact, *The Vampire Diaries* suggests that Damon, the monster who kills people, is not the true threat to the social norm. There's a greater threat to society than the monster. This threat, which is the whole reason for Alaric and Damon's unusual bond, revolves around the deceptive female. The cause of Alaric's need to become a hunter and Damon's vampire status lies in manipulative women who have seduced and destroyed the normative lives of both men. Thus, the bond between hunter and monster originates from subversive feminine performativity, and the men ultimately respond to this trauma by performing hypermasuline behaviors as a means of regaining the masculinity taken from them.

II: Alaric Saltzman as Seeing Teenagers and Monsters Beyond "Convenient Definitions"

Within *Angel* (1999-2004) and *Supernatural* (2005-present) the monster hunter narrative took steps towards putting an end to the assumption that all monsters are societal threats. These programs convey that non-humans are capable of redemption, both after being a bane to humanity (Angel) and before it comes to that (Sam Winchester). Monster hunters such as Charles Gunn and Gordon Walker end up failing in their tasks (and dying for it) because they remain prejudicial to these redemption-driven monsters. With his friendship and trust in vampires (Damon Salvatore), werewolves (Tyler Lockwood), and witches (Bonnie Bennett), Alaric Saltzman rectifies Gunn's and Walker's mistakes by representing the monster hunter as someone who fully accepts the monster as a boon to society – and it doesn't hurt that he's also white.

One of the reasons why *The Vampire Diaries* succeeds in creating equality between humans and monsters is because the show stresses a central theme of both humans and monsters having the choice

to either conserve or destabilize the norm.[127] Whereas *Angel* and *Supernatural* position the redemptive monster as a rarity and focus on the monster's efforts to become human,[128] *The Vampire Diaries* does not present the monstrous body as something that needs to be fixed. Instead, it presents monstrosity as already complying with western society's norms: its vampires, werewolves and witches are high schoolers and their parents serve as the town's founders—they live fairly normative lives, aside from being "monsters."

Following similarly-themed late 2000s supernatural narratives such as *Twilight*, *True Blood*, *Moonlight* (2007-2008), *Blood Ties* (2007), and *Being Human* (2008-2013),[129] *The Vampire Diaries* presents humans, vampires, werewolves, and witches as caught up in the daily struggles of protecting family, maintaining relationships, and longing for approval.[130] Such concerns over family, relationships, and identity normalize the monstrous and show a more complicated representation of them. With *The Vampire Diaries* taking place in high school, a setting that centers on identity formation and social groups, adolescence is linked to the monstrous. Monsters are represented as just another group facing an adolescent crisis in identity.[131] Many of Elena Gilbert's classmates must come to terms with both their high school identities and a newly discovered monstrous heritage. For example, Tyler Lockwood's

[127] Angela Tenga and Elizabeth Zimmerman, "Vampire Gentlemen and Zombie Beasts: A rendering of True Monstrosity," *Gothic Studies* 15.1 (2013): 77.
[128] With Angel being a vampire hoping to redeem his role in massacring people as 'Angelus' and Sam Winchester hoping to rid him of the demon blood before he becomes a threat to humanity.
[129] All of these narratives frame vampires as love interests. With *Twilight*, directed by Catherine Hardwicke, performed by Kristen Stewart and Robert Pattinson, Summit Entertainment, 2008; *True Blood*, created by Alan Ball, HBO, 2008-2014; and *The Vampire Diaries*, created by Kevin Williamson and Julie Plec, CW, 2009-present tending to be compared to one another in scholarly texts that examine the gendered and social subtext to the love between a young high school-aged girl and a blood-drinking boy. See Tenga and Zimmerman; Ananya Mukherjea, "My Vampire Boyfriend: Postfeminism, 'Perfect' Masculinity, and the Contemporary Appeal of Paranormal Romance," *Studies in Popular Culture* 33.2 (2011); and Karen Backstein "(Un)safe Sex: Romancing the Vampire," *Cineaste* (2009) for scholarly examinations into *Twilight*, *True Blood*, and *The Vampire Diaries* and their romantic heroes.
[130] Natalie Wilson, *Seduced by Twilight* (Jefferson: McFarland, 2011), 16.
[131] Penelope Eckert, *Jocks and Burnouts: Social Categories and Identity in the High School* (Columbia University: Teachers College Press, 1989): 75.

status as the school's jock becomes compounded when he learns of his werewolf nature from his uncle.[132]

Tyler's revelation of being connected to a supernatural creature known for its embodiment of sexuality and aggression[133] only amplifies Tyler's already established hormonal and anger issues.[134] Similarly, the school's popular girl, Caroline Forbes (Candice King) also has to come to terms with becoming a vampire and Elena's best friend, Bonnie Bennett (Kat Graham) discovers that she is a descendant of witches.[135] *The Vampire Diaries*' monsters essentially mirror James B. Twitchell's argument that all monster stories deal with sexuality and puberty,[136] and the main cast then is a mixture of different social groups *and* supernatural creatures, emphasizing monstrosity as just another social identity category for the students to come to terms with. *The Vampire Diaries* can then be read as a supernatural variation of *The Breakfast Club* (1985) or any other of a number of coming-of-age teen dramas. Its representation of vampires and werewolves suggests that these "monsters" are also caught up in the social groups of jocks and princesses, and they struggle to expose that underneath their high school and supernatural veneers exists teenagers just like everyone else.[137]

The program fits Alaric Saltzman into this high school setting by introducing him as a caring adult figure *before* revealing his identity as a monster hunter. *The Vampire Diaries* initially presents the adult male as someone who is both physically and psychologically abusive towards the teenagers, in the form

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[132] *The Vampire Diaries*, "Bad Moon Rising," CW, September 23, 2010, written by Andrew Chambliss.
[133] See Noel Carroll, "Nightmare and the Horror Film: The Symbolic Biology of Fantastic Beings," *Film Quarterly* 34.3 (1981): 22.
[134] Such as Tyler attempting to injure Stefan Salvatore when he joins the football team in *The Vampire Diaries*, "Friday Night Bites," CW, September 24, 2009, written by Barbie Kligman and Bryan M. Holdman; as well as making out with Matt Donovan's (his best friend) mother after being dumped by his girlfriend in *The Vampire Diaries*, "Under Control," CW, April 15, 2010, written by Barbie Kligman and Andrew Chambliss.
[135] As seen in *The Vampire Diaries*, "Brave New World," CW, September 16, 2010, written by Brian Young; and *The Vampire Diaries*, "Family Ties," CW, October 1, 2009, written by Andrew Kreisberg and Brian Young..
[136] See my introduction chapter, which summarizes Twitchell's analysis of monsters in his text *Dreadful Pleasures*.
[137] Jacqueline Bach, "From Nerd to Napoleons: Thwarting Archetypal Expectations in High School Films," *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing* (2006): 77.

of public ridicule and using authority to usurp the teen's actions[138] and illustrates Alaric as someone who is different from the men who deny choice from teens. In his first episode, "History Repeating"[139] Alaric replaces William Tanner (Benjamin Ayres) as the school's history teacher. Tanner is an antagonistic authority figure for the students, frequently demeaning his students such as when he tells them "cute becomes dumb in an instant" when they are unable to answer his questions in class.[140]

"History Repeating" shows that Tanner even goes so far as to keep a 'jackass file' on students he observes as troublemakers, something that Alaric reveals to Jeremy Gilbert, one of Tanner's jackasses. However, rather than letting Tanner's perception of Jeremy cloud his own view of the teenager, Alaric throws the file away and offers Jeremy a clean slate in the class.[141] With this action, Alaric's introduction into the series positions him as a reasonable authority figure. Like Kolchak and Mulder, Alaric is performing authority correctly. Alaric is someone who gives students the benefit of the doubt and a chance to accept/reject opportunities as they see fit, and this moment between Alaric and Jeremy reveals the monster hunter as being a fatherly figure.

Following Alaric's efforts to give a second chance to a troublemaker, "The Turning Point"[142] has Alaric confront another abusive male figure, Mystic Falls' Mayor. In this episode, Jeremy and Tyler Lockwood get into a physical altercation during the high school's career fair. Mayor Richard Lockwood[143] (Robert Pralgo) breaks them apart, takes the two boys outside and admonishes them with: "You don't fight in there like pansies. You take it outside, fight your battles like men, and move on. Best lesson my

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[138] In *Breakfast Club*, directed by John Hughes, performed by Emilio Estevez, Judd Nelson, and Molly Ringwald, Universal Pictures, 1985; figures such as Assistant Principal Vernon, Andrew Clark's father, and John Bender's father convey the adult male as displaying abusive behaviors to the teens: from physically abuse (Vernon and Bender) to relentless pressure to win (Clark). See David L. Kaye and Emily Ets-Hokin, "*The Breakfast Club*: Utilizing Popular Film to Teach Adolescent Development," *Academic Psychiatry* 24.2 (2000): 111.

[139] *The Vampire Diaries*, "History Repeating," CW, November 12, 2009, written by Bryan M. Holdman and Brian Young.

[140] *The Vampire Diaries*, "Pilot," CW, September 10, 2009, written by Kevin Williamson and Julie Plec.

[141] Alaric does so by offering Jeremy an extra credit assignment to boost his grade in the class – something that Jeremy promptly accepts.

[142] *The Vampire Diaries*, "The Turning Point," CW, November 19, 2009, written by Kevin Williamson and Julie Plec.

[143] Richard Lockwood is both Tyler's father and the town's mayor.

dad taught me. So let's settle it. Fight." When he says this, both boys look uncomfortable and do not want to follow his order. Before the Mayor physically forces his son into hitting Jeremy, Alaric steps in.

Despite the possible repercussions, Alaric calls the Mayor "a full grown alpha male douchebag" before taking Jeremy back inside. Once again, *The Vampire Diaries* presents the adult male as an abusive figure, one who perceives violence as an appropriate problem-solving tool and desires to force that belief upon the teens rather than give them a choice. Alaric's intervention once again sets him up as a reasonable figure, this time as someone who protects students from abusive figures who just want to bully choice away from them.

"History Repeating" and "The Turning Point" convey Alaric's propensity for giving troublemakers second chances and helping them to get out from under the thumb of repressive adults. Considering *The Vampire Diaries*' representation of high school, figures such as William Tanner and Richard Lockwood play to the concept of domineering teachers and parents who see teenagers as objects that need to be controlled. Rather than being a force of arrogance or dominance, Alaric presents an interesting contrast by taking a more caring approach to teens already encumbered by the pressures of high school, adults, *and* the supernatural. Such qualities set the tone for Alaric's open-minded nature. Before even hinting at his monster hunter identity, Alaric is established as an authority figure who refuses to give into prejudice against students, in a narrative that revolves around the ability to choose one's moral stance—it isn't inherent in who one is but in the choices one makes. The significance of Alaric being established as someone who gives people the benefit of the doubt and second chances helps to mark his character as reasonable and non-prejudicial. Rather than fully embracing the violent nature of the figure, à la Charles Gunn and Gordon Walker, *The Vampire Diaries* is making a point to differentiate its hunter as an advocate for free choice. As this advocate for free choice, Alaric shares similarities with Carl Kolchak and Fox Mulder, two figures who seek out truths rather than violence. However, he still takes action when monsters threaten innocents, and Alaric's identity as the program's monster hunter is presented to the

audience in the final moments of "The Turning Point" – where he stakes a vampire who threatens Jenna Sommers (Sara Canning), the aunt and legal guardian of Elena and Jeremy.

Alaric's reasons for coming to Mystic Falls are revealed via a conversation with Stefan Salvatore in "Children of the Damned."[144] In the episode, Stefan confronts Alaric and questions why he's come to Mystic Falls. Alaric's answer: "I just want to find out what happened to [Isobel]… I saw [Damon] draining the life out of her. He must have heard me coming. He just...disappeared. So did her body. [The police] never found her."[145] In this moment Alaric reflects Fox Mulder's truth-seeking nature, which makes sense considering his initial actions of questioning the opinions of authority figures. Unlike Gunn and Walker, though, Alaric is not fueled by vengeance; he just wants to uncover the truth.

By establishing Alaric's second-chance nature in tandem with his mission to uncover the truth, his subversion of the violence-driven adult male is further expressed. Through having Alaric challenge abusive teachers and fathers, his character better serves a narrative that focuses on humans and monsters in need of guidance and understanding rather than manipulation. Authority figures like Tanner and the Mayor who manipulate the teens, share similarities with Gunn and Walker's method for confronting the supernatural – wherein these hunters strictly view violence as the only way to solve problems, and perceive all monsters as deserving death (thereby denying all monsters any benefit of the doubt). Both the Tanner/Mayor and Gunn/Walker pairs strive to see teens and monsters in the simplest terms and convenient definitions. Alaric's actions thus rewrite the adult's and monster hunter's purpose: questioning oppressive figures and their assumptions of others, and pursuing the truth rather than blindly acting – two actions which complement a narrative striving for a more complicated understanding of the monstrous body.

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[144] *The Vampire Diaries*, "Children of the Damned," CW, February 4, 2010, written by Kevin Williamson and Julie Plec.

[145] "Children of the Damned."

III: Alaric Saltzman and Damon Salvatore as Victims of the Manipulative Female

By presenting Alaric as an understanding adult figure whose caring nature facilitates his desire in exposing the truth, he embodies *The Vampire Diaries*' central theme of normalizing the monster as being invested in family, relationships, and identity. This marks Alaric as separate from the previous representations of the televisual human monster hunter, with him accepting that the monstrous is on par with humans: it isn't their monstrosity that is suspect, but their choices. However, while confronting abusive figures and seeking out answers over violence appears to be a move towards eliminating the prejudicial bias of the monster hunter, Alaric's acceptance of the monster leads to a vilifying of the feminine. This occurs because his transgressive attitude and bond with the monster stems from a shared betrayal at the hands of manipulative women.

The Vampire Diaries' shift from transgressive human/monster relations to a regressive gendered representation occurs when Alaric learns the truth behind his wife Isobel's disappearance. In the episode "A Few Good Men,"[146] Alaric confronts Damon in the Salvatore home, demanding to know what happened to Isobel. Damon's response: "You want me to tell you I killed her? Would that make you happy? Because I think you know what happened…I turned her." From Alaric's conversation with Stefan prior to this moment, his origin appears to follow the usual script for the monster hunter: with Isobel supposedly just another female victim whose death initiates the male's journey as a hunter.

However, Damon's revelation shifts Isobel from victim to manipulator, with him going on to say: "She came to me…I turned her because she begged me to….I guess she wasn't happy at home, wasn't happy with life in general, wasn't happy with you." This change in the hunter origin is facilitated by the show's emphasis on characters having the freedom to make their own decisions. While Isobel did lose her humanity, it was something that *she* sought to do: she made a choice to end her marriage and Alaric's normative life, because she wasn't happy with being his wife.

[146] *The Vampire Diaries*, "A Few Good Men," CW, March 25, 2010, written by Brian Young.

By choosing to become a vampire and abandon Alaric, Isobel drastically restructures feminine performativity within the human monster hunter narrative. As seen within previous chapters, the human monster hunter furthers the cultural tendency to position women as damsels to be avenged/saved by the chivalrous male heroes.[147] While Samantha Mulder and Alonna Gunn do position the female body as passively responsible for the erasure of the man's normative life, Isobel actively seeks to erase Alaric's masculinity, and this suggests she is more threatening to the masculine body than the monster. This expression of the feminine as dangerous to men is furthered when Damon reveals that he too is a victim of feminine manipulation: "We're kindred spirits, abandoned by the women we love."[148] As the audience learns in flashbacks within "Lost Girls" and "Bloodlines,"[149] the vampire Katherine Pierce is the one who manipulates and turns the Salvatore brothers into monsters.

In "Lost Girls," a flashback to the year 1864 reveals that the vampire Katherine Pierce (Nina Dobrev) plays a significant role in Damon and Stefan's past. Upon taking residence in the Salvatore estate, Katherine sleeps with both of the brothers to keep herself entertained. When the brothers learn she is a vampire, she compels[150] each of them to keep the secret from the other and continues to manipulate and use them. Another flashback in "Bloodlines" goes on to show how competing for Katherine's affection creates a rift between the Salvatore brothers, leading to their deaths and transformations into vampires.[151] These flashbacks highlight that like Isobel, Katherine uses seduction to

[147] See Rhona J. Berenstein, *Attack of the Leading Ladies: Gender, Sexuality, and Spectatorship in Classic Horror Film* (Columbia University Press: New York, 1996); Carol J. Clover, *Men, Women, and Chainsaws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (London: British Film Institute, 1992); and Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40.4 (1988) for some of the seminal critiques on gendered performativity in mainstream media.
[148] "A Few Good Men."
[149] *The Vampire Diaries*, "Lost Girls," CW, October 15, 2009, written by Kevin Williamson and Julie Plec; and *The Vampire Diaries*, "Bloodlines," CW, January 21, 2010, written by Kevin Williamson and Julie Plec.
[150] *The Vampire Diaries* presents vampires as being capable of controlling the minds of humans, simply through eye contact.
[151] Their father kills the Salvatore brothers in their efforts to protect Katherine from him, and Katherine's blood is in their systems upon their deaths – thus triggering their transformations into monsters.

upend the male's normative life, and in her case, she doubly breaks the Salvatore's familial bonds and their ties to humanity.

Manipulative femininity becomes further established as the greater danger and the bonding agent between the hunter and monster when Isobel resurfaces and meets with Alaric. In "Isobel,"[152] a reunion between Alaric and Isobel suggests a possible moment of closure, but she makes it clear that their meeting is not for his benefit; she says, "I don't have any reasons that are gonna comfort you. I don't have any explanations that are gonna satisfy you." Instead, she wants him to set up a meeting between her and Elena.[153] These comments reinforce the notion that Isobel has no qualms about abandoning Alaric and that she wishes to continue using him. When Alaric refuses to help her, Isobel picks him up by the throat and says: "You better tell Elena that I want to meet or I'm gonna start killing the citizens of this town one by one and I'm gonna start with your history students. Got it?" This demonstration of physical violence and threat towards his students only supports Isobel's status as a danger to both Alaric's masculinity and society as a whole and becomes the turning point in Alaric's bond with Damon.

From Alaric's introduction in "History Repeating," giving a second chance to troublemakers is a distinguishing quality of his character. Yet, when Alaric recounts his reunion with Isobel to Damon, he expresses that she is beyond second chances: "I looked for the woman I married but she wasn't there. Whoever that is, she's cold and detached… you're a dick and you kill people but I still see something human in you. But with her there was...nothing."[154] This statement suggests that even Alaric's patience has its limits. The idea that Alaric sees humanity in a monster that kills people and nothing in a "cold" woman only furthers the program's subtext: a woman who fails to follow proper feminine performativity, of being duly obedient to one's husband/boyfriend, serves as a greater danger than even

[152] *The Vampire Diaries*, "Isobel," CW, May 6, 2010, written by Caroline Dries and Brian Young.
[153] Isobel's insistence to meet with Elena stems from the revelation of her being Elena's birth mother – as seen in "A Few Good Men."
[154] "Isobel."

the monster. Overall, Isobel and Katherine's manipulative actions position them as "Femme Fatale" figures, the archetypal models for exploiting men with their feminine wiles.

The Femme Fatale embodies a subversive woman who uses her sexuality to advance her own agenda, utilizing erotically appealing innocence to lead men to their destruction.[155] In a narrative centering on the theme of choice, Isobel and Katherine are *The Vampire Diaries*' Femme Fatales who make choices that destabilize the men's lives and thus are positioned as worse than the monster. Both women challenge the masculinist practice of women needing the protection of the male body. Isobel refuses to just be Alaric's wife and instead chooses an immortal life on her own. While Katherine refuses to be the girlfriend to one of the Salvatore brothers, she takes *both* of them and controls them on her own terms.

In their decisions to take control of their own lives and relationships, both Isobel and Katherine break from the 'proper' feminine decorum to rely on masculinity – such as being faithful to one's husband and choosing only one male partner. Through these choices to refuse masculinity as the decision-maker, Isobel and Katherine are vilified more than the monster because they subvert normative gender performativity.[156] Alaric's and Damon's response to this failed femininity is to embrace one another's masculinity and perform actions which reassert their masculine power: enacting socially productive masculinity, which allows for them to both protect the norm and recapture the heteronormative power that Isobel and Katherine denied them.

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[155] See James F. Maxfield, *The Fatal Woman: Sources of Male Anxiety in American Film Noir, 1941-1991* (Cranbury: Associated University Press, 1996), 98; and for further scholarly examinations into the Femme Fatale's predatory sexuality see Maxfield; Elisabeth Bronfen, "Femme Fatale—Negotiations of Tragic Desire," *New Literary History* 35 (2004); J. P. Telotte, *Voices in the Dark: The Narrative Patterns of Film Noir* (Urbana: Illinois University Press, 1989); and Andrew Dickos, *Street with No Name: A History of the Classic American Film Noir* (Lexington: Kentucky University Press, 2002).

[156] Kerry M. Mallan, "Witches, Bitches, and Femmes Fatales: Viewing the Female Grotesque in Children's Films," *Explorations into Children's Literature* 10.1 (2000): 4.

IV: Alaric Saltzman's Reinforcement of Stereotypical Masculinity

Alaric's and Damon's positions as kindred spirits who share the trauma of victimization by deceptive women not only ushers in a new threat to the social norm, it also helps to establish a bond which enacts stereotypical masculinity. *The Vampire Diaries* centers the Alaric and Damon friendship around typical masculine behavior: by frequently pairing them together to fight monsters, drink alcohol, and use Elena Gilbert as a supportive figure – i.e. playing out the stereotypical expectations of the male role to counter their emasculation as the hands of the Femme Fatales.

1) Violence

Starting with "Let the Right One In,"[157] Alaric's and Damon's roles in *The Vampire Diaries* center on them protecting Mystic Falls by confronting the town's monstrous threats. This episode in particular deals with Stefan being abducted by a group of vampires and Damon enlisting Alaric's help.[158] The two are successful in rescuing Stefan through killing the rogue vampires, and Damon meets Alaric at the Mystic Grill bar to say: "That was fun. Oh, don't look at me like that. I know you hate me. Guess what? Everyone hates me. But you can't deny it. We were bad ass." Damon's enthusiasm for him and Alaric working so well together in killing monsters encourages a kinship for violence on top of their statuses as being abandoned by the women they loved.

After teaming up to save Stefan, *The Vampire Diaries* presents Alaric and Damon in various confrontations with the supernatural. Besides fighting vampires, both men work together to confront werewolves, plot to kill an Original vampire, go up against a vengeful spirit, and confront a hybrid bent on sacrificing Elena.[159] These confrontations with various supernatural adversaries allow Alaric and

[157] *The Vampire Diaries*, "Let the Right One In," CW, April 8, 2010, written by Julie Plec.
[158] In an attempt to infiltrate the house Stefan is being held in, Damon is unable enter it without an invitation from the human owner being controlled by the rogue vampires.
[159] As seen in *The Vampire Diaries*, "By the Light of the Moon," CW, December 9, 2010, written by Mike Daniels; *The Vampire Diaries*, "Crying Wolf," CW, February 10, 2011, written by Brian Young; and *The Vampire Diaries*, "The Dinner Party," CW, February 17, 2011, written by Andrew Chambliss; an Original is a type of vampire the program establishes as being extremely powerful and known for being one of the first generation of vampires. In this case,

Damon to fulfill the monster hunter's ideology of maintaining societal order through cleansing threats to normativity. Yet at the same time, such actions also glorify and normalize violence as a socially productive act. Damon's line of "we were bad ass" mirrors Gordon Walker's sentiment "Oh, come on, man, it's not like it was human. You've gotta have a little more fun with your job."[160] A key difference is that Walker's violence discriminated against all monsters, even the harmless ones. In a narrative which carefully addresses the monster's choice to protect or destabilize the norm, Alaric's and Damon's actions become justified because they're only killing monsters who *choose* to threaten the norm.

Therefore, Alaric and Damon can enjoy policing Mystic Falls because their violence maintains Elena's and the town's safety. Alaric and Damon's actions perpetuate and reinforce a specific vision of masculinity that film and television inscribe upon the male body. In making their primary activities focus on killing monsters, *The Vampire Diaries* positions violence as masculine. While the two men aren't hard bodies in the same vein as figures like Sylvester Stallone and Chuck Norris – the muscle-upon-muscle impossible standards of popular media – Alaric and Damon's recurring violence against the supernatural feeds into the cultural stigma of men needing to be tough, aggressive, and distanced from others.[161]

This focus on masculine violence falls in line with the monster hunter's masculine ideology of men being the only one's strong enough to protect society. While there have been hunters who embrace and enjoy their violence (Gunn and Walker), the fact that it's both the human and monster policing Mystic Falls (as white men) vindicates their predilection and enjoyment of violent activities.

Alaric and Damon are focusing on Elijah Mikaelson (Daniel Gillies); *The Vampire Diaries*, "Ghost World," CW, October 27, 2011, written by Rebecca Sonnenshine; and *The Vampire Diaries*, "The Last Day," CW, April 28, 2011, written by Andrew Chambliss and Brian Young; a hybrid is a cross-bred species, wherein a werewolf turned into a vampire possesses the strengths of both creatures. In this case, Alaric and Damon combat against Klaus Mikaelson (Joseph Morgan).

[160] *Supernatural*, "Bloodlust," CW, October 12, 2006, written by Sera Gamble.

[161] Peter J. Boyer, "TV Turns to the Hard-Boiled Male," *New York Times*, February 16, 1986; for further examinations into popular culture's association of masculinity with violence, see Susan Jeffords, *Hard Bodies: Hollywood Masculinity in the Reagan Era* (New Jersey: Rutgers University Press, 1993); Jillian Sandell, "Reinventing Masculinity: The Spectacle of Male Intimacy in the Films of John Woo," *Film Quarterly* 49.4 (1996); Steven Cohan, *Masked Men: Masculinity and the Movies in the Fifties* (Indiana: Indiana UP, 1997); and Amanda D. Lotz, *Cable Guys: Television and Masculinities in the 21st Century* (New York: NYU Press, 2014).

Thus, Alaric's and Damon's purpose within *The Vampire Diaries* is to provide a friendship that reinforces traditional tropes of white masculinity.

2) Alcohol

While Alaric's and Damon's taste for violence serves as a distinguishing quality of their friendship, so too is their recurrent penchant for drinking hard liquor with one another. If they're not fighting monsters, both men are drinking Bourbon, Whiskey, and Scotch on a regular basis, meeting up at the Mystic Grill, the Salvatore home, or Alaric's apartment to do so.[162] This presentation of drinking as a bonding element even goes so far as to be used as their means of saying farewell to each other on two separate occasions. In "As I Lay Dying,"[163] Damon is dying from a werewolf bite and when Alaric visits him, he brings a bottle of Scotch that they proceed to drink. When the tables are turned in "Do Not Go Gentle,"[164] with Alaric dying from not transitioning into a vampire,[165] Damon brings a bottle of Whiskey to share. Therefore, alcohol is not just established as a favored pastime in-between fighting the supernatural, it also serves as a means of penultimate closure between the two men.

From as early as the Western genre's depictions of gunfighters frequenting saloons for Whiskey, the act of alcohol consumption is a symbol for what it means to be a man.[166] There's also an emphasis on what they drink, with media depictions showing men drinking hard unadulterated liquor, not cosmopolitan cocktails and wine. They go to bars and drink to validate their masculinity and bond with other men, and thus drink alcohol in order to be male. The act of drinking is said to symbolize manliness

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[162] *The Vampire Diaries*, "The New Deal," CW, January 5 2012, written by Michael Narducci; *The Vampire Diaries*, "Crying Wolf," CW, February 10, 2011, written by Brian Young; and *The Vampire Diaries*, "The Ties that Bind," CW, January 19, 2012, written by Brian Young.

[163] *The Vampire Diaries*, "As I Lay Dying," CW, May 12, 2011, written by Turi Meyer, Al Septien and Michael Narducci.

[164] *The Vampire Diaries*, "Do Not Go Gentle," CW, April 26, 2012, written by Micael Narducci.

[165] In this episode, Esther Mikaelson (Claire Holt) turns Alaric into a vampire so that he may kill her son, Klaus. However, the show establishes that if a newly-made vampire does no consume blood (and thus fully transition into a vampire), he/she will die.

[166] Danny Wedding, "Alcoholism in the Western Genre: The Portrayal of Alcohol and Alcoholism in the Western Genre," *Journal of Alcohol and Drug Education* 46.2 (2001): 6.

because of its cultural link to other key aspects of the male role: unconventionality, risk-taking, and aggressiveness.[167]

Alaric and Damon's propensity for drinking as a bonding activity caters to such notions of masculinity. However, with their friendship being born out of mutual emasculation, this emphasis on sharing alcohol plays to the belief that alcoholism represents a means of dealing with masculine failure: men who are insecure in their masculinities tend to use alcohol consumption to demonstrate masculine competence.[168] On the surface, Alaric and Damon's violence and drinking appear to center on the human and monster exercising their masculinity for society's benefit. However, their frequent fighting and drinking can also be read as vehement attempts to reconcile a shared denigration at the hands of women. Alaric and Damon's focus on fighting and drinking can be read as their way of convincing themselves and others that they are manly and badass societal defenders.

3) Supportive Femininity

From fighting vampires in "Let The Right One In" to confronting werewolves in "By The Light of the Moon," Alaric and Damon use violence to protect the woman they love: Elena Gilbert. As a surrogate daughter for Alaric and a love-interest for Damon, Elena represents the passive female in need of rescuing.[169] Just as violence and alcohol allow the two men ways to enact manliness, Elena serves as a supportive female in need of protecting. As the passive woman, Elena inspires and positively influences the men. From sharing inspirational words with Alaric in "The Hybrid"[170] to other characters noticing

[167] Russell Lemle and Marc E. Mishkind, "Alcohol and Masculinity," *Journal of Substance Abuse Treatment* 6 (1989): 216.

[168] For more examinations into alcohol consumption and masculine insecurities, see James W. Messerschmidt, "Becoming 'Real Men': Adolescent Masculinity Challenges and Sexual Violence," *Men and Masculinities* 2 (2000); Rollo C. Capraro, "Why College Men Drink: Alcohol, Adventure and the Paradox of Masculinity," *Journal of American College Health* 48 (2001); and Gary R. Brooks, "Masculinity and Men's Health," *Journal of American College Health* 49 (2001).

[169] Such as Alaric and Damon working together to rescue Elena from a vampire in *The Vampire Diaries*, "Masquerade," CW, October 28, 2010, written by Kevin Williamson and Julie Plec; and from the hybrid in "The Last Day."

[170] Elena tells Alaric of his importance as a father figure: "You're not a lost cause, [Alaric]. You're just lost. But so is Jeremy, and so am I. Our family is gone. We don't have anybody. I'm sorry, but you don't have anybody either,

Elena's positive impact on Damon and vice versa,[171] Elena enacts 'proper' femininity, in stark contrast to Isobel and Katherine. Whereas Isobel robs Alaric of an opportunity to be a father, Elena encourages him to be a surrogate father to her and Jeremy. While Katherine manipulated and controlled Damon, Elena helps to make Damon happy and a better person.

Whereas Isobel and Katherine reflect the Femme Fatale, Alaric and Damon's protectiveness over Elena and her reliance on them to save her from various monsters provides them an opportunity to mold Elena into an 'appropriate' female body. Both men have been betrayed and now they have this young woman they can mold so she doesn't follow Isobel's or Katherine's examples. By keeping her safe and allowing them to show off the value of masculine strength, Elena is less inclined to outright abandon them like Isobel and Katherine did. While Elena does serve as an inspiration to the men, they too inspire her. Alaric's fatherly presence allows her to acknowledge that they are good for each other. In helping to make Damon a better person, Elena finds surprising challenges that allow her to see facets of herself that she would be unaware of otherwise. Thus, Elena does not just appreciate the physical safety that the masculine body provides, but there's also an emotional growth that she receives with the men around.

Elena then serves as a representation of the "Good Woman" in *The Vampire Diaries*. As a polar opposite to the Femme Fatale, the Good Woman is a faithful lover and friend to the male hero, whose innocence inspires him to be a better man.[172] Elena's dependence and influence on Alaric and Damon

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so...We're kind of good for each other" in *The Vampire Diaries*, "The Hybrid," CW, September 22, 2011, written by Al Septien and Turi Meyer.

[171] In *The Vampire Diaries*, "Heart of Darkness," CW, April 19, 2012, written by Brian Young and Evan Bleiweiss; Damon's friend Rose (Lauren Cohan) voices this observation: "It's not just that she makes him a better person, she does, but he changes her too. Damon challenges her, surprises her, he makes her question her life, beliefs. Stefan is different, his love is pure, he'll always be good for her. Damon is either the best thing for her or the worst."

[172] For scholarly examinations into the Good Woman as a passive counterpoint to the Femme Fatale, see Barbara Hales, "Projecting Trauma: The Femme Fatale in Weimar and Hollywood Film Noir," *Women in German Yearbook* 23 (2007); Janey Place, "Women in Film Noir," in *Women in Film Noir*, ed. E. Ann Kaplan (London: British Film Institute, 1978); Sara-Jane Finlay and Natalie Fenton, "'If You've Got a Vagina and an Attitude, that's a Deadly Combination': Sex and Heterosexuality in *Basic Instinct*, Body of Evidence and Disclosure," *Sexualities* 8.1 (2005);

clearly situates her as the Good Woman, and as a counter to their experiences with Isobel and Katherine. If their violence and drinking represent Alaric and Damon's insecure masculinity, then Elena reestablishes them as manly heroes and looks to correct Isobel's and Katherine's negative influences. In the end, although Elena is the main character of *The Vampire Diaries*, she is instrumental in solidifying Alaric's and Damon's roles as the masculine protectors in the program. Elena ultimately embodies a more amicable version of femininity than Isobel and Katherine and represents the men's second chance at making the female body dependent upon masculine strength rather than scheming to usurp it.

V: Conclusion

Within *The Vampire Diaries*, Alaric Saltzman and Damon Salvatore's friendship presents a significant shift for hunter/monster relations. However, such a shift is accompanied by stereotypical gender representations of the manipulative Femme Fatale, macho male activities, and the inspirational Good Woman. Alaric and Damon's bond embodies *The Vampire Dairies*' push for humans and monsters as both being equally shaped by choice (versus through birth or transformation), starting with establishing Alaric as an authority figure who perceives teens beyond the convenient definitions of other teachers and parents. Rather than just perpetuating the adult male as arrogant and oppressive, Alaric inverts the dynamic set by William Tanner and Mayor Lockwood. He challenges the perceptions and decisions made by his cohorts, through reaching out and helping troubled teens in any way possible. Alaric's everyone-deserves-a-second-chance nature is further expressed in his encounters with Damon Salvatore – wherein Alaric has every reason to hate Damon, but he chooses to befriend him instead.

Unique to the human monster hunter narrative is Alaric's decision to make friends with the monster who killed his wife. Such an odd friendship occurs because both men share a common experience: being manipulated by a deceptive woman. As seen in his encounters with Damon and Isobel, Alaric learns that her death was actually a ruse so that she may become a vampire and abandon

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and Amelia Jones, "'She Was Bad News': Male Paranoia and the Contemporary New Woman," *Camera Obscura* 9.1-2 (1991).

him. Paired with Damon's own experience of losing his family and humanity because of Katherine Pierce, *The Vampire Diaries* appears to establish dangerous women as the true threat to the social norm over supernatural monsters.

Both Isobel and Katherine correlate with the Femme Fatale archetype, using their sexuality to get what they want and abandoning men when they're no longer of use to them. There is a gendered subtext that suggests Alaric's and Damon's connection to one another goes beyond just being wronged by a woman. They befriend one another because they have been emasculated and forced onto paths of violence; in a narrative centering on choice, both men have lost their ability to choose because of women.

Through their shared emasculation, Alaric and Damon perform gender acts that look to reestablish their manhood. This is seen with their friendship strictly focusing on fighting monsters and drinking alcohol. Alaric and Damon's initial partnership in "Let the Right One In" sets the tone for their friendship. Their defeat of a group of vampires and meeting for drinks afterwards is just the beginning of their confrontation with supernatural creatures and bonding over alcohol consumption. Their bonding over violence and drinking suggests that men should only perform social bonds in forms conducive to heteronormative masculinity, and thus perpetuate ultra-masculine expressions as ways to work through the trauma of female manipulation. Ironically, by enacting this gender performance, Alaric functions more like Mayor Lockwood – the "alpha male douchebag" concerned with fighting battles "like men" and not "pansies." Just as Lockwood pushes for manly performativity from his son, Alaric's and Damon's stressing of violence and drinking in *The Vampire Diaries* also reinforces similar stereotypical patriarchal notions of manliness.

In locating the hunter and monster as protectors of the social norm through manly activities, Alaric's and Damon's actions revolve around keeping Elena Gilbert safe, positioning her as the passive daughter/lover. While Isobel and Katherine function as the Femme Fatales in *The Vampire Diaries*, Elena

fits the mold of the Good Woman. By relying on Alaric and Damon for their protection and support, Elena reinforces the female as a damsel. Just as the Good Woman functions primarily to support the active male, Elena provides words of encouragement and inspiration for Alaric and Damon. Through doing this she plays to the masculinist practice of women as secondary figures meant to influence and inspire the male into heroism. Through Elena, not only do Alaric and Damon recapture their masculine natures, but they also mold her into a woman who will support the male body rather than undermine it. The Alaric and Damon friendship then serves as a corrective measure, making sure Elena does not turn out like Isobel and Katherine.

In the end, while Alaric Saltzman functions as a unique representation of the human monster hunter, his friendship with Damon Salvatore problematically reinforces the gendered conceptions of the manipulative feminine as a threat to the norm, male machismo as socially productive, and the passive inspirational female as an idealized form of femininity. In Alaric Saltzman, *The Vampire Diaries* appears to relay the underlying message: it is possible for a horror-themed narrative to present the monster and humans as equals. Taking a page from *Angel* and *Supernatural*, both the hunter and vampire are influenced by choice rather than nature and are equally positioned as agents of normality. But, rather than the monster seeking out a way to become human, *The Vampire Diaries* allows for all of its monsters to have a choice in being either a productive member or a threat to society.

Alaric's and Damon's embodiment of a full partnership between the human and monster is a theme that becomes central to contemporary supernatural programs. For instance, *Grimm* (2011-present) centers on a Portland homicide detective (Nick Burkhardt)[173] forming a strong bond with a werewolf-like murder suspect (Monroe)[174] because of his invaluable assistance in explaining the

[173]Played by David Giuntoli.
[174] Played by Silas Weir Mitchell.

Wesen[175] world to him and *iZombie* (2015-present) focuses on a Seattle homicide detective (Clive Babineaux)[176] forming a friendship with a zombie (Olivia Moore)[177] who helps him solve cases. Such shows emphasize humans and monsters as bonding with one another because they share a vested interest in upholding the status quo. However, in order for Alaric and Damon to help in establishing such a transgressive partnership, the female body has to be positioned as a significant threat to normality: meaning that progress in complicating humanity/monstrosity must regress to the traditional perceptions of masculinity and femininity.

[175] In this series, "Wesen" is the collective term for the different kinds of supernatural creatures that inhabit the world -- and in the narrative inspired various figures in Grimm fairy tales.
[176] Played by Malcolm Goodwin.
[177] Played by Rose McIver.

CHAPTER 4 "'I DON'T KNOW WHETHER TO KILL IT OR LICK IT': KATE ARGENT'S COMPLICATION OF GENDERED AND SEXUAL PERFORMITIVITY IN *TEEN WOLF*"

I: Introduction

An interesting element to the televisual human monster hunter mythos is its continuous depiction of women in passive roles. Characters such as Samantha Mulder (*The X-Files*), Alonna Gunn (*Angel*), and Elena Gilbert (*The Vampire Diaries*) all serve supportive functions: as the female loved-ones who spur men into taking up the hunter mantle. As outlined in my introduction, confining sisters, wives, and girlfriends to being the victims suggests that only men can confront supernatural threats. While there have been women like Buffy Summers and the Halliwell sisters (*Charmed*) who save humanity from monsters, their natures as Slayer and witches suggest that women need to be supernaturally-powered in order to thrive at monster hunting. However, *Teen Wolf*'s Kate Argent challenges this precedent and serves as the first significant female to take on a more active role as a human monster hunter.[178]

MTV's *Teen Wolf* (2011–present) revolves around Scott McCall (Tyler Posey), a newly-made werewolf struggling to maintain high school normalcy while fighting monstrous urges. The program's main narrative focuses on Scott's life in Beacon Hills,[179] where he interacts with his high school peers, werewolves, and werewolf hunters. In contrast to Scott, who fights his werewolf urges, Kate, a werewolf hunter, embraces her violent tendencies. Within the first season of the series, Kate is the only female to actively hunt werewolves and the only hunter to take pleasure in torturing and killing *all* werewolves, even those who have not killed humans. In the larger scheme of things, Kate continues Charles Gunn's (*Angel*) and Gordon Walker's (*Supernatural*) problematic intentions of using the hunter mantle to embrace one's violent nature. Once again, we see the monster as the one who struggles against his violent tendencies, whereas Kate, the human monster hunter, thrives on hers.

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[178] As opposed to the Harvelles in *Supernatural*, who primarily functioned as surrogate mother (Ellen) and sister (Jo) for Dean and Sam Winchester.

[179] *Teen Wolf*'s fictional locale, the town functions as a generic representation of a California city.

Key to *Teen Wolf*'s narrative is its focus on werewolf mythology. Jeff Davis, the show's developer, has made it abundantly clear that *Teen Wolf* will focus on werewolf mythos, rather than creating vampire-human-werewolf love triangles, à la *Twilight* (2008), *True Blood* (2008-2014), *The Vampire Diaries* (2009-present), etc.[180] By holding onto werewolf mythology as its core theme, and not convoluting the narrative with vampires or other creatures, *Teen Wolf* centers on the struggle of dual natures. Similar to Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, the figure of the werewolf exemplifies the conflict of human nature – maintaining one's 'proper' civilized self, while keeping one's violent self away from the public's purview.[181] Thus, a narrative focusing on the werewolf mythos will almost certainly utilize this balancing act as its primary conflict. The program's main protagonist Scott McCall, the teen wolf of the show's title, exemplifies this. Scott's struggle for control parallels the hormonal urges that are part of high school life and adolescence in general, making it a complementary setting for the werewolf narrative.

In particular, the first season of *Teen Wolf* focuses on Scott, who relies on his best friend Stiles Stilinski (Dylan O'Brien) and the mysterious werewolf Derek Hale (Tyler Hoechlin) to help him adjust to becoming a werewolf. His love interest, Allison Argent (Crystal Reed), is the daughter of Chris Argent (JR Bourne), the leader of the werewolf hunters. In the series, Scott strives to balance keeping his mother,

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[180] For instance, in a 2011 interview with *Zap2it.com* in "'Teen Wolf' EP Jeff Davis talks mythology and his one rule: 'No vampires'," June 6, 2011; http://blog.zap2it.com/frominsidethebox/2011/06/teen-wolf-ep-jeff-davis-talks-mythology-and-his-one-rule-no-vampires.html), when asked "Obviously your show centers on a werewolf, but are you interested in bringing on other supernatural entities?" Davis' response was: "Absolutely. But I have a rule: No vampires." This sentiment is brought up once more in a 2012 interview with *Clevver.com* in "Jeff Davis Spills 'Teen Wolf' Season 3 Secrets," October 18, 2012; http://www.clevver.com/videos/2012/10/18/tv-shows/jeff-davis-spills-teen-wolf-season-3-secrets/). When asked "Are there going to be vampires on the show this season?" Davis responded "I can conclusively say there will be no vampires on the show this season. And usually my typical line is that there will never be vampires on the show Teen Wolf, but ask me that in five years when we've run out of ideas."

[181] Horror scholars such as James B. Twitchell, David J. Skal, and Rick Worland discuss how the figure of Jekyll and Hyde shares certain affinities with the werewolf. In *Dreadful Pleasures: An Anatomy of Modern Horror* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985) Twitchell identifies Wolfman stories as embodying the Victorian belief that humans are perpetually trapped between their bestial and angelic natures (Twitchell, *Dreadful Pleasures*, 204); Skal acknowledges there being a "werewolfish duality [in] Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde" and consigns that the primary conflict of the figure is a "descent into bestial violence" in *The Monster Show: A Cultural History of Horror* (New York: Faber and Faber, 1993), 19 and 140; Worland also identifies a connection between Jekyll and Hyde and Victorian culture, by noting "the lustful, cruel, and violent side of Jekyll's nature [is one] that the proper Victorian gentleman wishes to hide from public view" in *The Horror Film: An Introduction* (Oxford: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 31.

Melissa McCall (Melissa Ponzio), safe and to keep his secret safe from classmates like his lacrosse rival, Jackson Whittemore (Colton Haynes).

What makes Kate an interesting figure is her departure from the familiar depiction of the human monster hunter. As previously discussed, in programs like *Kolchak: The Night Stalker* (Carl Kolchak), *Angel* (Charles Gunn), *Supernatural* (Sam and Dean Winchester), and *The Vampire Diaries* (Alaric Saltzman), the hunter is male, while women function as damsels in distress or Femme Fatales. These narratives embody masculine ideologies that communicate the idea that men are stronger and more able than the women whom they must protect, thereby reaffirming gender norms that uphold patriarchy. Kate Argent's presence within *Teen Wolf* provides a challenge to this, with her representing the first prominent human female monster hunter on TV.

More importantly, *Teen Wolf*'s interpretation of the human monster hunter follows the example set by *Angel* and *Supernatural*. All three programs branch out to depict the monster hunter as non-white (Gunn and Walker) and non-male (Kate). Yet, these variations also problematically position the hunter as a reckless obstacle for the series' monster protagonist (and managed by the white male hero). Like Gunn and Walker, Kate too displays a preference for giving into her violent urges. But she also displays a predatory sexuality, which further prohibits her from being a proper hunter like her white male counterparts. Through her predatory sexuality, Kate is uniquely positioned as a proxy for *Teen Wolf*'s fans and creates an interesting subtext for the way in which the show's producers seek to manage both their character's and fans' obsessive impulses.

II: Kate Argent and Horror Narrative Performativity

Kate Argent's nature as a character who fully embraces her violent tendencies is best illustrated in her introduction into *Teen Wolf* within "Magic Bullet,"[182] which plays on horror tropes only to subvert them. The episode opens with a woman in her 30s driving in the middle of the night. As she is driving,

[182] *Teen Wolf*, "Magic Bullet," MTV, June 20, 2011, written by Daniel Sinclair.

the radio announcer discusses the recent "animal attacks" in town.[183] The woman scoffs at the news and changes the radio to a station playing upbeat music. This moment in which the character chooses to ignore the broadcast recalls countless scenarios in crime procedurals and horror narratives, with the narrative's cold opening featuring a character who ignores vital information as she transverses alone in an isolated area.[184]

"Magic Bullet"'s opening is constructed in such a way as to suggest that this woman will be the next victim of an "animal attack." As the scene continues to play out, the audience receives a quick glimpse of a werewolf running in stride with the woman's vehicle – and it disappears just as she looks out the window. With her eyes off of the road for a split second, the woman nearly gets into a collision with another vehicle. When the woman pulls her car over to side of the road, the werewolf jumps onto the vehicle's roof. It then smashes its arm through the driver's side window and grabs the woman by her left arm. Up to this moment, the scene plays out like a typical horror narrative with the woman acting as the werewolf's prey.

However, rather than becoming just another victim of the week, the woman uses her free arm to grab a shotgun from beneath her seat and proceeds to fire a round at the roof. At this moment, a role reversal occurs and the woman is no longer the prey; she is the predator. After firing her weapon, the woman rolls out of the vehicle and scans the area to take another shot. Upon seeing that the werewolf has fled, the woman yells "come on," fires a shot into the air, and yells "come on" even louder – the scene then transitions to *Teen Wolf*'s opening credits. The woman is Kate Argent, and this subversion of the predator/prey dynamic introduces Kate as an active predator rather than a passive victim.

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[183] Within *Teen Wolf*, "animal attacks" is code for the killings committed by werewolves.

[184] From crime procedurals, such as *Law & Order*, created by Dick Wolf, NBC, 1990-2010; and *CSI*, created by Anthony Zuiker, CBS, 2000-2015; to horror programs such as *The X-Files*, created by Chris Carter, FOX, 1993-2002; and *Supernatural*, created by Eric Kripke, WB and CW, 2005-present; the opening scene establishes both the murder and criminal/monster to be featured in that week's episode.

The opening scene of "Magic Bullet" initially sets up Kate Argent as a helpless damsel, but immediately shifts to reveal that she is more capable than the werewolf realizes. Kate's character provides a subversion of the classical gender roles in horror, wherein the monster is a sexual threat to the female and emasculates the male hero who seems unable to rescue her.[185] Kate's reflection of stereotypically masculine attributes, such as fighting with and overpowering werewolves, draws similarities to the "Final Girl" in Slasher films.[186] The Final Girl also embodies male and female attributes, and it is through her ambiguous gender identity that she is able to defeat or outlive the Slasher antagonist. While Kate is definitely not a Final Girl, she does demonstrate an active and stereotypically male behavior, thus providing a twist that begs to question the assumptions of "normal" gender functions in horror. Not only is Kate active, subverting the damsel-in-distress, passive female role but she also doesn't need a male to rescue her. She completely takes over that role herself.

Kate's introduction in "Magic Bullet" is significant because before her character was introduced, the women in *Teen Wolf* functioned primarily in one of two roles. The older women function as supportive mothers, as in the case of Melissa McCall and Victoria Argent (Eaddy Mays). The younger women are featured as objects of desire, as in the case of Allison Argent and Lydia Martin (Holland Roden), the love interests for Scott and Stiles, respectively. Essentially, the women are relegated to playing either motherly or romantic roles. Rather than being an object of support or affection, Kate presents an interesting contrast to the other female characters. Unlike Melissa, Victoria, Allison, and Lydia, Kate takes on more of an active and independent role in the series. Besides her introduction scene, Kate is shown leading a team of hunters to attack the werewolf Derek Hale at his home, with Kate

[185] See the synopsis of Robin Wood's discussion of horror in *Hollywood: From Vietnam to Reagan…and Beyond* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2003), 68.

[186] As horror scholar Carol J. Clover has demonstrated in *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992); a key to Slasher horror is the establishment of the "Final Girl," the most resilient potential victim of a seemingly unstoppable killer and one with whom male audiences can identify because of her perceived masculine qualities (Clover, *Men, Women, and Chain Saws*, 39).

being the only one successful in subduing him and extracting vital information from Derek through torture and observation.[187]

While characters like Scott are always fighting to keep their violent urges in check, Kate freely gives into them and takes pleasure in inflicting pain. Like Gunn, Walker, and Alaric, Kate embraces the human monster hunter's violent characteristics – thus she taps into the figure's masculine prowess and has fun as she does so. However, Kate's position as a woman enacting a traditionally male role flips the traditional horror and hunter script of the woman as a passive love object. Therefore, Kate's transgression from being a submissive female also likens her to *The Vampire Diaries*' Isobel and Katherine, two women who refuse to have their lives dictated by patriarchal traditions (like duly following one's husband and choosing one sexual partner). By having fun with killing and usurping the active male body, Kate doubly works as an improper monster hunter. Kate extends this even further by displaying sexual aggression that is foregrounded in her interactions with werewolves, and *Teen Wolf* illustrates this deviation of sexual threat in Kate's scenes with the werewolf Derek Hale.

In "The Tell," Kate subdues a shirtless Derek with an electric shock baton. As he is writhing on the floor, Kate stares at him and declares: "This one grew up in all the right places," and she also comments "I don't know whether to kill it or lick it." This moment, where the monster lies helpless and the heroine dominates the scene illustrates an inversion of the monster's assaultive gaze dominating a helpless damsel in terror.[188] As this scene plays out, it presents shots of Kate standing over Derek and alternates between close-ups of Derek's shirtless body and Kate's face as she looks down at him and smiles. These close-ups frame Kate as the one with the assaultive gaze as Derek lies helplessly at her feet. With Kate's position as the one with the assaultive gaze, *Teen Wolf* appears to avoid falling into

[187] As shown in *Teen Wolf*, "The Tell," MTV, June 27, 2011, written by Monica Macer; and *Teen Wolf*, "Formality," MTV, August 8, 2011, written by Monica Macer.

[188] On the monster's assaultive gaze, see Rhona J. Berenstein, *Attack of the Leading Ladies* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1996); where she comments that "the fiend with a focused and assaultive gaze . . . exerts power over the heroine," while the latter is reduced to "a vacant and paralyzed stare, which often signifies her pliability in the hands, or eyes of the monster" (Berenstein, *Attack of the Leading Ladies*, 119).

Classical horror traps. However, it is actually using those Classical horror conventions to make Kate the monster.

With the episode "Formality," Kate's aggression continues to take on a sexual quality. As in "The Tell," Kate tortures an imprisoned Derek with electrical shocks, this time in order to ascertain the identity of the werewolf behind the town's "animal attacks." However, in "Formality," Kate's use of electricity is paired with sexual aggression: as she tortures Derek, Kate brings to light the "fun" moments she had with Derek in the past. These moments include the "crazy sex" they had and Kate's burning Derek's family alive. By identifying sex and murder as "fun," Kate's improper attitude towards hunting reflects Walker's sentiments in *Supernatural* ("You've gotta have a little more fun with your job").[189] Like Walker, Kate's interest in monster hunting lies in accumulating a body count rather than focusing on saving innocents. She does not seem to know the difference between sex and death—which definitely puts her on the same ground as classical monsters. These monsters usually did not present an overt sexual threat, but rather their overt physical threat was privileged, although audiences could infer the implicit sexual threat under the surface. Kate appears to be just the opposite: she represents an overt sexual threat, and there are rather clear indications that this goes hand in hand with a physical threat as well. Once again, *Teen Wolf* is making Kate the monster.

"Formality" exemplifies Kate's deviant nature: unlike other hunters, such as her brother Chris Argent, who only kills werewolves that have killed humans, Kate takes pleasure in torturing and killing any and all werewolves. This is evident in her scene with Derek as she reminisces over killing his family as 'fun.' While Derek is not a 'good' werewolf, when Kate burned the Hale house, she also murdered innocent people, including children and humans.[190] This episode reveals Kate's and Derek's histories

[189] *Supernatural*, "Bloodlust," CW, October 12, 2006, written by Sera Gamble.
[190] This is mentioned by Kate's brother, Chris Argent, in *Teen Wolf*, "Code Breaker," MTV, August 15, 2011, written by Jeff Davis.

with one another, in which Kate seduced Derek in order to gather information on his family – which she used to commit arson at the Hale house, killing most of his family.

Kate's taste for predatory sexuality is a distinguishing quality of her character, and it is not limited to her interactions with Derek. She demonstrates similar sexual aggression with the other teenage male characters from the series. In "Wolf's Bane,"[191] her niece Allison points out her classmate Jackson Wittemore at the high school's lacrosse game, and Kate's reaction is: "Holy hotness…ah, if I was in high school again…or maybe just as substitute teacher…" As in her scenes with Derek, Kate's reaction to Jackson emphasizes her dominating and aggressive sexuality with respect to men, but it becomes quite discomforting when considering that she is now ogling a high schooler. Kate's predatory gaze and sexual advances are not just directed towards the men in the series, they are also directed towards her niece Allison. As such, Kate's sexuality borders on incest and homosexuality and generally threatens normative heterosexuality.

Kate acts much as a mentor might towards Allison, engaging in activities such as giving Allison a family heirloom for her birthday and teaching Allison how to use a taser gun.[192] Kate's role here, then, seems to conform to the stereotype of women as nurturing. Yet Kate's push for Allison to understand their family history and to take joy in electrocuting things conveys a slight nudge for Allison to be like her aunt. When teaching Allison how to use a taser, with Allison's teddy bear as the target, Kate's enthusiasm for seeing pain inflicted (even on an inanimate object) is illustrated by her reaction when the teddy bear begins to smoke from being hit by the taser. Kate says: "Oh ha haha! See, now, *that's* what I'm talking about!" Kate's enthusiasm during this scene serves to encourage the infliction of violence. Even if the recipient of the pain does not provide a response to the pain, just the act of inflicting damage

[191] *Teen Wolf*, "Wolf's Bane," MTV, July, 25, 2011, written by Jonathon Roessler.
[192] As seen in "The Tell," the family heirloom (a silver medallion with a wolf on the front) came with a suggestion for Allison to look up their family history. In the beginning of *Teen Wolf*, Allison was unaware of the existence of werewolves as well as her family's duty as werewolf hunters. By giving Allison the heirloom, Kate is nudging her to investigate their family history; and *Teen Wolf*, "Lunatic," MTV, July 18, 2011, written by Monica Macer.

is enough to excite Kate – making her desire for violence even clearer. Allison's reaction is more somber, perhaps due in part to her recent break-up with Scott. However, for a moment it appears as if Allison is breaking into tears because she electrocuted her teddy bear – a response that would be more typical than jubilation.

While helping Allison to become more aware and stronger, Kate's discourse and physical contact with her appears to carry a sexual subtext, and this is most explicit in "Wolf's Bane." In this episode, Allison approaches Kate, voicing her desire to "not want to be scared…[feel] utterly weak, like [she needs] someone to come in and rescue [her]." In response, Kate slowly walks around Allison and says "if you can just give me just a little bit of time [Kate smacks her lips] be just a little patient. I think I can give you exactly what you want." During this line of dialogue, Kate softly caresses Allison, sliding her left index finger along Allison's shoulders from the left to the right, and is speaking in almost a soft whisper. This interaction conveys sexual innuendo, presenting Kate's possible homoerotic desires as well.

Through showing Kate's aggressive sexuality in tandem with her sexual tension with Allison, Kate's subversion of normativity is further expressed. By having Kate relay sexual innuendo towards her niece, *Teen Wolf* posits Kate as monstrous being with her inappropriate sexuality. Kate's aggression towards Derek already positions her within the monster role. Having Kate implicitly seduce Allison with promises of power positions Kate's and Allison's relationship as similar to Count Dracula's interaction with Mina Harker – wherein the monster seeks to seduce the victim, and ultimately seeks to change her into a version of himself:[193] Mina into a vampire and Allison into a hunter. Both the Dracula/Mina and Kate/Allison dynamics are based on sexual tension – thus by having Kate's relationship with Allison akin to that of Dracula with Mina, Kate's homoerotic characteristic further illustrates her as a sexual threat. Kate's actions thus rewrite the human monster hunter's purpose of upholding the status quo in two ways: 1) by shifting roles with the monster and becoming the sexual threat, and 2) by enacting a subtext

[193] *Dracula*, directed by Todd Browning, performed by Bela Lugosi, Helen Chandler, and David Manners, Universal Pictures, 1931.

of sexual tension, which not only conveys homoerotic desire but is also incestuous – two taboos underpinning the heteronormative sexuality that the human monster hunter normally seeks to protect.

III: Kate Argent and *Teen Wolf*'s Fans

By presenting Kate as an active female monster hunter whose non-normative gender and sexual performance empowers her, Kate seems to be suited for appealing to a female audience. This marks Kate as a textual space for fan identification, a way of integrating the fan into the narrative. However, while linking Kate to *Teen Wolf*'s fans appears to be a move towards eliminating the male heteronormative bias of monster hunters, Kate's ultimate fate may be the writers' way of 'managing' the fan's attitudes toward the show. Kate's excessive attitude and resulting death – just like Gunn and Walker – warns fans that being too obsessive has consequences.

Ironically enough, *Teen Wolf*'s producers seem to encourage fans to gaze at the male cast—much as Kate does–both within the show and via social media. With *Teen Wolf*, the program's producers implement multiple strategies to please and encourage not just a general fan-base, but one that appeals to female and queer fans as well.[194] Aesthetically, the program frequently features most of its male cast shirtless. While the series does not have the cast shirtless all of the time, many scenes take place in the boy's locker room, with the boys working out or changing their clothes. The theme of shirtless stars is pushed even further on the *Teen Wolf* Tumblr page.[195]

Teen Wolf's page, *Never Love a Wild Thing*, allows fans to post questions to showrunner Jeff Davis, and encourages fans to submit their artwork.[196] Within four months of its introduction, the

[194] See for instance the *Advocate.com* article Jase Peeples, "Hungry like the Wolf," *Advocate.com*, November 12, 2013, http://www.advocate.com/print-issue/current-issue/2013/11/12/why-teen-wolf-orientation-blind-utopia.
[195] On March 29th, 2011, a *Tumblr* page devoted specifically for Teen Wolf's was created, entitled *Never Love a Wild Thing*, Last modified March 31, 2016, http://teenwolf.tumblr.com/.
[196] See "Ask Us Anything," *Never Love a Wild Thing*, June 17, 2011, http://teenwolf.tumblr.com/post/6631680389/ask-us-anything for the posting of questions and "Teen Wolf Fan Art Contest," *Never Love a Wild Thing*, July 1, 2011, http://teenwolf.tumblr.com/post/7130896874/teen-wolf-fan-art-contest-submit-your-best for the submission of fan artwork.

Tumblr page also provided fans with a "shirtless and sexy photo gallery" link.[197] The link takes fans to MTV's website with a 16-picture gallery from the show, featuring images from the first season, accompanied by humorous captions.[198] For example, one picture shows Derek writhing on the floor after Kate shocks him, with the caption "Derek's pain is our pleasure." Another image shows Scott walking on the road, with "If you're lost in the woods, take off your shirt and walk around flexing your muscles until your ride arrives." Such examples show that *Teen Wolf*'s producers are utilizing websites like Tumblr and MTV.com to encourage the fans to gaze at the cast.[199] Through creating galleries that emphasize *Teen Wolf*'s many shirtless scenes, as well as implementing humor, the producers are anticipating the fan's interest in the male bodies on the show.

Jeff Davis and the producers are well aware of the fans' interest in the male cast members,[200] and their use of the show's materials encourages the fans to post similar images either on official *Teen Wolf* social media platforms (Tumblr, Twitter,[201] Facebook,[202] etc.) or on fan-sites including teenwolfdaily.com, teenwolfonline.org, and teen-wolf.net. Pinterest.com is another one of the many sites to feature fan-posted images of the show. Users post collages of the male cast shirtless and comment on them.[203] With this in mind, Kate's actions for appreciating a shirtless Derek Hale and

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[197] "Teen Wolf: Shirtless and Sexy Photo Gallery," *Never Love a Wild Thing*, July 12, 2011, http://teenwolf.tumblr.com/post/7535880641/teen-wolf-shirtless-and-sexy-photo-gallery-click.
[198] "Shirtless And Sexy," *MTV.com*, July 12, 2011, http://www.mtv.com/photos/teen-wolf-shirtless-and-sexy/1666936/6356221/photo/.
[199] Henry Jenkins, *Convergence Culture: Where Old and New Media Collide* (New York: New York University Press, 2006); Jenkins outlines this practice whereby media industries implement "extension," "synergy," and "franchising" strategies as means for expanding their "content across different delivery systems" (Jenkins, *Convergence Culture*, 19).
[200] As addressed in a Tumblr response by Davis - http://teenwolf.tumblr.com/post/54308177952/dear-jeff-i-was-really-terribly-hurt-by-the-way-derek - and in an interview with TVguide: Damian Holbrook, "Teen Wolf Wins TV Guide Magazine's Fan Favorites Cover Contest," *TVguide.com*, December 3, 2013, http://www.tvguide.com/News/Teen-Wolf-Magazine-1074134.aspx.
[201] "Teen Wolf," *Twitter.com*, Last Modified April 22, 2016, https://twitter.com/MTVteenwolf.
[202] "Teen Wolf," *Facebook.com*, Last Modified April 27, 2016, https://www.facebook.com/TeenWolf.
[203] Such as the pins: Alexis Marie, "Teen Wolf Boyys," *Pinterest.com*, http://www.pinterest.com/pin/465700417688311413/; Sarah Perez-Doktor, "Teen Wolf Boys," *Pinterest.com*, http://www.pinterest.com/pin/347832771191375109/; and Moni Q, "shirtless boys of Teen Wolf," *Pinterest.com*, http://www.pinterest.com/pin/92112754852256436/.

making comments like "I don't know whether to lick it or kill it" fits rather well with the activity-taking place on *Never Love a Wild Thing* and other *Teen Wolf*-inspired sites.

Kate's empowered nature and sexual behavior toward the male cast could allow female viewers to model themselves on her. By having Kate make comments about the male cast that they too may have made, this structures to some degree the fans' social media responses to the sexualized images of the male members of the cast. For instance, one of the most popular Tumblr pages for *Teen Wolf* is *Texts From Last Full Moon*,[204] a variation of the *Texts From Last Night* blog, which posts fan-submitted text messages (usually with scandalous content).[205] On *Texts From Last Full Moon*, fans attach scandalous texts with images from the show. Among some of the most interesting submissions are related to Kate Argent images.[206] One image shows Kate and Allison at the lacrosse game,[207] with "Is it just me. Or are high schoolers getting sexier?" attached. Another image shows Kate as she is about to lick Derek's abs,[208] with "Do me a favor? If you get with him. Please lick his abs. Someone has too [sic] they're just too beautiful not to" attached. Despite Kate's role as a villain, images such as these convey that *Teen Wolf*'s fans and Kate share similar obsessive sexual compulsions towards the male cast.

Through the frequent depictions of shirtless males on the program itself, as well as the official Tumblr page encouraging voyeuristic images of the men, the series places an emphasis on the male body—so much so that one can assume that *Teen Wolf*'s producers are giving female and queer fans the green-light to obsess over the male cast. However, the fate of Kate Argent can also be seen as the producers' use of textual space to temper the obsession that they themselves encourage in the fans. By pairing this encouragement of the male gaze with Kate's fate, it appears that the producers are using Kate as a means of punishing the active woman. In fact, by *Teen Wolf*'s season one finale, "Code

[204] Last Modified August 12, 2013, http://textsfromlastfullmoon.tumblr.com/.
[205] Last Modified April 30, 2016, http://textsfromlastnight.com/.
[206] http://textsfromlastfullmoon.tumblr.com/tagged/kate-argent.
[207] "Wolf's Bane."
[208] "Formality."

Breaker," Kate's murdering of the Hale family through arson catches up with her, and she is killed by the season's main antagonist Peter Hale (Ian Bohen), the werewolf behind the "animal attacks."

"Code Breaker" features the climatic showdown between Scott, Peter Hale, and the Argents (Chris, Allison, and Kate), but not before Peter captures Kate. With his claws around her throat, Peter demands that Kate apologize for burning his family alive. Peter proposes: "Say it, and I'll let [Allison] live." When Kate chokes out an "I'm sorry," Peter responds with "I don't know about you, Allison, but that apology - didn't sound very sincere" and he proceeds to rip Kate's throat out – killing her in front of her brother (Chris) and niece (Allison). For all of Kate's strength and active nature, she is still a villain – whose violent death suggests an underlying message to the fans: while is it okay to gaze at the male bodies, those who show overly obsessive sexual compulsions towards the show will face consequences. Just as Gunn and Walker are punished for being African Americans who threaten the white male monster, Kate Argent's death implies that when women enact excessive spectatorship, they too will be punished for their problematic temperaments.

IV: Kate Argent and the False Hero Archetype

From Kate's introduction in "Magic Bullet" to her interactions with Derek in "Formality," her character's strength and non-normative sexual behavior reveals a textual space that both encourages and forewarns *Teen Wolf*'s fans. In the end, Kate's transgression of normative femininity and heteronormative sexuality results in her death, appearing to be the end of her impact on *Teen Wolf*. However, Kate's role within the series expands beyond that of villain. Kate's influence on Allison and her eventual death provides Allison the opportunity to take up the monster hunter mantle, situating Kate as the False Hero[209] in the series.

[209] For the notion of the false hero I am drawing from Vladimir Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994); which presents an elaborate pattern-sequence of 31 'functions' that make up any folklore narrative.

As one of the seven dramatis personae, the False Hero plays a primary role, akin to the Hero and Villain. As a variant on the Villain, the False Hero appears to act heroically and may even be initially mistaken for the real Hero; the False Hero is thus a usurper.[210] Whereas the Villain has to be defeated, the False Hero has to be exposed.[211] While the Villain's motivations are utterly evil and beyond redemption, the False Hero has character weaknesses, even vices, but is not self-evidently evil. Kate Argent's role as a werewolf hunter, who enjoys torturing to the point of sexual arousal, clearly situates her as a false hero in the *Teen Wolf* universe, and one with a particular vice.

While Kate's violent nature is revealed in the arson of the Hale family (killing children and humans as well), her relationship with Allison displays Kate's mentoring and nurturing side. When Peter held her by the throat and demanded an apology, Kate chose to apologize not to save herself, but to save Allison. Moreover, Kate's actions and her resulting death eventually allow Allison to become more than just Scott's girlfriend and a damsel in distress. Allison's plea to Kate in "Wolf's Bane" voices her frustration with her passive role. Allison no longer desires someone to come and rescue her, which is the typical position of women in horror narratives; she thus embodies and at the same time resists the normative gender roles offered to her. Kate's death allows Allison the chance to become a heroic empowered female and a true monster hunter – by providing her with knowledge of her family heritage as hunters and with the skills necessary to combat werewolves. Post-Kate, Allison takes a more active role in the series: from being able to neutralize a werewolf on her own, to leading a team of hunters when confronting a werewolf.[212]

Kate's influence over Allison sets Allison on a course to become a more well-rounded character, to go beyond a limited representation of women and sexuality. Due to her violent and aggressive nature, Kate could not be the ideal hunter and fails like Charles Gunn and Gordon Walker. Being a

[210] Propp, *Morphology of the Folktale*, 60.
[211] Ibid., 62.
[212] See *Teen Wolf*, "Venomous," MTV, July 25, 2011, written by Nick Antosca and Ned Vizzini; and *Teen Wolf*, "Fury," MTV, July 30, 2012, written by Jeff Davis.

monster hunter implies certain moral limits, as spelled out by Chris Argent in "Code Breaker." In the episode, Chris confronts Kate about the arson at the Hale house and relays the hunter's code to her: "Nous chassons ceux qui nous chassent,"[213] meaning that hunters only kill werewolves who have killed humans.

Kate's purpose in the series is therefore complicated: she serves as both a bearer of traditional conceptions of the female as monstrous but also encourages the construction of Allison as active female hero. In the end, although Kate eventually becomes marginalized as deviant and is punished for her transgressions, she is instrumental in molding a more able and independent Allison Argent. Allison represents a more tempered version of Kate, one who understands that killing all werewolves is not a prudent course of action: thus Allison is strong, but not unnecessarily violent.

V: Conclusions

Horror's monsters are extremely iconic and adapt to our ongoing considerations for restraining one's sexuality (Count Dracula), the ethics of controlling nature via science (Dr. Frankenstein), and the inner-struggle between our civilized and animalistic sides (Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde). Yet at the same time, with horror being about the supernatural besieging the ordinary, why not look at a figure who embodies the human side of the genre? The monster hunter represents a positive human character whose expertise, whiteness, and masculinity vanquishes the monster and restores the normative status quo as a key televisual trait for the last 40-plus years.

Kolchak: The Night Stalker, *The X-Files*, and *The Vampire Diaries* illustrate the white male hunter as a figure willing to make sacrifices for the greater good. Carl Kolchak and Fox Mulder forgo career-advancement and personal relationships to expose truths that others wish to ignore/hide, to confront authority figures who fail to use their resources properly, and to be perpetually held in a state of exile without any hope of receiving closure. Alaric Saltzman, on the other hand, is a believer in second-

[213] French for: "We hunt those who hunt us."

chances and relinquishes his resentment towards monsters. Most notably, Alaric forms a camaraderie with the monster who killed his wife. This transgressive partnership between the human and monster ultimately stems from their shared emasculation by manipulative women, and highlights their hypermasculine activities (killing, drinking, and protecting passive women) as socially productive. Kolchak, Mulder, and Alaric typify the hunter as someone who can let go of selfish ambition and a need for revenge; thus setting into motion the figure's underlying message that society can trust in the white male savior to use authoritative resources and protect communities in disarray.

Angel, *Supernatural*, and *Teen Wolf* challenge the human monster hunter's normative racial and gendered make-up, demonstrating that the figure can be African American and female. However, these hunters do not make sacrifices like their white male counterparts. They instead choose to indulge in their excessive impulses. Charles Gunn and Gordon Walker let their bigotry towards the supernatural overcome them and they take pleasure in killing *all* monsters. Their 'all monsters are bad' mentality makes them the only hunters to kill a loved-one who's been turned into a supernatural creature. Paired with the fact that the monster is coded as a sympathetic white male in *Angel* and *Supernatural*, Gunn and Walker therefore set up blackness as reckless and a threat to the social norm.

Kate Argent similarly embraces violence, but she also enacts a predatory sexuality that uniquely encourages and disciplines *Teen Wolf*'s fans. Kate's sexual compulsions are mirrored on social media sites, where female and queer fans fixate upon the male cast. Kate's eventual death reveals that there are consequences for being overly obsessive. Gunn, Walker, and Kate all face punishment for giving into their violent and sexual impulses, with them being killed (Walker and Kate) or on the verge of death (Gunn). These consequences suggest that while there is room for a non-normative representation of the hunter, if that person oversteps their boundaries and threatens the social norm, they will die – denoting minorities and women as incapable of being inherently tempered and selfless like the white male hunters.

Contemporary shows like *Grimm* (2011-present) and *Sleepy Hollow* (2013-present) integrate women and minorities as the narrative's heroes from the get-go, attempting to amend the problematic gendered and racial ideologies tied to the televisual hunter. However, the hunter's non-male and non-white representations still live on borrowed time to this very day. For example, *Hemlock Grove* (2013-2015) introduces Dr. Clementine Chasseur (Kandyse McClure). As a lesbian African American female monster hunter, Chasseur challenges the figure's normative representation in pretty much every way imaginable. However, Chasseur's role in the series positions her as a threat to Peter Rumancek (Landon Liboiron), a werewolf and *Hemlock Grove*'s white male lead character.

Chasseur's deviations from the norm and her mission to kill *Hemlock Grove*'s hero puts her in the same boat as Gunn, Walker, and Kate. Yet, Chasseur's resulting death is more grotesque than her predecessors. Olivia Godfrey (Famke Janssen), a vampire, rescues Peter just before Chasseur kills him. In doing so, Olivia severely beats Chasseur and locks her up in a dog crate. When Chasseur eventually escapes, Olivia flays her from the neck down and eats Chasseur's skin in front of her – and Chasseur remains alive during this entire sequence.[214] Such a gruesome death only furthers the pattern of non-white, non-male, and non-heterosexual monster hunters living on borrowed time. All the while, shows like *Supernatural* preserve the hunter as a heterosexual white male, which results in the Winchester brothers fighting the good fight for 11 seasons and counting. Thus, the fascinating and depressing truth behind the human monster hunter still stands: the white male representation is a tried-and-true constant, and any attempts to diversify the figure along the lines of race, gender, and sexuality are eventually squelched – preserving the hunter's conservative subtext.

The televisual monster hunter provides audiences with a unique insight into our cultural understandings of authoritative institutions, racial representation, male bonding, and female sexuality. All of the programs discussed in this analysis have been significant in developing the hunter's key traits

[214] *Hemlock Grove*, "Children of the Night," Netflix, April 19, 2013, written by Brian McGreevy and Lee Shipman.

that contemporary audiences take for granted: a fixation on the supernatural because of personal loss, perpetually confronting the supernatural via the MOTW formula, and normalizing hypermasculine actions such as killing monsters, drinking hard liquor, and protecting passive woman. These traits venerate the white male representation of the figure, which remains a stable fixture dating back to 1897 with Abraham Van Helsing and are maintained to this day with the Winchester brothers and their fellow televisual human monster hunters.

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ABSTRACT

SAVING INNOCENTS: TRACING THE HUMAN MONSTER HUNTER'S HETERO-NORMATIVE AGENDA FROM THE 1970S TO TODAY

by

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Advisor: Dr. Chera Kee

Major: English (Film & Media Studies)

Degree: Doctor of Philosophy

In supernatural-themed American television programs that focus on hunting or exposing monsters and the monstrous, the human monster hunter's representation and actions promote a conservative subtext. While horror scholarship prefers to examine the genre's monsters and women, and regulate the hunter as simply being an expert, an exploration into the historical development of the figure reveals that there is a lot more to this character. The human monster hunter's televisual depictions from the 1970s to today reveal a complex illustration that reifies the "American dream." Time and time again, through the loss of an ideal middle-class experience, the human monster hunter chooses to step outside of the law – but still uses police and federal resources to better protect that experience for others. At the center of the televisual human monster hunter narrative is a unique embodiment of authoritative institutions, racial representation, male bonding, and female sexuality. Ultimately, this often-ignored figure functions well beyond the conventional roles of monster-pursuer and victim-savior, and thus provides an exceptional insight into race and gender issues within American culture.

AUTOBIOGRAPHICAL STATEMENT

Adam Kem Yerima is a PhD Candidate at Wayne State University in English (Film & Media Studies). His dissertation, "Saving Innocents: Tracing the Human Monster Hunter's Hetero-Normative Agenda from the 1970s to Today," is scheduled for a Summer 2016 defense. His interests include ancient and contemporary mythology within popular culture, supernatural-themed TV drama, critical race theory, and gender studies; he has a chapter accepted for an upcoming collection by McFarland Press, tentatively titled *Investigating Teen Wolf*, which explores Kate Argent's female bravery, predatory sexuality, and relationship to *Teen Wolf*'s female fanbase.