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# The Legends of Bigfoot: Or How I Regained My Manhood

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# The Legends of Bigfoot:

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Or How I Regained My Manhood

A Thesis

Presented to

The Academic Faculty

By

Daniel Blaine McCarty

In Partial Fulfillment

Of the Requirements for the

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## **Preface**

I grew up in the small backwoods town of Social Circle, Georgia on 100 acres of land, a family plot that had been in the family since the 1940s. There at the bottom of the hill I lived framed by aunts, uncles, and grandparents. We called it the “Jones Compound.” Social Circle was like any other small, rural Georgia town. It had evaded much of the modernization of the larger cities around it. It is the first town you come to that is just outside the metro-Atlanta reach. For its sake, it was small and quaint.

Bigfoot was not a constant threat. There were not any reported sightings of him in my lifetime, but I knew of him. From the time I was a small child, I was enamored with the idea that something unknown existed in my backyard. Growing up on so much land, I was determined to lay my eyes on the creature. If Bigfoot lived anywhere in Georgia, I knew he would have set up camp on my grandfather’s land. It was beautiful and untouched. Fields full of grass taller than I. You could get lost exploring the deep, thick woods.

I never did see Bigfoot but that did not stop me from trying. In the hot summer haze, my brothers and I would set out to find him, setting up traps, and camping out under the night sky, until we got too scared to stay. I do not think that we ever made it a full night of Bigfoot hunting without getting scared. Bigfoot became one of the only things that my father and I could bond over. We did not

have much in common, but the possibility of Bigfoot seemed to do the trick. We would joke for hours about Bigfoot watching us, reenact the famous “Bigfoot walk” from the Patterson/Gimlin film, or debate the possibilities of existence and the impact on society. It was not just Bigfoot that we bonded over, but monsters. Frequently, he would try to scare me by pretending to be a monster or Jason from the *Halloween* films. Monsters were ingrained in me as a child, just from being one of the only things we could bond over. However, Bigfoot was the constant in our relationship.

I was not into sports; my father was a high school sports star. I knew all the words to Britney, Christina, and Mariah; he would joke that someone was singing for them. As I got older and questioned my sexuality and own masculinity, he felt further isolated from my world. Yet, Bigfoot remained the one constant in a relationship we half-assed, until I became an adult and could appreciate the man he was and celebrate our differences.

Bigfoot represents a chance to explore what it means to be a man, a man not unlike my father. Bigfoot is personal to my life, a topic that I have many memories with from believer to scholar. I was obsessed with the idea that Bigfoot must represent something deeper than just an unidentified creature with some possibility of existing. When it came time to write on a subject, my only thought was on Bigfoot and masculinity. How manly must we be to encounter Bigfoot?

“... The quest for manhood- the effort to achieve, to demonstrate, to prove... masculinity- has been one of the formative persistent experiences in men’s lives”.<sup>1</sup>  
 - Michael Kimmel, *Manhood in America*

### **INTRODUCTION: BIGFOOT AND MEANING (or I Don’t Feel Manly)**

On Monday August 27, 1958, Jerry Crew returned to work along the Bluff Creek in Northern California, about 200 miles north of San Francisco in Del Norte County. He was working for the Wallace Construction Company, owned by Ray Wallace. The company was clearing and moving timber to make way for a major highway cutting through the wilderness. This area had no known inhabitants and was described as thick wilderness. Therefore, Crew drove two and a half hours home to Salyer, California every weekend, where he was very much involved with the community. The story of Bigfoot began with his arrival at work following such a weekend. When Crew got to his worksite, he spotted footprints surrounding his bulldozer. The footprints were described as “not only larger than anything he had ever seen... [but] unmistakably those of a *human* foot!... Deeply impressed in soil... the clear imprint of a bare five-toed human foot!”<sup>2</sup> Moreover, while footprints usually are not cause for concern, the reaction from workers and the quick involvement of the local media made the footprints a national sensation that led to the creation of a new American monster, Bigfoot.

On October 5, 1958, Andrew Genzoli first introduced the name “big foot” in an article about an unknown creature lurking in the forests of Northern California. Humboldt Times hired Genzoli was to write the column “RFD”, which “would be of interest to rural readers... and

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<sup>1</sup> Michael Kimmel. *Manhood in America: A Cultural History* (New York: Free, 1996), 4.

<sup>2</sup> Marian Place, *On the Track of Bigfoot* (New York: Pocket Books, 1979), 7.

peppered... with liberal doses of nostalgia for a lost and simpler Humboldt County”.<sup>3</sup> The idea behind many of Genzoli’s articles was to present information for rural readers that would center on nature, community, and conservative belief. Therefore, in that first article, “Giant Footprints Puzzle Residents along Trinity River,” Genzoli teased out the ideas of nature and mystery that would appeal to his reader. The article was published with a picture of Jerry Crew holding a plaster cast of the footprints with him and wrote:

There is a mystery in the mountains of Humboldt County, waiting for a solution... Who is making the huge 16-inch tracks in the vicinity of Bluff Creek? Are the tracks a human hoax? Or, are they actual tracks of a huge but harmless wild-man, traveling through the wilderness? Can this be some legendary sized animal? Crew said the men refer to the creature as ‘Big Foot’.<sup>4</sup>

This new monster belonged to the United States and became the center of media frenzy. The *Humboldt Times* ran eighteen stories on Bigfoot just in the month of October in 1958.<sup>5</sup> Soon after this initial article, Genzoli shortened “Big Foot” to “Bigfoot” as the stories were picked up by different news agencies.

Once the stories became the center of national media frenzy, Bigfoot was elevated from a local mystery to a cultural icon. Most stories in the media centered on locating the source of the footprints. Many believed the footprints were misidentified bear, gorilla, or monkey tracks. Even crazier than animal prints, a strange, yet popular conjecture was that the footprints had been created by a Native American who had escaped from a “Civilian Conservation Corps camp”.<sup>6</sup> Joshua Blu Buhs argues that the explanation is possibly linked to the legend of a Western outlaw who harassed travelers on the Oregon Trail during the 1840s through 1860s. This savage was believed to have existed as “part Indian, part negro, and part white... he was too large to ride a

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<sup>3</sup> Joshua Blu Buhs, *Bigfoot: The Life and Times of a Legend* (Chicago: U of Chicago, 2009), 72.

<sup>4</sup> Andrew Genzoli, “Giant Footprints Puzzle Residents along Trinity River” (*Humboldt Times*, October 5, 1958).

<sup>5</sup> Buhs, *Bigfoot: Life and Times*, 75.

<sup>6</sup> *ibid*, 77

horse, but that he once out-ran three horses over twenty miles of varied ground along Oregon's Malheur River".<sup>7</sup> In contrast, Jerry Crew offered a different explanation; Crew believed Bigfoot was a divine creation sent to confuse the theory of evolution and encourage Christian beliefs.<sup>8</sup> Whatever the reason, the cultural product of Bigfoot represents a sort of crisis in the American culture. Bigfoot is a collective cultural construction to symbolize emotion and reaction. As a symbol, Bigfoot conveys value, belief, and importance; the image of Bigfoot possesses significance to suggest widespread attitudes and beliefs. Bigfoot corresponds with the symbol of the American West, as Bigfoot is able to represent this idea of interrupting and intruding unknown lands.

Bigfoot has sprinkled the collective unconscious of the American people since the events took the nation by storm. The creature appears in creative mediums from cartoons and movies to advertisements, literature, and even erotica. There are stories about encounters with unknown ape-like creatures in our news feed every few years or so. The nation cannot escape this monster. Bigfoot haunts our forests, hardly ever to harm us but always lurking in the shadows. We catch glimpses of him as he strides by or we hear the call of Bigfoot deep in the forests. We may see evidence of his existence in the way that limbs are arranged, or we may want to believe that the sound of something rustling around outside might possibly be the elusive creature. Whatever the case, we know Bigfoot. However, I long to find a deeper meaning to Bigfoot as a means of representing a crisis of masculine identity in America in an attempt to reassert an outdated identity, as a last frontier of exploring a primitive manhood in the twentieth and twenty first century.

The goal of this project is to provide insight into the gendering of American masculinity

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<sup>7</sup> Porter Morgan Ward, "Bigfoot: Man or Myth?" (*Montana: The Magazine of Western History*, April, 1987), 19.

<sup>8</sup> Buhs, *Bigfoot: Life and Times*, 78-79

through a case study of Bigfoot films and popular erotic literature. Whether they are horror films or family films, the fabled creature is inherently masculine and reveals ways men act out their masculinity through the creature through film. While sports might seem to be an obvious place to discuss masculinity, the study of masculinity through Bigfoot provides different insights that reveal how men make sense of the world around them without the pressure of society, as Bigfoot is an elusive creature that evades modernization. Bigfoot interests me because men, for the most part, encounter the creature, seek the creature, hunt the creature. There are people out there that believe Bigfoot is a species with male and female, adult and children counterparts, existing as part of our world but somehow remaining unfound. However, we mostly assign Bigfoot male. The American people, as a whole, do not refer to the creature as female. Most Americans use the pronoun “he” when referring to it. Bigfoot is a man’s monster, and men are the primary focus of this study. More specifically, it is how gendered norms create Bigfoot and how films with Bigfoot reveal anxieties about masculinity. Bigfoot became an outlet for men who wanted an escape fantasy, to live isolated, through this rugged, savage masculinity. The masculinity of Bigfoot attempts to recreate an outdated man, but fails to modernize in a world of updates and new models.

Masculinity is defined by what it is not, through the gendering of femininity. The visibility of the opposite gender, femininity, hides masculinity so that it appears invisible. It is a subtle way, but a viewer or audience member understands who and what is and is not masculine by how feminine something appears. The invisibility of masculinity occurs when a masculine character comments on an act of femininity, by commenting on effeminate men or hypersexual women or other acts of non-masculinity. There are many situations where this could happen, with bullies in a schoolyard, a woman’s domination, or power play. By doing these things, by

defining non-masculine identities, masculinity gets its definition. The assumption is that masculinity is non-changing, but outside factors, such as history and culture, influence and shape it. However, because of the patriarchal society we live in, masculinity is a constant characteristic to which all other identities compare, and Bigfoot attempts to order masculine identities by re-establishing a more traditional masculine ideal. In heterosexual relationships, this could occur by the assertion that a man's place is in the work place and the woman's place is in the house, caretaker versus monetary provider. By making masculinity invisible, men are able to normalize it and make it seem nonexistent. For example, young boys often taunt other boys for being effeminate and prescribe ways to talk, to walk, to hold one's demeanor, etc. By taunting effeminacy, the boys are in essence defining what it means to be a boy, to be masculine. It renders masculinity invisible by exposing the effeminacy as distinctly un-masculine. The characteristics of masculinity mark a boundary around who is masculine and who is not. A man is a man because of the characteristics that make other things non-manly. The concept of masculinity appears to be constant throughout history. However, if a random selection of men were to be surveyed, the definitions of what it means to be masculine would be different.

There is not one constant way to act out masculinity, even if Bigfoot symbolizes a constant masculinity. Therefore, it constantly evolves as a cultural concept, influenced by historical events, popular culture, societal changes, and so on. Todd Reeser argues in, *Masculinities in Theory*, that masculinity is variable and changes over time. *Nonetheless*, Reeser writes, "... contradictory forms of masculinity are always simultaneously in cultural circulation... relations between supposedly archaic or outdated definitions of masculinity operate alongside or against common or accepted ones".<sup>9</sup> Masculinity is as complicated as other

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<sup>9</sup> Todd Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction*. (Chichester, West Sussex: Wiley-Blackwell, 2010), 221-222.

identities and both history and culture shape it. However, masculinity intrinsically holds more power when it is defined through other identities; therefore, to study masculinity is to shine light on an identity that seeks to make itself invisible as a way to normalize the power inherent to it. The images that we see in society define masculinity while at the same time reveal a masculinity that already exists in the world. Masculinity has to be in this constant dialogue with other forms of identities because without comparing itself, masculinity would have no meaning.<sup>10</sup> With Bigfoot, men are able to define masculinity that exists outside of a gendered binary, which will be discussed throughout the paper. While men think that Bigfoot allows them to escape their lives to play out their masculine crisis because of changes to the identity, in the end recreate the inherent power in masculinity.

In a sense, encounters with Bigfoot represent encounters with masculinity. By using Bigfoot as a medium, men are able to play out how they define masculinity. If Bigfoot represents the masculine ideal and men encounter Bigfoot, then in essence, men interact or encounter their own masculinity. They are able to determine how masculine one must be to encounter their own masculinity (Bigfoot) and walk away unscathed or wounded.

Through Bigfoot, men, who either sought Bigfoot in the wild, through film, or other mediums where Bigfoot appears, were able to revive a masculinity that already existed while simultaneously redefining masculinity. This “Bigfoot masculinity” was an antiquated masculinity that had the potential to reestablish men back at the top of the hierarchy. Robert Bly’s book, *Iron John: A Book about Men* discusses the role of men over time and helps enlighten Reeser’s own theories about the definitions of masculinity. Bly’s work aids in the argument that Bigfoot is a representation of masculine identity closer to the point. Bly writes that

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<sup>10</sup> Ibid, 41-42.

a “large, primitive being” exists in every man, and each man has to overcome the “sanitized, hairless, shallow man” within to have all sides of him become fully accessible.<sup>11</sup> Through this similar explanation, Bigfoot is the literal representation of this primitive man that exists in all men. The men that are actively searching for Bigfoot (a large and primitive beast) are in essence searching for their own masculinities, or rather are facing their own masculinity. Bly notes that men of the more recent years have yet to find their inner Wildman and claims that the “industrial community” has led these men away from finding and understanding themselves as men, which echoes Buh’s theory that the shift in the economy changed how men viewed themselves. Bly continues on to say that, “The Wild Man is not opposed to civilization; but he’s not completely contained by it either”.<sup>12</sup> Men have changed in the new economy. Bly’s text comes from the mythopoetic men’s movement, a movement that sought to liberate men from the modern world as it hindered men from expressing their true masculine nature. It reveals a larger implication that men feel as if they are losing their rights and freedoms to express themselves. Writing in 1990, Bly provided further insight that the state of identity crisis the men face throughout modern history, not just at the time of the economic shift that Buhs argues. By using the Wildman myth, Bly is able to relate to men across time. In essence, then, the Bigfoot event was a way of finding and reestablishing the construction of manhood, and each time he is encountered after that is a reassertion of this reestablishment. Bigfoot embodies the man in his primal state living on the fringes of society and civilization as self-reliant, dependent upon no one. Ultimately, Bly is defining an innate, natural non-historical manly nature, and the symbol of Bigfoot attempts to define masculinity in the same way.

It is possible for Bigfoot to represent a manifestation of anxieties about masculinity, a

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<sup>11</sup> Robert Bly, *Iron John: A Book about Men* (Reading, MA: Addison-Wesley, 1990), 6.

<sup>12</sup> Bly, *Iron John*, 8.

monster created to disrupt the change in masculine ideals to recall a more traditional, ahistorical masculinity. If men collectively feel like the change is too much, then Bigfoot represents a disruption in a change in the culture. It may not be true for all men, but culturally, masculinity was tied to Bigfoot through imagery and ideology. Analyzing monsters allows for an understanding of how specific groups question their own authenticity, questions their place, and questions their identity against and within the boundaries of the society. Monsters are an embodiment of a certain cultural moment of time; an embodiment of a feeling and a place. They incorporate fears, desires, anxieties, and fantasies.<sup>13</sup> Jeffrey Jerome Cohen writes, "...the monster is best understood as an embodiment of difference, a breaker of category, and a resistant Other..."<sup>14</sup> Monsters are best read as group responses instead of individual responses as it would become about "individual nightmare" than about cultural ideologies.<sup>15</sup> The opportunity would be lost to explore the historical and societal aspects to the stories by looking at an individual response.<sup>16</sup> When examining the manner that men are redefining masculinity to an old standard, it is important to look at the group as a whole. There is more to the symbolism of Bigfoot this way, rather than looking at how one person interacted or responded to the creature. This is because monsters are the beliefs and ideologies produced by social realities to become historical events. By doing this, they shape historical anxiety.<sup>17</sup> Just as Bly attempted to do with creating an ahistorical manhood through changing of economy, as discussed by Buhs, Bigfoot created this site where conversations about identities could occur.

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<sup>13</sup> Jeffrey Jerome Cohen. *Monster Theory: Reading Culture*. (Minneapolis: U of Minnesota, 1996), 4.

<sup>14</sup> Cohen is the editor of a collection of essays in the book *Monster Theory*. This quotation is written in the preface of the collection. Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, *Monster Theory*, x.

<sup>15</sup> W. Scott Poole. *Monsters in America: Our Historical Obsession with the Hideous and the Haunting* (Waco, TX: Baylor UP, 2011), 15.

<sup>16</sup> Poole, *Monsters in America*, 15.

<sup>17</sup> J. Jack Halberstam. *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters* (Durham: Duke UP, 1995), 27.

To understand the gendering of Bigfoot as a means of representing masculine identity crisis, I will discuss the films *Legend of Boggy Creek* (1972), *Harry and the Hendersons* (1987), and *Willow Creek* (2013).

*Legend of Boggy Creek*, inspired by actual events, is a horror docudrama that sets out to find the “Fouke Monster,” which is a Bigfoot-like creature that haunts the people of a small town in Arkansas. The discussion of this film will be to examine and discuss the role of men in society and question the impact of society is on masculinity. The next discussion is about *Harry and the Hendersons*, a family comedy film about one family’s interaction with and eventual cohabitation with Bigfoot. This is an interesting film to include as it is not horror, but does remove any sexual content to show how suburban masculinity should be expressed by making the creature more innocent and ridiculous. The last film discussed will be the 2013 film, *Willow Creek*, to provide the more explicit horrors of Bigfoot. The film follows a couple into the woods of Willow Creek, where Bigfoot was filmed in the 70s. The most interesting scene and key to the discussion of this film comes at the end when Bigfoot attacks the couple and takes the woman hostage. Ultimately, this film analyzes modern masculinity and emasculation as a real threat to modern men. These films will be used to discuss the gender identity formation as a means of representing anxieties in the real world. In a longer study, historical events would be used to position the events of the film with and include in the discussion actual eyewitness to discuss lived experiences with Bigfoot. However, this study aims to find how Bigfoot is represented in these films as a means of representing gender. Lastly, the discussion of Bigfoot will end with the analysis of Virginia Wade’s series of popular self-published books, *Cum for Bigfoot*. This romance series involves the abduction of women by Bigfoot in the woods of California, again Willow Creek. In this interesting story, Bigfoot takes three girls from a camp and rapes them repeatedly. The story is

from the perspective of one of the girls, but it follows the girls from their capture to their eventual marriage and motherhood. From this discussion, the goal is to provide a different perspective on manhood from the eyes of a woman for women about men. If monsters represent and code anxieties about the culture from which they emerge, then it is the goal of this study to gain insight into anxieties about manhood.

### **LITERATURE REVIEW:**

Bigfoot is a fabricated American monster that finds its origin through other monsters in Native American lore and the infamous Abominable Snowman, found in the Himalayas. Typical studies of Bigfoot address the mythological origins of the creature in folk studies. While other studies aim to debunk or prove the existence of the realities of an ape-like creature, Joshua Blu Buhs inspires my analysis by the research that seeks to find a deeper cultural meaning to Bigfoot. In *Bigfoot: The Life and Times of a Legend*, Buhs examines the character of Bigfoot, and similar creatures, as a response to a change in the economy from industrial to service and consumption. This change created a new man and transformed what it meant to be a successful man. This new man became successful for the luxuries and goods he could buy and afford, and ultimately forced him into the home as a figure within the house with the rise of the middle-class family in suburban homes. This shift to a home-bodied consumer was the beginning of the threat to masculinity in the modern era. Buhs argues that with the creation of Bigfoot during this economic shift, men were able to envision themselves as the men they wished they could be. Bigfoot represented a self-reliant creature that lived on the outskirts of society as a resistant other.<sup>18</sup> In agreement with Buhs' argument, the Bigfoot legend stemmed from changes in housing, changes in landscape, and changes in economy, which all changed the definition of

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<sup>18</sup> Buhs, *Bigfoot: The Life and Times of a Legend*, 108.

American masculinity.

One school of scholarship relevant for understanding Bigfoot's larger cultural meaning concerns "the Wildman" as a folk character or archetype. There are many ways that the Wildman appears in society. It can be in literary form or an actual observation. Bigfoot walks in both worlds. He was both an observed entity and a fashioned image. Joshua Blu Buhs' *Bigfoot: The Life and Times of a Legend* examines the character of Bigfoot, and similar creatures, that have appeared throughout the history of the United States. Buhs' arguments helped to form many of my own questions as he supports the idea that Bigfoot represents men and their struggle to maintain their masculinity. He starts by tracing the trajectory of the Wildman, Yeti, Sasquatch, and Bigfoot. Buhs shows how Bigfoot stayed in the American periphery for many years through media, film, sightings, and festivals, among other things. For Buhs, the economy changing from industrial to one of service and consumption changed what it meant to be a successful man. The new man was defined by what he could buy and his visibility within the household, thus threatening his masculinity. Consumption began to define identities. Men were no longer defined by their skill, and so Buhs argues that Bigfoot represents a challenge to the change in economy. As well as, Bigfoot represents the anxiety men felt in a time during this period when they were losing their traditional masculine identity. Bigfoot embodies the men as they wished they could be. He stood as a self-reliant creature that lived on the outskirts of society and resisted society.<sup>19</sup> Bigfoot provided the men with the avenue to speak about their fears of indistinctness and to dispense their outer selves to become a Wildman. According to Buhs' argument, Bigfoot came from changes in housing, changes in landscape, and changes in identity. These three factors caused the anxiety these men underwent, as the working-class men feared these changes would fail them or leave them out of a narrative. Bigfoot becomes the temporary outlet that functions as

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<sup>19</sup> Ibid, 108.

a projection of the needs and desires these men wish to release as an escapist fantasy of anxiety and desire.

### **Post-War Suburbanization and Post-Industrial Masculinity**

To understand the essential question surrounding Bigfoot as a cultural product, it is best to begin by examining the period from which the monster was born in the United States. Historically, it is important to know what was happening in and around the 1950s in the American culture that would cause men to begin to believe in the actual existence of Bigfoot. There was a change in culture with the rise of suburbia that led to the formation of a new class of people in the fifties. The image of Bigfoot attached to the myths and symbols of American masculinity within changing economy to become a conglomeration of fears and anxieties of the change. It is essential to revisit some of the influential scholarship written during this time or about this time that dealt with the changing economy to ground Bigfoot's cultural identity and production in this historical period.

In *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States*, Kenneth T. Jackson discusses the symbolism of suburbia as the embodiment of contemporary culture. He argues that the longing for a private life, needing to reveal conspicuous consumption, having a reliance on private transportation, wanting the ability for upward mobility, focusing on nuclear units, separating work and leisure lives, and the privileging of economic freedom drove the building of suburban communities. Suburbia reveals the living patterns that condition the behaviors of the people. Suburbia provides people with private and separate lives, and Jackson argues that this separation, not suburbia, underscores much of human nature. As people moved further from cities, owning a suburban house fused with the American Dream and transformed to be exclusive, private, and centered on the nuclear family.

Jackson outlines four ways for defining the suburbs of the United States: as low residential density with no noticeable divisions between town and country, increase in homeownership with detached houses, (which Americans have preferred over attached houses, like apartments), residential status with an economic division between the center and the periphery, and the distance from work. Along with this, Jackson notes three factors that drove people from the city. One of the most influential factors was an increase in racial tensions as cities spread outward instead of upward. This caused white people to come more in contact with racial minorities and resulted in a fleeing from the city with the rhetoric of “saving the kids” or “doing it for the kids”. Along with the racial tension, economic factors pushed people from the cities. This included economic factors such as cheaper land on the outskirts of the city, which combined with a preference for detached houses and the idea of being closer to the wilderness. The final factor was the reliance on solitude that the detached houses and larger land plots provided. Specifically during the 1950s to the 1970s, there was an upheaval of people moving from the cities to the suburbs. Jackson reveals that the suburban population grew 83 percent during this period and that eighteen out of twenty-five of the largest cities lost population over the three decades.<sup>20</sup> The people relocating were typically white, middle-class families. The racial prejudice along with economic factors of inexpensive land and housing, wealth, along with the attachment to “wilderness” and solitude drew people out of the city and led to a sprawl in residence, work, and consumption. Therefore, Jackson argues that the development of suburbs and suburbia has just as much to do with public policy and population growth as much as it is a natural process for the American people. However, Jackson leaves no room for the definitions of suburbia to include the working-class. After 1945, the Federal Housing Administration offered

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<sup>20</sup> Kenneth T. Jackson. *Crabgrass Frontier: The Suburbanization of the United States* (New York: Oxford UP, 1985), 283.

low interest loans that allowed working-class families to enter the suburbs where the middle- and upper-class lived. Jackson's text centers on suburbia as a middle- and upper-class haven, but C. Wright Mills discusses in *White Collar: The American Middle Class* the alienation of the working-class from the middle-class and the modern model of capitalism that Jackson perpetuated. C. Wright Mills adds to the understanding of the pressures of suburban life on working-class people.

In *White Collar: The American Middle Classes*, C. Wright Mills discusses the formation of a new class of people known as the white-collar workers. It is worth noting that Mills wrote this text during the period when the societal changes occurred, which reveals tangible reactions to the changes in the economy. His reaction provides insights into how working-class men reacted to the changes, even if he was writing from the advantage of the academy. His central argument reveals this reaction when he argues that the change in the economy to "salesman mentality" signified that people had to sell an aesthetic over actual job skill. Mills draws a distinction between the "Old" and "New" Middle Classes. The Old Middle Class is characterized by its economic independence for the people possessed their own means of production. This would be the independent executives and farmers. The New Middle Class, the new white-collar worker, consists of dependent employees who work with means of production owned by others, the employees working for salaries. These new workers subsisted on employment but lost their independence. Even further, occupational structure changed the distribution of income and professional skill. Therefore, Mills argues that the new white-collar lifestyle removes the frontier character that was prevalent in American society to become the new American character for modern society. It was about the aesthetic or "pleasing salesman" and not the physical laborer or the hard executive. The shift in identifiable workers led to the creation of the new class of people

employed for aesthetic purpose over skills. He refers to society as a “great big salesroom” and the new white-collar class, as an idea, shapes the understanding of modern society by representing all men and women living in the twentieth century. Their lack of power alienated them in the mass produced world and pushes them to the fringes of economic life. For Mills, the key to this is that the white-collar worker resembles the blue-collar worker. However, the white-collar class became the American standard to represent most of the American population. These same people are purchasing the houses in the suburbs not because of being white-collar, but because the frequent image of the farm laborer or the western hero prevails in the minds of Americans as Henry Nash Smith outlines in *Virgin Land*.

Henry Nash Smith analyzes the power of the Western myth in *Virgin Land*, which clarifies the hold this image has on the American mind. Working within the Myth and Symbol school, Smith argues that the frequent image of the Western hero and the farmer conveyed the power of the West on the American people as the embodiment of the idea of Manifest Destiny. Manifest Destiny signified the right of the American people to expand the country to redeem and remake the land in the image of an agrarian lifestyle meaning the land needed to be saved by the Europeans. An agrarian ideal refers to farming as a way of life that values rural society over urban society and sees it as a shaping ideal of social values. Even further, Manifest Destiny created a collective construction that inspired people to go west and find “new” land to remake. Smith argues that the frontier relied heavy on masculine renewal as it sought rugged, backwoodsmen who knew both the wilderness and civilization, with characters such as Wild Bill Cody and Daniel Boone. Even further, as farmers entered the land, the myth of the garden was established. The myth established in the minds of American people that they needed to find new frontiers to cross and new lands to settle. Frederick Jackson Turner’s proclamation that the

frontier was closed could not stop the drive to find more lands to discover. Even further, as the farmers moved west and “redeemed” the land to fit the agrarian lifestyle, the myth of the garden entered the consciousness of Americans. Bigfoot provided a sort of frontier for men to redeem.

As the Frontier myth impressed on the American people to find new lands, the myth of the garden entered the American consciousness as part of the pastoral life once the lands were cultivated. According to Leo Marx, the myth of the garden reveals the contention between advancement and pastoral life. In *The Machine in the Garden: Technology and the Pastoral Ideal in America*, Leo Marx writes about the intrusion of technology into the pastoral as revealing a tension in the changing landscape of the nation. Marx, writing at the same time as Mills and Smith, similarly discusses the myth of the garden and its impression in the minds of the American people. This tension exists in the emergence of technological advances into pastoral scenes in literature of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The sudden interruption of an idyllic scene by technology reveals these tensions in the Americans’ commitment to rural happiness. Technology in these scenes reveals the power, wealth, and progress that the future holds while the reaction to the technology signifies a hold for the rural life. He argues that Twain, Melville, and Hawthorne are the literary authors that best revealed the issues of the contradiction. For Marx, the raft in *Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* and the cabin in Thoreau’s *Walden* are representations in literature that represents an escape away from society and restrictions on freedom to suggest the desire to live an independent and free life and to indicate the “possibilities of sufficiency, spontaneity, and joy that had been projected upon the American landscape since the age of discovery.”<sup>21</sup> However, the fantasy of the pastoral ideal ends with the presence of technology.

Marx defines the garden as representing “original unity, the all-sufficing beauty and

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<sup>21</sup> Marx, 330

abundance of the creation.”<sup>22</sup> He is specifically talking about America as “nature’s garden,” paradise, and a utopian vision. The garden is the culmination of these traits and signifies American as a new Eden.<sup>23</sup> Conversely, the machine is defined as an agent of change and industrialism, and “entails manufacturing on a large scale.”<sup>24</sup> However, Marx argues that the machine was supposed to be the means to a happy “middle landscape, a rural nation exhibiting a happy balance of art and nature.”<sup>25</sup> In addition, Marx argues that there is the:

“tendency to invoke Nature [sic] as a universal norm; the continuing dialogue of the political philosophers about the condition of man in a ‘state of nature’; and the simultaneous upsurge of radical primitivism (as expressed, for example, in the cult of the Noble Savage) on the one hand, and the doctrines of perfectibility and progress on the other.”<sup>26</sup>

Essentially, Marx is arguing that the tension exists in the pursuit of both nature and progress because it is a contradiction. The way that progress has been implied does not fit within the notion of nature because it disrupts it. The pastoral ideal and the emergence of the machine in it” enabled the nation to continue defining its purpose as the pursuit of rural happiness while devoting itself to productivity, wealth, and power.”<sup>27</sup> This is the kind of contradiction that is contained within suburbanization as suburbs bring people closer into contact with nature and isolation, but industry is brought into nature with the construction of suburbia.

The myth of the frontier and the myth of the garden reveal different ways that symbols are joined with myth to perpetuate a collective conscious of the American people. To take it one-step further, Richard Slotkin details the ways that myth expresses ideology through its narrative, its language, and its metaphors in *Gunfighter Nation: The Myth of the Frontier in Twentieth –*

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<sup>22</sup> *ibid*, 85.

<sup>23</sup> *ibid*, 76.

<sup>24</sup> *ibid*, 146.

<sup>25</sup> *ibid*, 226.

<sup>26</sup> *ibid*, 88.

<sup>27</sup> *ibid*, 226.

*Century America*. Over time, the original story becomes a myth once a set of codes are embedded in it as symbols as they are told repeatedly. Myths are stories informed by a society's history and manage to achieve power to symbolize the ideologies of the society. Myth is a phenomenon that both history and the culture shape and develop. Slotkin argues that myths are more suggestive than logical thought because human thought and action create the myths; therefore, myths are able to carry accepted truths for particular people about the norms for society. Encoded within the myth are realities from which scholars can extract the ideologies that societies hold. In addition, the changes in the myths over time reveal how social changes occur culturally. Understanding that myths change through time, Slotkin argues that even though people identify myths as part of a tradition, the myths are constructed along cultural lines and not historical lines but are affected by history. Myths are formulated as a way to go about expressing or explaining a problem that is the result of a change in an experience, which results in the myth gaining contradictions and a consciousness that are at times at odds with the society. Slotkin argues that the Myth of the Frontier is the oldest myth in the American history as it encodes the national identity, political economy, and "progressive" civilization of the United States. Conflict is central to the myth; "regeneration through violence" is the theme.

The scholarship on myth and class help to center the importance of the cultural product of Bigfoot as it explains that there was a history of the American people using myths and symbols corresponding to historical changes as Slotkin, Marx, and Smith discuss in their texts. Myths and symbols provide insights for scholars to examine and read as embodiments of the changes in landscape and economy. C. Wright Mills and Kenneth Jackson frame the historical background that real lived changes occurred in society during this time. Together, these texts contextualize Bigfoot as a mythic response to the change in both the economy and the landscape in the post-

war United States. The economy shifted during this period and a new ideology of suburban life was exemplified as the American dream. Mills argues that the forming of the white-collar working class isolated the workers in the new capitalist model, and Jackson argues that suburbia isolated people further in the detached houses. The people felt a sense of powerlessness as the individual does not have the means to achieve his goals but is rather a means to an end. Bigfoot is one example of a representation of escape that Marx outlines in his text. Like the cabin in *Walden* or the raft in *Huckleberry Finn*, Bigfoot represents the idyllic lifestyle that thrives outside on the fringes of society. The men who were central to the creation of the monster used Bigfoot as a way to escape the routine of everyday life, which includes the pressure of the American dream and the change in the economy to the sales representative model. Bigfoot symbolizes a response to these changes.

Bruce Kuklick took issue with the Smith, Marx, and Slotkin arguing that they are not adequately concerned with methodology. He argues that image does not produce any realistic and pragmatic fact, which problematizes research because of the difficulty to prove anything as real. Images carry symbols and myths, but the problem with images is that they can never carry facts. Images are just creations that have a deep constructed meaning that come from the mind. Smith argues that symbols and myths exist on a different plane than facts, and Marx argues that images are concerned with the inner workings of the mind. Images reveal how people make sense of their world. It is not about the actual reality of the image but rather how people respond to it and how people collectively perceive them. Because the Myth of the West held such a powerful hold on the image of America, people seek to replicate it without knowing because history has informed the American people's collective perception.

In addition, Kenneth T. Jackson argues that the American people were obsessed with the

idea of nature and controlling it as one of the factors for the growth of suburbia. There are multiple ways that people expressed this anxiety about suburbia. C. Wright Mills can be read as one response to this change as he directly responds to the change. Bigfoot is not the only response to this change. A more concrete example of this change is Malvina Reynolds' song, "Little Boxes," a popular song about the sameness of the houses that peppered the land of suburbia. Another example of a response was the popularity of the western genre or sitcom shows centered on the suburban home. As Buhs discusses at length in , *Bigfoot: Life and Times of a Legend*, Bigfoot encodes many of the anxieties about the change in economy that came with suburbia, but Bigfoot's gendering as male extends the symbols embedded in it. There is something inherently masculine about the creature that exists as an escapist masculine hero.

### **Men, Women, and Sexual Identity**

In addition to understanding myths about nature and the frontier, it is important to take studies of gender into account in order to interpret Bigfoot as a cultural symbol. The historical background reveals that the shift in the economy left men, as Buhs argues in *Bigfoot: Life and Times of a Legend*, questioning the state of their masculine identity. Masculinity, as a concept, is unstable and culturally defined; however, society's definition of masculinity is often considered stable with characteristics that denote power. While there is no one-way to define masculinity, there are accepted norms that prescribe what it means to be masculine. This is distinct from the biological sex as it is the cultural attitudes about masculinity that inform men the appropriate ways to act out their masculinity. The symbols of manhood set a boundary around who is masculine and who is not. Todd Reeser writes, "... contradictory forms of masculinity are always simultaneously in cultural circulation, and that relations between supposedly archaic or

outdated definitions of masculinity operate alongside or against common or accepted ones”.<sup>28</sup>

For this research project, there is a need to examine Bigfoot as a cultural product from the perspective of gender studies. Since Bigfoot is typically represented as male, then how does this code masculinity? Does it encode masculinity? Lastly, can Bigfoot represent masculinity?

Todd Reeser helps to frame an understanding of the gendered monster with his text, *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction*. Reeser argues that masculinity, as a concept, is unstable and culturally defined. Reeser’s goal is to provide ways to approach the study of masculinity from an academic point of view that challenges the notion of a constant and stable masculine identity. Masculinity is as complicated as other identities for it is influenced both by history and by culture. To study masculinity is to shine light on an identity that seeks to make itself invisible as a way to normalize the power inherent in it. To make masculinity invisible, other identities are pointed out as acceptable or not. Think of grade school taunting: boys taunt other boys for being effeminate including the way one talks, walks, or holds one’s demeanor to define what it means to be masculine. It renders masculinity invisible by exposing the effeminacy as distinctly un-masculine. Taunting never makes a claim for what is masculine, only what is not masculine. By doing so, it creates a boundary around masculinity to give it power. Reeser takes a multidisciplinary gender studies approach to define the ways that men, and society as a whole, theorize and perform masculinity. The images that we see in society define masculinity while at the same time reveal a masculinity that already exists in the world. Masculinity has to be in this constant dialogue with other forms of identities because without it masculinity would have no meaning, which is what makes the notion of a static masculinity incorrect.<sup>29</sup>

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<sup>28</sup> Todd Reeser, *Masculinities in Theory: An Introduction*, 221-222.

<sup>29</sup> *ibid*, 41-42.

If Bigfoot encodes gender roles and sexualities, then I must look at feminist thought on the idea of sex because I will be examining pornographic text that reveals how gender is acted out through Bigfoot. I start with Linda Williams' *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* because it deals with the power structure of sex. Williams' work can help explain how Bigfoot is a sexual object that displays power. In *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure and the "Frenzy of the Visible,"* Linda Williams claims that pornographic film offers a search to find a "visible" truth about sex. More specifically, it reveals a truth about female sex and pleasure. Williams also analyzes the development of porn and "hard core" porn. She does this by tracing the porn genre back to the stag film. The feature length porn, unlike the stag films, provide a greater narrative that offers the proof of satisfaction. Stag films are cut to be discontinuous and the narrative is incoherent and unexpected. In the feature length films, the visible pleasure is displayed in three stages: genital show where the hidden body parts are shown, genital event, which is shown by the "meat shot" (sex), and "money shot" where the pleasure is at its most visible (male ejaculation). With both of these, the analysis and the argument, Williams is able to argue that "hard core" genre is contradictory. It is supposed to provide evidence of female pleasure but becomes visual proof of the man's pleasure. One of the more interesting things that Williams argues pertains to the "confession of male pleasure". Williams argues that the visible proof of both pleasure coincides with the male orgasm but fails to imagine a different confession for female pleasure. Female pleasure becomes organized around male norms of sex. Williams also discusses the social, economic, and legal effects and changes on the porn film, but at the center of the text is the relationship between power and pleasure. She argues, influenced by Foucault that sex and sexuality does not stand away from the influence and control of history and power. Williams finds that the more recently, the porn films problematize the power and pleasure

connection by analyzing sadomasochistic porn and polymorphous porn. These types of fetish porn films have little penetration and ejaculation (or it is downplayed), which Williams argues provides evidence of the role of power in a woman's journey to pleasure. The polymorphous porn provides evidence of a "subversion" of the hierarchies of active and passive, male /female dichotomy. As for limitations to the reading or flaws, I see that there could be room for Williams to discuss other forms of films' influence on the genre, or how the genre influenced other outlets that provide "confession of male pleasure". One of the ways this will influence my own work will be to look at how women are portrayed in the Bigfoot encounters, real or imagined. Is it about discovering female pleasure or about revealing a male pleasure? One of the subjects of my thesis will be the popular series of pornographic novels, *Cum for Bigfoot*. This series is about the kidnapping of women and their eventual rape, love, and assimilation into the hidden society of Bigfoot, so I think that this text, while dealing with visual porn, will help to enlighten my analysis of the power and pleasure inherent in the text.

In *Screening Sex*, Williams follows the depiction of sex on screen throughout film history. She starts with Thomas Edison's 1896 film, *The Kiss*, goes through the production codes of Hollywood and concludes with depictions that are more recent, including films such as *Brokeback Mountain* and sex on the Internet and personal screens. Again, the central goal of this text, as with *Hard Core*, is to examine the power of and depiction of sexuality. Using Foucauldian analysis, Williams details the ways that modern depictions of screened sex influences contemporary sexuality and everyday life. Williams' goal is to determine when, how and why sex went from something that was not and / or could not be shown in films to today where it is a cultural product in the United States. Central to her argument is the relation between revelation and concealment in the history of screening sex. Williams defines screening

as what is both shown and not shown giving way to the argument about how screened sex both “reveals and conceals”. Her argument is that there is no truth about sex found in the representations of it on the screen, which she argued in *Hard Core*, because there is power inherent in the selection of what sex is shown at different historical times. Williams uses close readings of films to examine and study the films and the impact it has on sexuality. The text is organized by period and theme to differentiate the societal views on sex and nudity. Films helped to push this change by showing the sex acts. Some of the supporting data comes from Kinsey and Masters and Johnson to discuss how the female orgasm is achieved and how women appear while achieving a climax. One of the things that Williams does is position her text outside of sexual movements, like the liberation movement or sexual freedom movement, and places the argument in the “reveal and conceal” narrative. She writes that the history of screened sex is “enigmatic and elusive” rather than providing “progress towards explicit knowledge”.<sup>30</sup> One way she explores this is with her discussion of *Barbarella*, where the close ups of the breasts allows the audience “distance” while also being able to “bring us exceedingly close to objects of desire and terror”.<sup>31</sup> Williams argues that this allows the audience to “question... the imagination of sex beyond the familiar formulas of soft and hard”.<sup>32</sup> Williams interweaves personal stories of her own experience with the films she discusses to add a personal touch for the reader. This is an interesting tactic employed by Williams as it makes the reader think to their own experience with sex on screen. However, it would have been better if she incorporated the filmmakers own decisions to include or not include the sex acts to provide some background for the inclusion or even some clue as to the awareness of the filmmakers of their choices. Chapter 2, “Going All the

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<sup>30</sup> Linda Williams. *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "frenzy of the Visible"* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1989), 24.

<sup>31</sup> *ibid*, 211.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid*, 213.

Way: *Carnal Knowledge on American Screens (1961-1971)*, is probably this most directly useful for my project as it deals with the difference between sex on screen and reading sex in novels. Since I will be examining the Bigfoot on film and in *Cum for Bigfoot*, it is useful to examine the two different types of media from the same perspective to reveal the differences for the gendered power.

Whereas Linda Williams attempts to critique the relationship of politics of the power in sex in her texts, Carol Clover focus on the woman's body in horror films in her text *Men, Women, and Chainsaws*. Her main argument is that horror and terror films are sadistic and affect the way men deal with women in the real world. At the heart of the argument is the dynamics of spectatorship and gender in contemporary horror films. The women's role, as both victims and heroes, in these horror films allow the predominantly young male audience to "simultaneously experience forbidden desires and disavow them on grounds that the visible actor is, after all, a girl" (18). The text is divided into four chapters. The first three chapters deal with different types of horror films: slasher films, possession films, and rape revenge films. The fourth chapter examines feminist literature about film spectatorship. For the chapter on slasher film, Clover discusses the role of the "final girl" who refuses to be a victim. This would be like Laurie in *Halloween* or Ripley in the *Alien* films. The male audience is forced to identify and root for the "final girl" because she is the only character left. She writes that identification is progressive because it allows for the fear of "bodily violation" to play out, and it is not exclusively coded female and allows for "a visible adjustment in terms of gender representation" (64). Clover extends her argument of representation of and reimagining of gender to possession and rape revenge films. Possession films forces the male viewer to reimagine the vulnerability of flesh and to reimagine what it would be like to be helpless. These films confront masculinity with

problems of femininity to arrive at a compromise. She argues that if Rambo were to “wander out of the action genre into a slasher film, he would end up dead. If he were to wander into an occult film, he would end up reformed”.<sup>33</sup> These films help to confront the masculine character and reimagine the survivor as feminine in order to achieve a “syncretic position” of gender. Her argument about the rape revenge films is interesting as she argues that men, again, are forced to identify with the victim, not the villain. These films reveal a shared fear by both men and women of horror and terror to bodily violation. The rape in the film operates to force the viewer (all viewers) to share in the fear of being physically violated.

### **Contemporary Cultural Studies**

Viewing Bigfoot through gender and sexuality theory enables me to view Bigfoot as a construct of gendered norms. Encoded in the creature is a sort of gendering that permits an escape to imagine a time that allowed men to be free of societal obligations and remake their image without consent of any outside pressures. Through Bigfoot, men were able to fix a disruption to their definition of manhood in America. Because Bigfoot is a monster, it is crucial to understand and examine the ways it encodes this fear of masculinity lost. The following scholarship examines a theoretical range of possible responses the monster can represent in the horror genre. These authors focus on issues of gender and sexuality and survey the history of the American horror genre and the cultural forces that helped to shape it. Like other myths or symbols, monsters allow an embodiment of a certain historical moment of time, feeling, and place. Monsters are a type of symbol or myth that incorporates fears, desires, anxieties, and fantasies. In *Monster Theory*, Jeffrey Jerome Cohen writes, “...the monster is best understood as an embodiment of difference, a breaker of category, and a resistant Other known only through

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<sup>33</sup> Carol Clover. *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1992), 98.

process and movement, never through dissection- table analysis".<sup>34</sup> Cohen argues that group's reactions form monsters and serve as the ultimate incorporation of anxieties about history, about identity, and about humanity because of their representation of difference. By breaking categories and resisting societal norms, monsters are representations of lived experiences and are expressions of disparity.

Like the myths of Slotkin and Smith, monsters of any given culture allow for a reading toward an understanding of how specific groups questions its authenticity, questions its place, and questions its identity against and within the boundaries of the larger society. The monster is a construct and projection existing against socially normative constructions, and as cultural discourse, it allows an arena to dispute the changes in the constructed norms. Monsters produce a narrative that provides a place that not only shapes identities but also becomes the place to hold conversations about public anxieties. Through constructions of identities and anxieties, monsters produce a deeper knowledge of place in history and the history of knowing, as well as, self-knowledge and human knowledge; monsters ask the questions of how people perceive the world and how people have distorted what they have attempted to order in society.

In *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears*, Stephen Asma discusses the evolution of mythical and real monsters. This is a great text to begin the discussion of monsters as it details the history of the fascination people have with the frightening and unexplained. In this tightly packed informative and thought provoking book, Asma is able to study the symbolic meanings of monsters in Western culture. Asma approaches this study from the perspectives of history and philosophy and draws from old and new media, including philosophical documents, newspapers, novels, and films. As Cohen writes in *Monster Theory*, Asma argues that monsters are vehicles for recording the anxieties, pathologies, and obsessions of a culture. He writes in the

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<sup>34</sup> Cohen, *Monster Theory*, x.

introduction, “The monster is more than an odious creature of the imagination; it is a kind of cultural category, employed in domains as diverse as religion, biology, literature and politics”.<sup>35</sup>

The text is divided into five parts: “Ancient Monsters”, “Medieval Monsters: Messages from God”, “Scientific Monsters: The Book of Nature Is Riddled with Typos”, “Inner Monsters: The Psychological Aspects”, and “Monsters Today and Tomorrow”. Each section is made up of two – four chapters and details the differences of the meaning and perception of the monsters.

“Ancient Monsters” pertains to the role that masculinity played in the construction of monsters and argues that, for the ancients, both real and imagined monsters were products of male insecurities within the confines of patriarchal cultures. The section titled “Medieval Monsters: Messages from God” can be summarized with the following quotation, “when monotheism became the dominant premise of religious culture, monsters had to be brought under the omnipotent, omniscient, omnibenevolent God. Monsters needed to be explained within the idea of a universal creator God who presumably created frightening beasts, deformities, and demons, too, or at least let them exist” (64). For the medieval peoples, monsters were created in regards to religion. In “Scientific Monsters: The Book of Nature Is Riddled with Typos”, Asma focuses on monsters in eighteenth- and nineteenth century and how they encode scientific principles, instead of ideas about God. This section, “Inner Monsters: The Psychological Aspects”, pertains to Freud’s theories and how the unconscious creates monsters as pathological and psychological beings. This section examines how people react and respond to the monsters. He discusses films such as *The Texas Chain Saw Massacre*, *Hostel*, *Forbidden Planet*, and *Blade Runner* in this section. In “Monsters Today and Tomorrow”, Asma discusses a range of things from zombies to cyber creatures, and from biotechnology to disembodiment. He argues that these unlock the

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<sup>35</sup> Stephen Asma. *On Monsters: An Unnatural History of Our Worst Fears* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 13.

monsters caged within us. His eventual conclusion is that people need an excuse to fight, protect, and defend, as well as transfer those terrifying qualities of a culture's own monstrous desires onto inhuman beings. This allows people to remain human and civilized but also to express anxieties and changes. Ultimately, Bigfoot, as a monster, is able to stand within any of the five historical categories; however, what is most important about this text is that Bigfoot can be read as a recorder of anxiety. Asma establishes that monsters throughout history always record some form of anxiety. Fitting Bigfoot into one particular historical category is not the goal here. It is about establishing credence that it can represent anxiety or some form of response to the culture because there is a history of monsters chronicling cultural anxieties. Therefore, no matter the historical period that would cause the creation of Bigfoot, from reincarnation of the mythic Wildman to unleashing the monster within, Bigfoot can be read as the embodiment of masculine anxiety.

In *Skin Shows*, J. Jack Halberstam argues that monsters are cultural objects of fears spawned by a shared sense of otherness and difference. Halberstam analyzes nineteenth century novels, *Frankenstein*, *Dracula*, *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde*, and *The Picture of Dorian Gray*, and twentieth century horror movies, *The Birds*, *Texas Chainsaw Massacre 2*, and *The Silence of the Lambs*, to argue that gothic technology “othering”, meaning how a human was defined in contrast to the monstrous, created these monsters. By showing the monster as a combination of otherness, race, class, gender, and sexuality, the white, heterosexual, the monster is able to declare the sites of corruption delineating the opposite of that which is normal. Halberstam argues, “The monster always represents the disruption of categories, the destruction of boundaries, and the presence of impurities and so we need monsters...”<sup>36</sup> Monsters serve as image construction sites of producing and “monsterizing” the other and by doing so, lead to self-

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<sup>36</sup> Halberstam, *Skin Shows*, 27.

identification where reevaluation of cultural assumptions can occur. Halberstam's historical analysis reveals that the "gothic" monster is more than just a sensation, but rather was a way to discuss human identity. The monster, excluded as the other, produces a narrative that provides a place that not only shapes identities but also becomes the place to hold conversations about public anxieties, like the Wildman or Bigfoot. Halberstam's text serves as a model for my own research project. Halberstam is able to examine the gothic monster in context of the culture from which it came. Essentially, I will read Bigfoot the way the Halberstam reads the monsters within the culture, as a way of determining how groups of people respond to changes in culture.

Moving away from the gothic and into Modern America, Mark Jancovich argues in *Rational Fears: American Horror in the 1950s* that not all horror movies in the 1950s were about Cold War politics. To view all the films from this period in such a way would detract from the real meaning of the films. The 1950s horror films are largely about the changes in American society in the postwar culture. Instead, Jancovich breaks the text down into three sections: invasion narratives, outsider narratives, and "crises of identity" narratives. Jancovich argues that to interpret the alien as always representing communism or the Red Scare would simplify the alien. He argues that the alien in invasion films actually criticize Fordism, "the process through which scientific-technical rationality is applied to the management of social, economic and cultural life, and the management of American life."<sup>37</sup> This argument is similar to C. Wright Mills argument of the change in white-collar working-class people from skill to aesthetic. There is a loss of agency and freedom because of the new model of management from top down. These films deal with this loss of identity, similar to my questions surrounding Bigfoot as a representation of men losing their masculine identity. In part two, Jancovich uses *The Incredible*

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<sup>37</sup> Mark Jancovich, *Rational Fears: American Horror in the 1950s* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1996), 2-3.

*Shrinking Man* and *Creature from the Black Lagoon* as examples of critiques on 1950s ideals of masculinity. Jancovich also argues for a re-understanding of gender in films like *Them! And It Came From Beneath the Sea*. In these films, women have authority and control. This, he argues, is against the common understanding of women as irrational and emotional. These films challenge that static notion of gendering. On outsider narratives, Jancovich argues that as the new American norms became strange and alien, the outsiders became victims who are threatened by the new norms just as much as they are a threat to them. The most important assertion is that the fascination of past decade horror films by people in the present time reflects continued social concerns of today. This is important because I think it is one of the reasons why Bigfoot sticks around. There is the constant threat of a loss of masculinity.

Another model to follow is David J Skal's *The Monster Show: A Cultural History of Horror*. In this text, Skal examines horror in American culture in his text, and central to his argument is horror is a reflection of society and states of minds. It acts like a mirror. By examining mostly films, but also some photography, television, and literature, Skal is able to explain how horror movies capture anxieties of the American people. For instance, he argues that *Godzilla* is a monster the paranoia of nuclear war and its affects. Skal uses fourteen chapters to analysis the way that horror films capture national crises. One of the more interesting chapters pertains to the effects of the birth control pill and Thalidomide. Here Skal shows how these drugs had horrific consequences and resulted in birth defects. Films such as *Rosemary's Baby*, *The Exorcist*, *The Brood*, and *Eraserhead* show the anxieties about monstrous children, despairing parents, and the fear of reproduction happening without sexual intercourse. Skal points to the scene in *Alien* when the male "gives birth" to the alien as it bursts from his chest. If *Godzilla* can represent nuclear war or *Rosemary's Baby* is about birth control, then Bigfoot can represent

men's anxieties about their manhood. He uses psychoanalysis to read deeper into the meanings of monsters and grounds the monsters in historical moments to provide a richer analysis of how the monsters in the horror genre capture the anxieties. Reading Bigfoot through this psychoanalysis will help to anchor and give deeper meaning to the monster as a response to changes in masculinity overtime.

These contemporary critiques about monsters and the horror genre provide a model to follow when examining Bigfoot as a cultural constructed product. The myth and symbol texts and the contemporary cultural critique texts are similar as they imagine an image for its cultural implications. However, these contemporary texts combine history, gender, and queer studies to form a different picture of what monsters symbolize for American people. The myth and symbol texts lay the groundwork that the contemporary texts able to use to finish to get more specific results. These contemporary texts are post-structural and postmodern allowing the text to stand on it is on to represent more than just what it is. From these texts, I will take the gender studies and psychoanalytical approach to understanding what Bigfoot represents. These authors use history as a starting point before they each examine different part of various media to reveal how monsters encode anxieties and help create identities, which is what I want to do with my Bigfoot research. According to Kenneth Jackson, C. Wright Mills, and even Kevin Jancovich, society was rapidly changing, and it is important to understand that Bigfoot was created in during this time. Leo Marx, Henry Nash Smith, and Richard Slotkin provide support that there is a history of myth making tied to the national conscious and provides support that images of myths can represent something more than itself, in this case Bigfoot can represent more than just a bipedal ape-like creature. Therefore, by examining imagined and real encounters with Bigfoot, I will be able to add to the scholarship on the politics of sexuality and identity formation that has a history

in the United States. Bigfoot, as society comes to see it, keeps coming back in popular culture every now and again, and essentially, I want to analyze the implications of the monster for the American people.

If Bigfoot is a response to the change in economy that Buhs argues in his text, then what Bigfoot is able to represent is what it means to be a man in the changing economy. Then what is being argued is that Bigfoot is a cultural product created to symbolize a set of masculine norms that men felt were no longer available to them in the new economy. This masculinity allows an aggressive man to combat the sanitized version of the family oriented manhood that the suburbanization process of the 1950s defined. Therefore, fantasies involving Bigfoot (real or fictional) offers an escape to explore ways of perceiving the world as identities shifted as Mills argues from skill to aesthetic. In this shift, Bigfoot can represent a masculine lifestyle that men longed to regain, an old-fashioned masculinity based on skill, freedom, and individuality. Here was a masculine creature that provided an arena in which a group of men could reposition themselves.

### **SECTION ONE: TOO MODERN FOR BIGFOOT?**

Bobby and Elizabeth Ford, rural citizens of Fouke, Arkansas, encountered the Fouke Monster one early May night in 1971, one year before the release of the film. The Fords had just moved into their new house and heard some rustling outside the house one week before they were attacked by a Bigfoot-like creature. Bobby said that he did not think anything about the noises and credited it to feeling unsettled and /or uncomfortable to the surroundings of a new house. A week later, according to Elizabeth Ford, the creature broke through the screened window and reached through with its hand while she was sleeping on the couch, which she mistook for a bear's paw. She later decided that it was much too hairy to be a bear's paw.

Returning from a hunting trip, Bobby and a few other hunters chased the creature away from the house. They described the creature as about seven feet tall, three feet wide at the chest with reddish-brown hair, and as walking on two legs. According to news articles, the creature came back and tried to break into the house the following night. They shot at it several times, but the mysterious creature dodged the bullets as it seemingly was attempting to escape. Thinking the creature had fled, Bobby said that the creature grabbed him by the shoulder from out of nowhere and pulled him to the ground when he was attempting to climb the stairs to get the screaming women in the house. By the time the others got to Bobby on the ground, the creature had left the scene but in the field next to the house, the people saw the creature quickly running through it. Bobby sought treatment at a local hospital in Texarkana, Arkansas for scratches across his back and mild shock. The creature was never found, even though they claimed to have shot the creature. Soon after the news broke about the attack on the Fords, more stories of sightings and attacks began percolating around town. All that remained at the Ford house was three-toed footprints, scratch marks on the porch, and damage to the window and siding. The Fords, who lived in the house for about a week, decided not to stay there and moved shortly after the attack.<sup>38</sup>

This particular story inspired filmmaker, Charles Pierce, and writer, Earl E. Smith, to make a movie about rural townspeople frightened and terrorized by a Bigfoot-like creature wandering through the town, forests, and swamps. Released in 1972, *The Legend of Boggy Creek*, a documentary-style horror film, became a run-away success making a reported 20 million dollars in the United State in drive-in theaters.<sup>39</sup> The film capitalized on the above experience with a Bigfoot-like creature in Fouke, Arkansas and follows “actual” residents of a

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<sup>38</sup> This account of the original story is a synthesis of two articles published by local newspaper agencies in May 1971

<sup>39</sup> Buhs, *Bigfoot: The Life and Times of a Legend*, 158.

small Arkansas community that had reportedly dealt with the “Fouke Monster”. In the film, the narrator informs the audience of his first encounter with the Fouke Monster, “I was seven years old when I first heard him scream. It scared me then; it scares me now.” This accomplishes two things: it verifies that there is fear and establishes a history of the creature.

The Fouke Monster had been terrorizing the community since the 1950s (or before). Because of this, Charles Pierce incorporated actual locations and the people involved in the events that inspired the movie. Several of the local townspeople, including respected citizens, experienced hunters, famous musicians, and police officers recalled stories of the creature, including the death of animals (such as wild hogs, chickens, and a kitten) and sightings in the forests. Filming on location, allowed the film to take on the feeling of the Arkansas swamp where the creature haunted the people. To make the creature more menacing, it is seen wandering and hovering in the forests, always at a distance to never give a clear shot of the creature. Dogs refuse to hunt the creature in one scene because they are terrified. These are small ways to reinforce the idea that the monster is terrifying. This is reinforced again when the monster suddenly darts out across the road in front of a police officer one night. It stands as a reminder to the audience that the monster is always lurking in the dark. The creature is nocturnal, aggressive, and carnivorous, which differs from the depictions of Bigfoot is a gentle creature, fearful of detection. The decisive scene was actually inspired from the newspaper accounts of the Fords. The monster attacks a family in a remote country house and sends one of the family members to the hospital. While there are these little reminders of suspense and horror, the majority of the film is filled with scenes of wildlife, landscapes, and townspeople. There are long scenes of the daily life of the townspeople and animals in the river. The film shows the day-to-day life of rural people, but there is this creature haunting them, watching them, and waiting to

attack them. The monster shows up briefly in scenes and the local townspeople tell stories about it killing animals, but it is mostly just quick, brief moments of horror, or intended horror.

However, framing the film is the tagline, “based on a true story,” to perpetuate the horror of a lived experience with real people. Today, this tagline is an overused motif, but at the time, horror writers and directors were experimenting with plots based around true events, such as *Texas Chainsaw Massacre*, *Jaws*, *The Hills Have Eyes*, and *I Spit on your Grave*. The film is able to achieve an authentic atmosphere with the combination of real experiences and the documentary-style filming. Because Bigfoot, or the Fouke Monster, haunts this “deadbeat” town, left behind in the industrialization and growth of cities and suburban life, the audience feels as if they are stepping into another culture, one removed from modern society. Thinking of the film in a rudimentary way, the film is about rednecks who are hunting for Bigfoot, but the experience of this rural town becomes absurd and in the process, “mundane rural life made to seem fantastic by the presence of a monster”.<sup>40</sup> Rural life and townspeople become a spectacle. Therefore, setting the film in and presenting the audience with Southern swamp and rural culture through the guise of a Bigfoot story shows a life outside of modernization and outside this ideal, rural as exotic.

Between the 1950s and 1970s, the suburban population grew from 36 million to 76 million and, in the same time, 83 percent of the United States’ growth happened in the suburbs.<sup>41</sup> Because of this growth, eighteen out of twenty-five of the largest cities lost populations over three decades, starting in the 1950s, creating a suburban ideal that fused with the American Dream. The suburban ideal provided the proper balance between country and city, as well as, a lack of communal living. The detached houses that came to define suburbia were private, quiet, and safe. During this time, suburbia became the embodiment of contemporary culture: privacy,

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<sup>40</sup> Buhs, *Bigfoot: The Life and Times of a Legend*, 158.

<sup>41</sup> Jackson, *Crabgrass Frontier*, 283-4.

conspicuous consumption, and reliance on private transportation. Upward mobility, a strong nuclear family unit, a separation of work and leisure, and a tendency for economic growth became the themes of the suburban ideal and the American Dream became a suburban house in which to be exclusive, private, and centered on the nuclear family. By setting *The Legend of Boggy Creek* in rural America, the film is able to capture the juxtaposition between the suburban ideal as lived by the audience watching the film to the poorness of a rural town left unable to modernize.

The film captures this through its low, but tight, budget, scenery, and inclusion of townspeople that recall their experiences with the creature. The cost of the film reportedly ranged from \$25,000 to \$160,000 to make, and high school students from the area worked as the crew to help keep the budget in-check. The costume for the creature was made from a gorilla costume. To save even further, local townspeople appeared as the residents of the town in the movie. Charles Pierce's films are known for having a regional flair to them and presents low budget portraits of small-town life and has had influence on later films such as *The Blair Witch Project*, which uses a similar style. *The Legend of Boggy Creek* was the first of three Boggy Creek films, *Return to Boggy Creek*, the sequel, and *The Barbaric Beast of Boggy Creek*. Because the film presents an interesting portrait of Southern swamp culture in the 1970s, the film (and its monster) is able to expose the anxiety of failing to advance in an advancing world. The real horror is being unprogressive. Scenes of rural, everyday life are juxtaposed with the obsession with finding a creature that lives and thrives in the forests of the rural backwoods. Bigfoot is not an urban creature that terrorizes urban people. Central to Bigfoot is the wilderness. The distinction between the "wild" and the suburban is the level of control exerted over nature. In the wilderness, there is no control. This is the allure of Bigfoot; he is untamable and persists

on evading civilization. Suburban neighborhoods want a controllable nature, not the wilderness. Maybe homeowners want to see some wild animals, but it must not be more than deer, birds, or rabbits. No one knows the variety of life that could exist in the wild, but fear that it could be a Bigfoot waiting to attack is the anxiety-producing fear that this film capitalizes on.

Henry Nash Smith, Roderick Frazier Nash, and Leo Marx, consider critically the meanings of nature in American history and the power that people have over nature. The American wilderness needs the intervention of the human hand to reach its fullest potential, without the intervention, it exists underused and purposeless. Nature, separate from human intervention, is dangerous because the separation marks the wilderness away from and alienates people.<sup>42</sup> In this instance, the town is made to seem backwoods like the creature they have created. The film is a cautionary tale of remaining modern and “useable.”

Land is commodifiable; however, the people of Fouke, Arkansas, abundant with land, trees, fields, and animals, are no longer being used for their land. There is no industry here. It is as if the people feel that they are useless to the nation because land is used to perpetuate national ideology and conquest. This town is useless. They live mixed within the trees that so abundantly could be commodifiable, but they are not considered a commodity for civilization; therefore, they remain unprogressive. Commodifying land means progression because industry builds around the land and people are moved in to work the industry. Land becomes a means of spreading American ideology.<sup>43</sup> Here, there are abundant lands ready to be industrialized, but remain untouched. For the people of this town, nature is mysterious but not separate from their own town. The Fouke monster represents the delayed effects of growth and progress.

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<sup>42</sup> William Cronon. *Uncommon Ground Rethinking the Human Place in Nature* (New York, NY: W.W. Norton), 1996.

<sup>43</sup> Frieda Knobloch. *The Culture of Wilderness: Agriculture as Colonization in the American West* (Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina), 1996.

There are three levels to the creature: it exists in nature, in rural society, and the gender. For the characters in the movie, intertwined are nature and society. Where nature ends and society begins is a thin line, and the Fouke Monster crosses this line often. It does not live in any boundaries of society or nature. It crosses blurred lines. It is a constant threat to the people because everyone knows that the creature is lurking out there somewhere, and since it does not live by any boundaries, it could attack at any moment. The Fouke Monster represents “the other” the townspeople feel they have become by monsterizing it. The monster, excluded as the other, produces a narrative that provides a place that, not only shapes identities, but also becomes the engages conversations about public anxieties of remaining stagnant.

Because the film is based on a true story, it places the action in the physical world and not in an imagined world. Bringing the Fouke Monster into the rural town brings importance to a town that is losing pace with the world. The style of the film reveals the regional degradation of the rural town and is forgotten by the rest of the world as it advances and grows. The wilderness, dense and thick, occupies much of the town. The emphasis of the rural qualities of the town implies that the residents of Fouke are as much a part of the local wildlife. They are as much of the setting as the flora and fauna. Perhaps the Fouke Monster represents a way that these rural people carve out their own fantasy of conquering the unknown and establishing dominance. Hunting the monster positions the people with a real chance to explore the wild, create an adventure, and extend domination, but no one has ever found the creature, neither dead nor alive. The Fouke Monster is savage, and society provokes it instead of society scaring it away. The narrator tells the audience that the frequencies of encounters and sightings means the creature is not scared of the people; it wants to keep the people away by constantly being a threat.

Therefore, the townspeople are scared of the creature, and want to kill it. If the townspeople could rid themselves of the monster, then maybe the town could advance.

Monsters are vehicles for recording the anxieties and obsessions of a culture.<sup>44</sup> Stephen Asma writes, “The monster is more than an odious creature of the imagination; it is a kind of cultural category, employed in domains as diverse as religion, biology, literature and politics.”<sup>45</sup> People need an excuse to fight, protect, and defend, as well as transfer those terrifying qualities of a culture's own monstrous desires onto inhuman beings. This allows people to remain human and civilized but also express anxieties and changes, which has been the case throughout history. The Fouke Monster represents the townspeople's fears of being lost in a world that is increasingly modern and advancing. There is the threat that history will forget them because of all the advances in the world around them that they cannot keep pace with, and the creature is a manifestation of this anxiety of this immobilization. In the film's climax, the creature terrorizes a family over the course of several nights. Inspired by the actual newspaper, the creature terrorizes a family in a remote country house. To defend themselves, the family fires upon the creature, but the shots provoke attacks on the family. The creature throws one of the family members through the front door of the home, causing the family member to be rushed to the hospital. There is no place for the family to go. They cannot escape the creature. This is part of the immobilization, the lack of progress because the house is tucked away in the wilderness, part of the wilderness. In a more suburban area, the victims would be able to run to the neighbors or run into civilization, exposing the creature. Here, the wilderness keeps the family from fleeing or from exposing the creature. The monster is able to remain untouched by civilization and inflict its rage

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<sup>44</sup> Stephen Asma. *On Monsters*.

<sup>45</sup> *ibid*, 13.

onto the family. The monster becomes a constant reminder of the stagnation of their rural lives.

The monster in this film is terrifying because the people are terrified about their position in the world. There is always an unknown force waiting to attack, but not only is the danger for the man but a continual danger for the family. The culmination of this comes during the pivotal scene, the one based on the actual Ford's story. The scene begins with a family in an old, rusty car. The narrator reveals that Charles and Anne Turner are renting a house in the woods with Anne's brother, Don Ford, and his wife, Sue. They moved in together with their small children to save money. Charles and Don recently became employed at a local cattle ranch that keeps them away most nights. They move in on a Monday, and by that Thursday night, the terrifying events begin to happen. Anne and Sue are home alone with the children when Anne hears noises coming from outside the window. The scene cuts to the shadow of the Fouke Monster climbing unto their porch and walking to the door, but he cannot get in. After jiggling the door handle, the monster disappears into the night. Anne and Sue get the landlord to come inspect the property, but he does not see anything or anyone. He asks if they want to come to his place until the men come back, but Anne decides they will just continue staying in the house through the night. The following day, Bobby Ford, the other Ford brother, comes to the house to fish with an eleven-year-old boy, Corky. On their fishing trip, Corky discovers a large three-foot track in the mud and is unnerved by its presence. He says, "It sure is spooky down here."

The monster attacks again in the night while Bobby is still there. Again, the monster climbs onto the porch, goes to the door, jiggles the handle, but cannot get in. Everyone in the house becomes alarmed and gets panicked. Right on time, Don and Charles return home from work upon which everyone in the house runs out onto the porch and bombards them with their

fears of an intruder, all talking at the same time. Don is able to calm the family and calls the landlord again, who is unable to help the family but leaves a gun with them to protect them should the intruder show back up. The family is still unaware that the intruder is the Fouke Monster; however, when the monster shows up for a third time, it sticks its hand through a broken window and tries to grab Bobby on from the couch. The men, all in white shirts, run outside with the gun and start shooting at the monster in the darkness. Instead of calling the landlord, they reach out to the local sheriff, who shows up but, like the landlord, is unable to help the family. The sheriff tells the men that it is nothing to be scared of, that a panther and a cub are living under the house.

By this point, the Fords and the Turners know that it is not a just a panther, but that the intruder is a hairy, red eyed monster. After the sheriff leaves, they go back outside and try to shoot at the monster again. The camera never cuts away from the men in the action and never shows the monster. The scene focuses on the men's reaction to the monster. Once they think they've killed the monster, they get down from the porch to investigate, but the monster, not dead, attacks Bobby, who is unable to escape from the attack. Once he finally breaks free, he runs through the front door in a state of shock. He gets a police escort to the hospital in Texarkana. The narrator reveals that Bobby recovered quickly, and the family moves away from the home with no intention of moving back. The anxiety is a collection of the anxiety of the small town, which is why so many people have encountered the creature and fear it. The monster is about the changes in American society than anything else. These new norms and advances in society are particularly alien to those who are left out of the advances. This positions the people as outsiders who are threatened by the new norms just as much as they are a threat to them. The Fouke Monster in all of its eeriness represents the new norms of the American society.

If the new norms are centered on the American Dream of achieving middle-class haven, then these rural people in Arkansas have been left out of the narrative, as they do not have the option of achieving suburban middle-class life, which becomes the message the audience receives.

If part of the suburban ideal is nuclear family, then another layer added in this discussion pertains to the role of the men. During this period of suburban growth, men's identities shifted from emphasis on the individual man to one that placed emphasis on the family.<sup>46</sup> More so than ever before in history, men were to be figures of honor *and* a face within the home, superb husbands and father figures. Television shows like *Leave it to Beaver*, *My Three Sons*, and *Father knows Best* exemplified this new domestic masculinity. Bigfoot began to represent the masculinity that these men lamented and longed to regain, an old-fashioned masculinity, capitalized on by Western genre and John Wayne, a symbol of a rugged adventurer. Here was a masculine creature that could live without the rules of society by being self-reliant and strong. Bigfoot could represent the struggle of claiming manhood that faced the new suburban man. While the domestic retreat of modern American men produced an absence for adventure and individualism, this film rallies against this type of masculinity. In the typical Bigfoot representation, the wilderness signifies freedom—freedom from the responsibility of family and civilized norms. Men could concentrate on cultivating their inner wild man; however, there is the double meaning of Bigfoot in this film that marks the boundaries of masculinity during suburbanization.

If Bigfoot represents the embodiment of masculinity, of how a man should act, then this Bigfoot exists as a reinforcement of the suburban masculinity that became the masculine norm

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<sup>46</sup> Kevin Starr, *Golden Dreams: California in an Age of Abundance, 1950-1963* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 6.

during this time. This is the crucial scene of the film. The monster, unprovoked, has attacked the family in the cover of darkness. For the audience, it is the perfect arena to play out the fantasy of moving further away from the city, or escaping civilization. The audience could live the experience of the “true story,” but they are able to return home with a sense of pride about their choices to live in the modern world. If men felt like masculinity could not be found within civilization, and only in the wilderness, men could be free from the responsibility of family and concentrate on cultivating the inner wild man, then this film aids in the destruction of that fantasy. Wild masculinity looks tough, unprovoked, and violent. If this masculinity is too tough, then how should the correct masculinity look? It should look like the images of suburban dads playing catch with their children in the yard, washing the car in the driveway. It should look like they are involved with their family in order to raise good children. This film reaffirms the audience’s own values of suburban life.

The final scene of the film starts with a man in a field, who is revealed to be the narrator and the child that lived through the attack in the old house in the woods. “I was thinking about it today as I decided to drive out to our old place,” he says. This lets the audience know that he was part of the family and that he no longer lives in this place. He continues, “Now run down and abandoned,” which confirms that the town never modernized. “Standing in this field, it all comes rushing back and an icy tingle comes down my spine when I recall that terrible, lonesome cry.” It is lonely in the rural countryside. Men should not move their families out in the middle of the wilderness. As will be shown with the next film, it is permissible to escape the confines of suburbia, but only if you return with your masculinity still intact.

## SECTION TWO: BIGFOOT AND THE HOME

*George, "He walked into our kitchen and was eating out of our refrigerator. I thought it was going to eat me, but he ate our daughter's corsage and then ate our goldfish!"*

*Sergeant, "And where is he now, Mr. Henderson?"*

*George, "In the bathroom."*

*Sergeant, "Oh, of course. How stupid of me"*

What do you do when Bigfoot takes over your home? You domesticate him.

While the last section of this study looked at the juxtaposition of rural lives and the suburban ideal, this section attempts to place Bigfoot into suburbia and analyze what happens when Bigfoot invades the neighborhood. Whenever and wherever the image of Bigfoot emerges, it is some form or comment on masculinity. Masculinity has no one particular way to define it. Characteristics of masculinity may be strong, distant, and cold, or loving, warm, and fatherly. It is possible to see Bigfoot as a way to create boundaries in the changing masculine norms. In popular consciousness, there is a struggle between various forms of masculinity. It may be the Ward Cleaver type, or the John Wayne type; however, one thing is clear about masculinity, it attempts to normalize itself by pointing out what is and is not masculine. It defines itself by defining what other identities are and where they fit into or out of accepted standards. Bigfoot allows for an understanding of how people question their place, and identity against and within the boundaries of the larger society.

The plot of Universal Picture's 1987 film, *Harry and the Hendersons*, revolves around a family's adoption of the wild creature. John Lithgow stars as George Henderson, the head of the household. Typified as the quintessential middle-class suburban family, the Hendersons are the sporting goods salesperson father, George, the frazzled but pulled-together mother, Nancy, the

unimpressed teenage daughter, Sarah, and the obsessed with all things boyish, Ernie. This is the epitome of the middleclass suburban American family. They have the suburban house, the white picket fence, the station wagon, and the dog. This is the American family, whitewashed and situated in the suburbs. If there were a family to be, it would be the Hendersons. The Bigfoot's adoption into the Hendersons adds a narrative to the suburban family and the masculinity ascribed to men in these neighborhoods. If Bigfoot of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s was a comment on the loss of masculinity, then *Harry and the Hendersons* represents what it mean to accept the suburban masculinity as a realized state. No more are men to escape their houses and yearn for adventure in the 1980s, but they are supposed to be content with being home with the family. The Hendersons' adoption of Bigfoot adds a different account to the constant masculine crisis in America. This film uncovers the new state of the man's role in the family. What happens when you domesticate Bigfoot? He becomes complacent and happy with his circumstances. This chapter attempts to understand what masculinity and sexuality means for the domesticated Wildman.

The film begins with the family returning home from a camping trip somewhere on the West Coast. It is during this scene that the plot of the movie first begins. While returning home, George, the father, hits something in the road in the family station wagon. Once he investigates the fur mass, George discovers that the family had hit an actual Bigfoot, or Sasquatch. They decide to take the creature home with them after the entire family gets out of the car and does do by strapping it to the roof of the car. The Henderson family thinks the creature is dead, but he comes alive only to scare them and bring the car to a screeching halt. This sudden stop makes Bigfoot fly off the roof of the car and into the road, again. It is a slapstick element to the film, played for laughs. This time he must be dead, so the George decides to put him back on the roof

of the car. Obviously, the character's intention to take the Bigfoot home is to sell the creature and make a quick dollar of the dead body, which is a story that the audience would be privy. Once in the house, Harry immediately rummages for food in the Henderson's kitchen to the point that he demolishes it. Among the casualties is the aloof teenage daughter, Sarah's fifteenth birthday corsage, which Harry eats. The pink, delicate orchid crumbles in the harsh, foul mouth of Harry, but the sheer power of Harry is no match for the awakened woman in Sarah. "My orchid, my fifteenth birthday corsage. The one I've saved for over six months... I was going to keep that for the rest of my life, and you ate it," Sarah yells to Harry, who is cornered in the kitchen by the small, yet boisterous, Sarah. "I don't care how big and ugly and smelly you are, you just can't go around eating other people's corsages. Even if you are an animal, you just can't go around acting like one in this house," Sarah scolds Harry for taking her flower. This is the first time that the unimpressed daughter cares, and it is about her flower that the extremely bulky Bigfoot has just eaten. It is as if the now, womanly, teenage daughter, whose innocence has just been taken by Bigfoot in front of her entire family, has quickly turned into the nagging wife as if to say something about the complexities of the Wildman lifestyle. The effects that linger for women are that it is a frustrating lifestyle. Maybe this brassy woman is exactly who the Wildman is staying away from in the wilderness. It is a brief scene, but it provides a complex reading of innocence lost.

For men, a savage manhood includes forcibly taking a woman and making her his own. For women, the same is not true. According to Janice Radway in *Reading the Romance*, women deem romances as bad when plots of a novel invoke intense emotions of anger because of a lived fear, like violence or rape.<sup>47</sup> Assumptions can be made that by this point Sarah has had some

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<sup>47</sup> Janice Radway. *Reading the Romance: Women, Patriarchy, and Popular Literature* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1984), 157-9.

form of sex education, whether it be from her parents, school, community, peers or media. Sarah is aware of sex, and it is not a stretch to say that Bigfoot has deflowered Sarah in front of her family. While men would find this as part of their escapist fantasies in their men's magazines, women do not find that this would be deemed a successful or positive romance.<sup>48</sup> I am not suggesting that Bigfoot is intending to become romantically involved with Sarah, but I am suggesting that the masculine characteristics of Harry as ascribed by brute force in which he thrives would recognize Sarah's perceived innocence as a conquest. This scene details an interesting power play between the sexes, and while the scene is fleeting, it curtails the scope of Bigfoot as the masculine entity. There is this opposition of forces at play in this scene between the typified male of Harry/ Bigfoot and the innocence of the woman in Sarah. Yet, something remarkable happens. Instead of being swept off her feet, as the male fantasy would have played out, Sarah stands up to Harry. She scolds him for his brashness. This is not the way one acts in the suburbs, and this is not the behavior a man should exhibit. If Bigfoot represents the masculine escapist fantasy, then Harry represents the failed vision of that fantasy.

The plot unfolds like a family-friendly comedy. The Henderson's decide that Bigfoot, who they have named Harry (he is hairy, get it?), should stay and become a pet, a loveable member of the family. They attempt to housebreak Harry by using sugar cubes to teach him how to sit. The funny thing about being housebroken is that Harry immediately sits in the recliner in front of the television watching an old show starring Ronald Reagan. Harry is unlike the popular representations of the Bigfoot that the audience would have expected. It made sense for the creature to be wild and to be fierce, as earlier shown in the kitchen scene. It made sense for the creature to come alive on top of the car and scare the Henderson family. It made sense for the

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<sup>48</sup> *ibid*, 159.

creature to tear about the house looking for food. However, this representation of Bigfoot is different in many ways. He is a vegetarian, who is saddened by the dead animals around him. In the initial scenes of the film, he begins burying furs, deer heads, and other animal products as if he is the reverent keeper of the wild. Harry is different because he is an innocent creature that can be tamed and taught how to sit. He can be housebroken. This Bigfoot does not wish to harm the family, but rather, he is kind and benevolent. Harry was not threatening, although clearly made in the image of a male. He had a pronounced, bald forehead and a white beard, making him seem sociable and/or wise. Bigfoot is taken in with this middle-class family after his fierce wild nature is discovered to be farcical. However, instead of continuing to domesticate the Wildman, the Hendersons realize that society will change the creature. He does not belong in the house but in the wild. Through this section, I will examine two competing masculinities in *Harry and the Hendersons*, George Henderson and Harry Henderson.

If the objective of the 1950s man was to conform to suburban middle class life and to the role as father and husband, and if the era after World War II became the era of the family, then George Henderson has done just that. He has been to keep his masculinity intact. He has not just left his self-interest behind; he has included his family in his self-interests. He is able to be the breadwinner and get his adventure. Michael Kimmel writes in *Manhood in America: A Cultural History*, “So long as they remained reliable breadwinners and devoted dads, they could become wild and adventurous ... It appeared that the more boring and dull the routine of men’s work became, the more exciting and glamorous were their fantasies of escape”.<sup>49</sup> However, George has reached a new level of manhood. This man is the epitome of the new 1980s man. He is able to have a job that pays him well enough to provide for his family, allows him to be a wilderness man, and permits him to go out into the wilderness. The opening scene is crucial to

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<sup>49</sup> Kimmel, *Manhood in America* 251-252.

understanding the tone of George's characterization for this new man. In the first five minutes of the film, the camera swaggers through the woods while the audience hears low audile grants and voices. From the way the camera move through the wilderness, the audience is to believe that they are Bigfoot or at least have the perspective of a Bigfoot. It is important to point out that by the time this film was released, Bigfoot had been in popular culture for thirty years, and Sasquatch type creatures had been in popular culture for longer. Audience members would be aware of the ways that Bigfoot sauntered and moaned. However, the audience is not following the perspective of Bigfoot; they are given the perspective of George and Ernie, who are coming back to the campground after successfully hunting and killing a rabbit. This is Ernie's first kill and George, of course, was the one to teach Ernie how to kill the rabbit successfully. Even further, before it is revealed to the audience that they are in fact following a man and his son through the woods, the camera comes through the clearing to show a horrified Nancy, who screams at what she sees. She sees her husband and son in the clearing with a dead rabbit.

It is interesting to note that the men of the 1950s were tired of the banality of everyday life and wanted that escape from the suburban havens to life of true adventure. However, masculinity was defined by the role of husband and father, not by the frontier hero or the Wildman. The longing for fantasy manifested itself in different ways, like the western or war genre films. Through these types of media, men were able to escape their lives and for a little while feel reckless, ruthless, primitive, and freedom from guilt. Magazines directly for and advertised to men, such as *Argosy*, *Saga*, *Adventure*, and *True*, presented vivid tales of adventure that featured heroic wartime achievements, exotic travel, and conflict with wild animals. Men were depicted as the definitions of "real men" with hairy chests. They were outdoorsmen. The magazines were able to "stimulate his [the man's] ego at a time when man

wants to fight back against women's efforts to usurp his traditional role as head of the family".<sup>50</sup> These men's magazines used the image of Bigfoot to represent this masculine lifestyle of an old-fashioned masculinity. The creature was able to represent the struggle of claiming manhood that faced the new suburban man and epitomized the masculine ideals of control over women, life without civilization, be self-reliant, and strong. Through this representation of Bigfoot, masculinity was achievable. Yet George was able to have both lives in civilization and wilderness and achieve balance between both.

On the other hand, there is Harry. He is everything that George is not. He would be the manifestation of manhood, if it were not for George. This is the clear difference in this film then in other representations of Bigfoot in other media portrayals. From the creation of Bigfoot, he (usually represented as male) persists as a true masculine hero, or he exists as the depiction of a crisis in defining masculinity. However, Harry does not really exist in this film as the image of the perfect masculine lifestyle. He is a gentle giant. He is vegetarian; maybe pescetarian because he eats one of their goldfish. At first thought to be wild and scary, but once he makes it to the house becomes docile and innocent. Even George and other men realize this throughout the film. He calls the sheriff to report that there is a Bigfoot in his house. Obviously, the sheriff does not believe him because there is no need for a Bigfoot in this world. He is domesticated somewhat easily because George is able to overcome him and train him with sugar cubes. He then immediately finds himself sitting in front of the television in a recliner completely transfixed by a Ronald Reagan movie. If Robert Bly's assertion in *Iron John* is true that the role of the "large, primitive being" that exists in every man must overcome the "sanitized, hairless, shallow man" to become receptive to all sides of himself is true, then George Henderson has done an excellent

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<sup>50</sup> Kimmel, *Manhood in America*, 254.

job.<sup>51</sup> Again, Bigfoot is the primitive being in this case, and if the men that are actively searching for Bigfoot are searching for their own manhood to become receptive to their full selves then George, who was not searching for Bigfoot, has done this. Instead, this film turns this trope in on itself.

Instead of George needing Harry, Harry needs George. He needs to learn how to overcome the Wildman within to live in this “sanitized” world of the 1980s. The 1950s suburban man is no longer a new identity that must be overcome in order to be happy. For men, George represents the perfect combination of manhood, domestic and wild. For Harry, he falls into suburban life and escapes it. He leaves after he realizes that he does not belong in this life. Of course, George and the Hendersons are sad that they have essentially lost a pet, and they on the hunt for him. Harry relaxes in a pool and watches *The Addams Family*, and media frenzy insures as more and more people report sightings of Harry. Eventually, George has to protect Harry, and I find this amusing because George is secure in his manhood, so much so that he returns Harry to the wild. Even George recognizes that Harry, this wild man, does not fit into the society. It is as if to say that there is no room in the modern society for this backwards masculinity. A man must now be able to balance his urges for the wilderness, where a man can be a man, with his duties of being a loving and providing husband. However, in the following discussion, being able to walk in both worlds is not enough for a man’s masculine identity. Instead of being like George, the main man the in the following film is unable to both uphold his masculine identity in his world, and ends a horrific Bigfoot attack. Up until this point, the men’s masculinities may have been questioned, but ultimately, they have proven their manhood. If Bigfoot deems someone un-masculine, the results are not as pleasant as making a pet as the case for George..

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<sup>51</sup> Bly, *Iron John: A Book About Men*, 6

### SECTION THREE: BIGFOOT vs. MAN

What is one to do when his masculinity is not enough to protect himself and his woman in the face of a Bigfoot attack? What happens when Bigfoot is not the ally but a terrorist? The 2013 horror film, *Willow Creek*, broaches this topic, or rather it is my argument that the film manages to use the image of Bigfoot to examine masculinity in the Twenty first century. The film, shot as a found footage film, follows Jim, the devoted boyfriend, and Kelly, the supportive girlfriend, through their exploration of Bigfoot country with the hopes of verifying the existence of Bigfoot. The inept masculinity of Jim does not exactly stand out on first viewing, but I argue that Jim's masculinity fails in the face of Bigfoot, to prove ultimately that he is not man enough. Again, as in each of the films throughout this discussion, Jim represents the everyman questioning of his masculinity. Once again, Bigfoot is representative of a masculine ideal that recalls a rugged lifestyle of seclusion and inaccessibility. In each of the other films discussed in this project, we found that each man, who faces a crisis in their masculine identity, prevails over Bigfoot, or something like it; however, in *Willow Creek*, Jim, the main male character, is unable to protect himself and his girlfriend, Kelly, from attacks from Bigfoot.

*Willow Creek* is a "found-footage" horror film that details Jim and Kelly's trek into Bigfoot country, Bluff Creek, where the first discovery of Bigfoot happened in the United States. There are two parts to this film. The first part details the history of Bigfoot in the early years, the Crew story from 1958 and the Patterson- Gimlin film from 1967. Jim is creating a documentary about Bigfoot and is seeking to find the creature in the place where it all began. Directed by Bobcat Goldthwait, this film does a surprisingly good job at detailing the early history of Bigfoot. It uses real places, events, landmarks, and people to discuss why Bigfoot matters, but it

also develops a tension between non-believers and believers. Goldthwait wants to remind the audience that this experience is real, whether one believes or not. The film interviews real people with real experiences like Nita Rowley, Steven Streufert, Shaun L. White Guy Sr., and Tom Yamarone. This does more than establish a lived experience for the audience; it also reveals the commodity that Bigfoot has become. Through burger places, music shops, national forests, statues, and murals, Bigfoot is a lived experience because the American people have commodified him to the point of being real. Ultimately, it does not matter if the existence of Bigfoot is factual, what matters is that the purchaser feels as if Bigfoot is real. Bigfoot drives the economy in this small town in Northern California. It perpetuates itself. The more people buy Bigfoot memorabilia and buy into the economy, the more likely they are to go out and search for Bigfoot. The purchaser may even imagine they hear something or see something move in the forest. It is about a hope of the experience that fires the commodification of Bigfoot. This leads them to return to the town to buy more commodities of Bigfoot to perpetuate their adventure. It is a cycle. One does not have to believe in Bigfoot to be a perpetuator of this economy, but it does not matter because the people visiting the town will continue to immortalize Bigfoot on their own by partaking in the local culture of the economy, the continued commodification of Bigfoot. Take Nita Rowley, for instance, she works at the Willow Creek information center and does not believe in Bigfoot. When asked if she would be surprised to see a Bigfoot, she responds that she would not be surprised to see one. Her thought is that she would not be surprised because she works in the economy that is peppered with the image of Bigfoot, so if the creature were real then he would have gotten her already. She says she would not be surprised to encounter a Bigfoot because she would not expect to see one at this point in her life. It is more likely that one would run into bears, mountain lions, and snakes than to ever encounter a Bigfoot.

Nita aids in the construction of the tension between the believers as her thoughts about encountering a Bigfoot resonate with many people in the audience. It reestablishes prejudice that Bigfoot is not real and one should not expect to see him other than on the murals throughout the town and in the landmarks and statues that pepper the town. It is no coincidence that Nita is the first person to be interviewed in the film. The other interviewees, who actually believe in Bigfoot and have had some form of contact with the creature, exist for the film to heighten the absurdity of the real claims of Bigfoot encounters.

For the believers, Shaun L. White Guy Sr. recalls a time that she and her father went into the woods and encountered a Bigfoot. Shaun L. White Guy Sr. is a member of the Hoopa nation and the lore and folktales would expose her to Bigfoot early in her life. Originally, it was thought that the men that found the tracks along Bluff Creek in 1958 got many of their stories about Bigfoot from the Hoopa people who worked closely with them on the construction site.<sup>52</sup> Shaun's story fits into the lore of her people, but the filmmakers decide to frame the story with a tension between nonbelievers and believers. The town, however, believes in Bigfoot or at least wants visitors to think they believe. Throughout the town, there are murals of Bigfoot working alongside the people of the town. In the largest mural of Bigfoot, he is seen helping to build the town. Kelly makes the remark that Bigfoot is a day laborer, which is the real reason he does not want to be found because he will be put to work. There really is not a way out of commodifying Bigfoot, and this commodity requires the he will be put to work. In this vision described by the mural, Bigfoot is just as much a commodity as he is a consumer. As Joshua Buhs writes, "All the longing, all the searching and hoping, and the beast turned out to have no power to change

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<sup>52</sup> Buhs, *Bigfoot: The Life and Times of a Legend*. However, this is a recurring theme throughout all Bigfoot believers.

the world, no path back to a better time, no secret after all.”<sup>53</sup> In this way, the filmmakers want the audience to recognize that if Bigfoot were real and were to integrate into our society, he would not somehow alleviate the struggle of modern culture. As Buhs writes, Bigfoot would be just as much like us, as workers and consumers, that are just cogs in the wheel. However, Bigfoot has yet to be found or make himself known to the people. In this way, Bigfoot remains absent from modern culture and still his image is a formidable escape from the crisis the advancements of modern culture provides for people. Therefore, the real tension comes from the main characters Jim and Kelly. Jim is on this adventure to detail and prove the existence of Bigfoot, and Kelly is there to support her boyfriend.

Jim is your prototypical male searching for Bigfoot. He is an adventurer, who believes in Bigfoot. Kelly, on the other hand, does not believe in Bigfoot. She says that she is afraid of many things but she is not afraid to admit that she does not believe in Bigfoot. Her rationale is that there has never been a body of Bigfoot found, and if the creature is as large as they claim, then there is no way for it to evade human contact for this long, meaning that Bigfoot would not be able to evade the non-believers. Jim does believe in Bigfoot and wants Kelly to admit that there could be a possibility that Bigfoot exists even without being found and classified by science. His argument sounds much like actual believers in Bigfoot, that every year thousands of new species of animals are discovered, to which Kelly argues mostly include plants, bacteria, and other microscopic lifeforms on earth. Kelly cuts Jim’s argument, “Not finding a tiny monkey in a giant rainforest the size of continent is not the same as not finding a 900 pound hairy biped roaming around a very highly populated Pacific Northwest area. That’s not the same, babe.” This conversation plays out like any conversation one would have between believers and nonbelievers. It is interesting to note that Kelly still supports Jim on his mission to trace the steps

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<sup>53</sup> Buhs, *Bigfoot*, 167-168.

of the original sightings to find the existence of Bigfoot. She does not have to believe in Bigfoot for them to work as a couple or for her to support him. Jim's biggest fear is that Kelly will perceive him crazy. Like any good romantic interest, Kelly assures Jim that she knows he is crazy and is okay with it. The support is not one way. Jim also supports Kelly in her endeavors to pursue her dreams and goals of professional acting. There is a fine line drawn in his support for her, though.

In one of their private conversations in the car, Kelly says that she will eventually need to move to Los Angeles to break into film and television acting. This admission comes after Jim says that they can move to Humboldt County where she can act in local theater. Kelly has bigger dreams than local theater and Los Angeles has the means to make her dreams come true, but Jim does not like this plan and says he will never move to L.A.; it is a "weird place." This town is lost in a world that is rapidly modernizing. The town's biggest attraction is a fabled creature. It has no sustainable industry outside of this. Kelly is aware of the dangers of moving from civilization to a town that has integrated with the wilderness. Recall *Legend of Boggy Creek*, the town too had become integrated with the wilderness. Ultimately, Bigfoot is more provoked in these environments because he thrives in non-modern areas. Interestingly enough, they have this conversation their way through the forest to the spot where they will begin the hike to the place that will definitively prove Bigfoot's existence. There are two ways of looking at this support. The first way is to say that both characters support each other in whatever endeavor they wish to make; they will make compromises, but there are lines that each have drawn in their support of the other. The second way to look at this is that the support only goes so far before it turns to skeptical. Kelly will support Jim on this Bigfoot adventure, but only so far as to prove him wrong - that Bigfoot does not exist. Jim will only support Kelly as long as it is in line with his

own dreams of Bigfoot hunting. Eventually, this support for each other is questioned when Jim asks Kelly to marry him in the middle of the night in their tent. Of course, Kelly turns him down; she has to turn him down to move the plot along. The decline of the proposal emasculates him. Kelly says that it is too soon for them to think about marrying each other. She does suggest that they move in together instead of getting married, but they will move in together to L.A. the one place that Jim says he will not live. Up until this point in the film in her mind, Kelly has supported Jim without question even if she does not believe in Bigfoot. She may think the entire thing is trivial, but she still supports Jim in this quest to prove the existence of Bigfoot. Now with the proposal turned down and moving to L.A. together on the table, Jim has to decide if he will be able to forgo his own interests to be with Kelly and move with her to L.A. Jim agrees to move with Kelly to Los Angeles. In this seemingly romantic moment, Jim gives way to his interests to Kelly and her ultimatum; however, this is where the film turns from faux-documentary to horror film. It has everything to do with the fact that Jim has allowed Kelly to emasculate him, to move him to the city, and support his girlfriend over his own self-interest.

Taking a note from classic horror films, warnings from two men act as the first evidence that horrifying events are about to ensue. While filming a scene with a Bigfoot statue, the couple is interrupted by a man that says, "This is not a joke, you shouldn't go there." The second and final warning comes from a man on the camping trail. A mysterious, angry man tells the couple to turn their car around and go back to town. "Look, I think what you want to do is, you want to turn this around and go back the way you came and keep driving until you get back to town." Like most horror films, this is the final warning that indicates to the audience that dread lies ahead. The audience is also aware that this would not be a horror film if the couple decided to turn back to safety, so the fate of the couple is decided once they decide to pursue their interest in

finding Bigfoot. The last chance warning does not come from a person, but from a disheveled campsite. Jim and Kelly set up their campsite and leave it to go explore the nearby forest. Upon their return, someone, or something, has demolished their campsite. As a last ditch effort, the couple could pack up and leave the campsite at that moment. The warnings have been there, but accordingly, the couple chooses to believe that a bear wrecked their site looking for food and they decided to stay. With three warnings, two from men and one from an unknown visitor, Jim and Kelly have sealed their fate. Bigfoot is real, and he is not happy with the couple.

The horror begins with Jim's emasculation. It is not until Kelly rejects Jim's proposal that the horror begin, mainly in the last thirty minutes of the film. For the audience, the suspense is high. Until this point, the characters have been talking about the possibility of Bigfoot existing, but after Kelly's rejection, something, presumably Bigfoot, begins terrorizing the couple from outside their tent. In the twenty-one minute shot, strange sounds from outside the tent inundate Jim and Kelly with fear. Confined to their tent, Jim and Kelly jump and flinch at every sound coming from outside the tent, hollering. It is noteworthy that the horror begins after Jim's rejection as this signifies the lack of masculinity in Jim. As noted previously, Bigfoot represents masculinity and the men who hunt Bigfoot are in essences hunting their masculinity. Jim fits within this framework. As discussed, Bigfoot embodies the men as they wished they could be. He stood as a self-reliant creature that resides and resists society from the outskirts.<sup>54</sup> Bigfoot becomes the temporary fantasy that functions as a projection of the desires for men to represent themselves as they hoped to be. Bigfoot is the embodiment of a foregone masculinity; therefore, Bigfoot's obligation is to dispose of any man who is not man enough to face him and forcibly take any woman who stands in the way of a man.

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<sup>54</sup> Buhs, *Bigfoot*, 108.

Stephen Asma's arguments about monsters are again relevant here. While this monster is chasing the couple through the woods, this Bigfoot representation is about the anxieties of the inner monster of stifled masculinity. If encoded in the monster is a gendering that permits an escape to recall a time that allowed men to be free of societal obligations and remake their image without consent of any outside pressures, then the Bigfoot monster in this film ensures the demolition of its disruption and its failures. Bigfoot is the physical manifestation of Jim's disappointment in himself; his emasculation comes from the rejected proposal and his agreement to compromise in moving to Los Angeles with Kelly. In Jim's fantasy, he was going to leap to action, find the monster, and get the girl. Once he did not get the girl, then he could not get the monster. This monster, of course, is representing masculinity, so therefore Jim could not take his masculinity, so masculinity took the girl and left Jim to die, presumably. Jim becomes helpless, powerless. There are uneven power structures. He is vulnerable. He cannot protect Kelly. If the slasher film's motto is sex equals death, then this turns that motto inward to become if one cannot perform then one cannot live and will take the woman because woman need a real man not someone who is searching but someone who just "has it." Bigfoot will always take the women if the man is not masculine enough. This is the first film where someone goes up against Bigfoot and is unable to perform. In every other offering up until this point, man faces Bigfoot and wins. Here is the first time that man faces Bigfoot and loses. Not only does he lose his girl to a more masculine creature, but also he is so un-masculine, that he loses his life. Presumably, Kelly is taken off into the forest with Bigfoot to be his sort of lover. There is evidence to this as the naked woman they encounter before Bigfoot attacks is his "forest bride" and now Kelly will be of the same use to Bigfoot. Audiences have come to expect a hero's conquest over a monster as it is the way they resolve anxieties about injustices. However, in this film, the role of the

monster is the product of the failure of male masculinity and the insecurity of the absence of it. There is not a victory over the horror and challenges our understanding of a heroic triumph over a monster and challenges our sense of moral fabric of good winning over evil.<sup>55</sup> It lacks the secure structure and meaning that audiences come to expect.

More than any other film in this project, the conflict between masculine and feminine is more visible. Set within a male story of crisis, Jim is forced to question his manhood. As Carol Clover argues in *Men, Women, and Chainsaws*, a male's story is linear and a female's story is cyclical.<sup>56</sup> This meaning that at the end of woman's story, she is where she began; the story is circular. In this case, Kelly is back to being a girlfriend of sorts. If for an instant she had any autonomy where she was independent and in charge of her fate, then by the story's end, she is back to being just the counter-part to a masculine character. She was able to say no to Jim's proposal, but she is unable to say no to Bigfoot's forcible abduction. Seemingly, she is now the bride she never wanted to be. She does get to live with her "man," but in this instance, she is coerced into a shared bond as it is assumed that Kelly is now taken to be Bigfoot's "forest bride." If a man's story is linear, then this suggests that he is not in the same place at the story's end. He is changed by the end. Even if he is dead, Jim was not the same was when he first started the story. He first started out as an optimistic character searching for the existence of Bigfoot. By the end, he found that Bigfoot not only exists, but also is not the helpful, demure creature that murals and statues depict. If he was at once masculine, by the end of the film, Jim is emasculated and has little dignity left, as evidenced by Bigfoot's kill. It cannot be stressed enough that Bigfoot is masculinity come alive, and the men, Jim in the case, that encounter Bigfoot are encountering their masculinity or a masculinity that is classified as correct. Before coming in contact with

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<sup>55</sup> Asma, *On Monsters*, 186.

<sup>56</sup> Carol Clover. *Men, Women, and Chain Saws*, 98.

Bigfoot, Jim is able to stay in this gray area of questioning his masculinity, but Bigfoot's attack signifies that he is not masculine / man enough to stand up to masculinity personified. Jim is not masculine enough or man enough and therefore must be eradicated. His story moves in a linear fashion from questioning his manhood to getting a definitive answer. "He emerges a 'new man' fully cognizant of what has befallen not only himself but her as well".<sup>57</sup> Clover makes an interesting note that the male's ending is very much like the woman's ending. If she ends up where she began, then he ends up in the same place as her, as a man who must accept the feminine "against which he railed at the outset but even, up to a point, shares it. If he does not accept and share it, he dies".<sup>58</sup> Therefore, the film's goal is to confront the masculine with the feminine and arrive at some compromise. The goal is to imagine a new, revised man, who is kinder and gentler; however, this film complicated Clover's discussion about masculinity and femininity. Jim was already a kinder man. He was already reformed and ready for marriage, ready to communicate. Bigfoot, as discussed in this film, will not allow that. A real man, compared to the rugged masculinity of Bigfoot, must never be ready to marry or communicate. Kelly helps to perpetuate this message. She does not want a man that is kinder, gentler men. She is at blame for suggesting that men be more like Bigfoot, that what she needs is a man's man, not a man who is so readily available to throw away his life for her.

The final scene of the movie complicates this further where the audience sees nothing more than twigs and grass but hears the couple's demise at the hands of Bigfoot. Presumably, Bigfoot has taken Kelly and forced her to be his new concubine. Jim is unable to save Kelly, as the audience hears his demise before Sarah's own screaming. This is interesting because even in men's fantasy there is always a hero to save the woman from the beast/monster. Yet, in this film,

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<sup>57</sup> Ibid, 99.

<sup>58</sup> Ibid.

there is no closure. The audience does not get to take part of the final scene; only through sound does the audience experience it. Anything could happen, but the assumption is that Bigfoot has taken Kelly and murdered Jim. Who is the hero? Is Bigfoot the hero, so to speak, for rescuing Kelly from a life with a man who so readily emancipates himself from his manly duties to be in a committed relationship? If we think back to the moment in *Harry and the Hendersons* when Harry eats Sarah's corsage and juxtapose that scene with the final in *Willow Creek*, this divulges a fascinating reading of the comparison of masculinity and femininity.

Sarah is the prototype of a strong woman, who stands up to her aggressor. According to Radway, women find that romances are bad when the story plays out too close to her own lived fears of violence and rape. As noted before, Sarah would have received some form of sexual education and would be aware of the dangers of rape. Harry eating her flower is likened to her innocence being taken from her, a rape. She stands up to her aggressor and backs him into a corner. She will not allow her innocence to be taken without scolding Harry first. On the other hand, Kelly is in no position to stand up to her aggressor. Bigfoot takes her like a thief in the night to some unknown future. Neither Kelly, nor the audience, knows the potential of her future, but it is bleak. Typically, in these scenarios, indifference, insensitivity, and brutish behavior are laid to rest by explaining them away. For Sarah, this would be in the development of Harry's character. He is not the brute, hyper-masculine character the family first envisioned, but instead, a docile and innocent creature. He knew no better, forgiven for his sins, and needed the family to teach him how to become better. Yet, Kelly will not have the same opportunity. More than just in the fact that her future is unknown; there is no transformation for her to reconcile. Kelly had the kinder and gentler version of Bigfoot in Jim. He not only wanted to settle down with her but also was willing to dispose of his own interest to be with her. For women, a successful romance

deal with female fears and reservations and lays them to rest by explaining them way through a move from insincere to devoted man by story's end.<sup>59</sup> Kelly's story is backwards from this. She starts out in a committed relationship, but by story's end, she is in another committed relationship. Only this relationship is by force and not a choice. Kelly's own choice in the matter was sealed when she decided to reject Jim's proposal. In a turn of events, Jim's emasculation made permissible Kelly's own demise. In the face of Bigfoot, Jim was unable to become man enough. His masculinity deemed irreproachable, and Kelly deemed prime for the taking. If Jim was not enough, then Bigfoot will be more than man enough. Jim gave her an out; however, Bigfoot provides no out. This is a cautionary tale to both sexes.

#### **SECTION FOUR: ROMANCING BIGFOOT**

Bigfoot is a man's monster created to rid the adventure of romance and the old notion of the damsel in distress. Men wanted an adventure that took them away from their homes where they were to be breadwinners, emotionally and physically supportive for the family. Bigfoot became a fantasy driven by the need to find a thrill outside of the domestic realm. Bigfoot allowed men to go in search of a real adventure where they could escape the house and the day-to-day burdens of the role of the husband and father. Bigfoot became the escape men craved for in the 1950s and 1960s. Eith Bigfoot, men are able to revive a pre-existing idea of masculinity while simultaneously redefining masculinity. This masculinity was an antiquated masculinity that had the potential to reestablish men back at top of the hierarchy in a time when they felt they were being left behind or being usurped in the feminized, consumer world. This antiquated masculinity allows for the continuation of divided gender roles and bounded sexualities.

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<sup>59</sup> Radway, *Reading the Romance*, 158.

Hunting for Bigfoot was not about establishing moral codes of appropriate romance, but rather, Bigfoot's creation confronts the themes of "knight in shining armor." When Bigfoot's footprints were found in 1958, the location of the footprints provides evidence to this concept of removing the romance. The footprints were found circling a bulldozer on a construction site in Humboldt County, California that was cutting into the forest a bypass to northern destinations. Here, Bigfoot could be found as he is a backwoods monster that American men could search for in their own time and place without the pressure of the familiar obligations. The adventure stood as a way men could remove themselves from the domestic just by going out in to the woods of their own countryside. Placing the unknown essentially in the backyard removes the romantic notion attached to the hunt for unknown beasts; men did not have to worry about women being threatened in the backyard. Without an exotic locale, Bigfoot searchers were able to pursue their own identities without it complicated by saving a damsel in distress.

If Bigfoot stories are placed in context with other films about beasts, *King Kong* or *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, it makes clearer this idea that for Bigfoot stories romances are replaced with adventure. Each of these films depicts a heroic man that must protect a woman from the perils of the unknown. In *King Kong*, John Driscoll feels the need to protect Ann Darrow from Kong, and in *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, Dr. David Reed must protect Kay Lawrence from the creature, Gill-Man. In *King Kong* and *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, the monsters are infatuated, or even in love, with the leading women, and this becomes what these men fight. By placing the plots of these films in locations outside of the United States, these monsters become an analogy of foreign fears. In a sense, the men in these films are fighting for their whiteness. The plots of these films parallel with colonial attitudes, a white hegemonic force

that must intervene when outside forces threaten the lives of white women. White men must protect the white women from the advances of the lustful and impious “other” men. The normative race and gender roles are reestablished and promulgated for the mass audiences, and by doing so, the films advance the status quo. If one were to think of Kong as the representation of African Americans, or other groups of people marked black by the dominant ideology, then of course Kong cannot help his lust and love of Ann Darrow as depicted through white men’s eyes. She is a white woman who is the ideal woman that white men fear will be lost to other racialized men. This premise is not confined only to these films; many films depict a heroic white man’s fight for heteronormative relationships throughout all of Hollywood films’ history. Like Denham says in *King Kong*, “Because the public, bless 'em, must have a pretty face to look at.” It is this premises that Bigfoot becomes a response.

Bigfoot, a monster created as a way to rid the adventure of romance, became a fantasy driven by the need to find a thrill outside of the domestic realm. This was the perfect fantasy because it was located in the physical world they understood. Bigfoot allowed men to go in search of a real adventure where they could escape the house and the day-to-day burdens of the role of the husband and father. Each of these films depicts an adventure, going away from the domestic into the foreign where unknown creatures are found. At the creation of Bigfoot in the late 1950s, the hunt for Bigfoot excluded women. It is a boy’s club. It was a way to keep the beast from falling in love and to keep the hunt going without worry of defending the heteronormative romance that pervades the films. The sites are not an exotic location and the monster was not an exotic creature lurking in the shadows of an exotic locale. Kong and Gill-Man were both exotic creatures conquered in foreign places.

Bigfoot represents a way that these men in rural settings could carve out their own fantasy of conquering the unknown. In *Creature from the Black Lagoon*, Dr. Carl Maia finds a fossilized web hand in the Amazon that supplies him with the chance to go into the unknown. For the characters in the film, the adventure turns to horror as the fossilized hand belongs to a species that still thrives in the lush jungles along the Amazon River. Bigfoot becomes a real chance to explore the wild and create an adventure. Bigfoot perpetuates adventure; it is never truly over because he is never turned over to the proper authorities. To do so, would be to ruin the chance to hunt, and again, this hunt is about hunting for masculinity. So searching for Bigfoot is a way that men can continue to remove themselves from the house to go out into the wilderness in their backyards and fantasize about conquering a beast without intertwining it with romance. Bigfoot becomes an antithesis to the romance theme imbedded within the fantasy monster films.

This is complicated when you add women into the story or at the center of the story. Bigfoot then becomes savage and brute, seeking sex and procreation. He rapes and dominates, as shown in the films, *Legend of Boggy Creek*, *Harry and the Hendersons Willow Creek*, and in the series, *Cum for Bigfoot*, written by Virginia Wade. While women were central all three films discussed earlier, they were still periphery to the main story. The plots to the films are about discovery Bigfoot, the women get lost in the search. In the pivotal scene in the *Legend of Boggy Creek*, the need to protect the women drove the hunt for the swamp creature, but the men were the ones who lead the hunt. The masculinity remains through the act of the hunt. In *Harry and the Hendersons*, the domesticity of Harry was more to do with how George interacted with the creature and vice versa, even if Harry is destroying the house and deflowering the teenage

daughter. In *Willow Creek*, the film has more to do with emasculation, the wrong form of masculinity, then with the actual romance between the two protagonists. In *Cum for Bigfoot*, Bigfoot kidnaps, rapes, marries, and procreates with barely legal teenagers. The addition of this story into this study interjects a new way of thinking about masculinity through the eyes of women that sheds light to the negative side of Bigfoot, the promotion of rape culture.

*Cum for Bigfoot* is an erotica fantasy series written by Virginia Wade, the pseudonym for a self-professed stay at home mother. *Cum for Bigfoot* fits within the smaller subgenre of erotica novels, known as monster erotica where everything from zombies to ghosts to, well, Bigfoot, have been sexually reimagined. A more mainstream version of this is Stephanie Meyer's *Twilight Series* or EL James' *50 Shades of Grey* series (where the monster is reimagined as an affluent white male with a kink). Whatever the reason, there is something spooky and fantastic about having passionate, rough sex with "the other" embodied in the monster. The very success of erotica novels, marketed to and purchased by a large group of women, says something about the pleasure of the power inherent in unwelcomed sex. This book starts out with three boys and three girls who have decided to go camping in Mt. Hood National Forest, a known Bigfoot-spotting tourist destination. The group of teenagers are being chaperoned by one of the boys' stepfathers. The stepfather chaperone is important to the story because he and the main character have sex, but this has to remain a secret as it could ruin the man's marriage and her friendship. It starts as a fun filled trip but turns into a nightmare after Bigfoot kidnaps a group of teenaged girls with the full intent of reproducing with them. When the girls wake up, they find themselves locked in a cage and standing outside the cage is an old woman with a collection of lubrication, oil, and sex toys, and her son, Leonard, the Bigfoot. The main character watches from her cage

as Bigfoot rapes her two best friends while the old woman stimulates them with the vibrator. Since the main girl is the prettiest, Bigfoot saves her for last. He attempts to woo her, taking her in front of the fireplace, even doing some foreplay before demanding that she perform oral sex. She enjoys herself immensely, all the thoughts of her time with her friend's stepfather gone from her brain. The two cuddle together, but when she wakes up, she devises a plan to have a foursome with Bigfoot to tire him out so they can run away without worry since Bigfoot will be too tired to move. This begins the erotic adventure that spans two volumes and 15 books. It is about an implausible love story between a young woman and a Sasquatch. Through this examination of a woman writing about a sex-crazed Bigfoot, the story reveals the significance to stay at home mothers about the meaning of manhood and how the fantasies that are none too different from their husbands. If men were creating Bigfoot, then what does it mean for a women to be driving the Bigfoot hunt, so to speak.

In an interview with *Salon Magazine*, the interviewer, Tracy Clark-Flory, asked Virginia Wade about her inspiration in writing an erotica story about Bigfoot. Wade reveals,

I was dabbling in a bunch of short stories around 2011 and all these “daddy stories” were on [the erotica bestseller list]. I never had success with these silly daddy stories, so one day this crazy idea came into my head. I was kind of rebelling; most of my colleagues were writing these pseudo-incest daddy stories — with no real incest at all, I mean, none of the characters were blood related — so I said, “I’m going to write something totally freaky and crazy.” Bigfoot sprang into my mind.<sup>60</sup>

Reading between her words, Wade's goal with this series was to provide a shocking account of erotic romance, to capitalize on women's fantasies of losing control. If Wade is rebelling, then her audience is rebelling too. While the story may have stayed under the radar to mainstream

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<sup>60</sup> Tracy Clark-Florey. "Bigfoot, Sexy? Erotica Author Explains." *Salon*. N.p., 22 Jan. 2014. Web. <<http://www.salon.com/2014/01/23/bigfootSexyeroticaauthorexplains/>>.

audiences, the series sold more than 100,000 copies in 2012, which provided Wade with a paycheck for \$30,000 per month at her peak.<sup>61</sup> Ultimately, this indicates that women long for fantasy too. Wade says later in the interview that the erotica business is lucrative, while providing an outlet to enter a different world, where women “can go somewhere else for a while and experience something that will never happen.”<sup>62</sup> This places women in the same boat as the men, longing for adventure, fantasy, escape, - but with sex and romance. As I have argued through this study, Bigfoot allows men the ability to revive a masculinity that already existed while simultaneously redefining masculinity by questioning it against Bigfoot. Bigfoot’s significance is the double layer of defining and redefining manhood. It provides the potential of reestablishing and acknowledging the continuation of divided gender roles. Therefore, if Bigfoot represents a masculine lifestyle for men, then Virginia Wade’s interpretation of Bigfoot extends the same concept. Here again is a masculine creature with control over women, outside civilization. If Bigfoot represents struggle of claiming manhood that faced the suburban man, then Wade’s Bigfoot is about the women’s interpretation of this struggle. Even more so, it is about adding the romance and the responsibility of family life back into the fantasy.

If men were bored with the sanitized suburban life of the new consumer model, then so to were women. While their husbands were daydreaming about gun slinging and hunting for their masculinities, the women were daydreaming about men who were already masculine. Through Bigfoot, men, and now women, are able to be voyeuristic. As discussed earlier, men turned to adventure magazines as a form of escape. If men had their magazines and their hunts, then women have the erotic novel, both are examples of how desire takes shape. If men wanted to

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<sup>61</sup> Andrew Lipstein, “Cum For Bigfoot!: The Rise, Fall, and Future of Monster Erotica” March 2015.

<sup>62</sup> Clark-Flory. "Bigfoot, Sexy? Erotica Author Explains." *Salon*.

escape the house, then women wanted men to keep them forcibly from the house by a large, strong male.

Linda Williams writes in *Hard Core: Power, Pleasure, and the "Frenzy of the Visible"* that pornography allows viewers the chance to "glimpse the previously hidden and often sexual, "things" of women.<sup>63</sup> The author of *Cum for Bigfoot* is a woman, so there exists in the text a double layer of experience—how women want sex, the hidden thing, to be an escape. The fantasy self of a woman wants to be needed, taken, and kept. The romance is alive when women are at the center. While Williams' study focuses on the power of pleasures, the voyeur in the porn house, she still makes compelling arguments that help frame this story in context of the larger masculine problem. Williams argues that pornography lays bare the truth of patriarchal ideas.<sup>64</sup> Is Wade then playing into the patriarchal ideas or is she reshaping the Bigfoot?

Continued in the same interview, the interview asks Wade why she thinks this has become as big of a success as it has. She answers

The longer I'm in this business and reading other people's work, I'm beginning to realize that it's this capture fantasy, where you kind of have this thrill about being kidnapped and ravished, but of course you would never want that to happen to you in real life. The danger of it, the dark quality to it and the taboo nature of it, I think that all appeals — and actually to mostly female readers. When I started writing erotica I thought I was writing for men.<sup>65</sup>

Therefore, Virginia Wade, according to her own words, understands what she is writing. She isn't mystified at all. She is aware of the power inherent in the story. She even admits that she

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<sup>63</sup> Williams. *Hard Core*, 4.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid*, 266.

<sup>65</sup> Clark-Flory. "Bigfoot, Sexy? Erotica Author Explains." *Salon*.

thought she was writing for men, but her main audience has been female. What is it about this “capture fantasy” that appeals to women?

This goes back to the same reason men wanted to create Bigfoot in the first place. It is about escape. There is a cognitive understanding from the audience that this fiction would not happen in their real life. As long as it stays on the pages, there is no problem. Women, similar to the stories about the men, can escape to a place where they are sexually submissive. This story involves eighteen year olds, at the prime of their beauty. They are just legal, able to freely express their sexualities, and do not have the pressures of motherhood quite yet. Men worship younger women, and women are told to look younger, be younger. This is a rampant issue in women’s lived daily experience. How many products are marketed to women to make them look and feel younger? Therefore, the story involved eighteen year olds as a way of letting women ease back into this earlier time in their life, before husbands, before children, and before household / career / wifely / motherly duties. Virginia Wade even declares it herself, “Why do we read books? So that we can go somewhere else for a while and experience something that will never happen to us.” She understands the spectacle.

Virginia Wade is writing this outlandish story because she understands what it means to be a stay at home mother and wife. She is able to write an escape for herself, while at the same time, creating an escape for other women in her same place. The sex is only part of the story, but the escape is the full picture. But if Bigfoot is representative of a masculinity that men longed for, then can the same be said about the Bigfoot of Wade’s concoction? When asked what kind of lover exactly is Bigfoot, Wade says that he is gentle. She continues, “The women really, really enjoy everything he does to them. It starts out — I can’t call it rape because then I’ll get in

trouble — it's one of those forced seductions. It's not really any worse than a bodice-ripper romance — although my stuff's pretty detailed..."<sup>66</sup> What turns women on about this story is the rape fantasy; it may be gentle but still rape nonetheless. If more women were to say they have these fantasies, there is a real fear that actual rape will occur under the moniker of "see, she did want it". Where do these fantasies come from? It comes from the same place that the creation of Bigfoot came about. If Bigfoot represents how a man should measure up on a masculinity scale, then this rape fantasy is formed from this male dominance model. It is based on the male rape culture. Over time, women have been conditioned to buy into men's domination fantasies. If Bigfoot is considered the most masculine of creatures, if he is who other men should aim towards, then creating a fantasy that sexually involves him, the ultimate male, raping the ultimate female, young and in the prime of her child-bearing years, becomes marketable to women who are already mothers and wives.. On the other hand, the woman with the fantasy is in control as she is the one writing the scenario, so maybe consent is implied. There is a difference in the fantasy self and the real self.<sup>67</sup> In an article published in *Journals of Sex Research*, researchers, Joseph Critella and Jenny Bivona, found that between 31% and 57% of women have fantasies about being forced into sex against their will. Why would a person fantasize about an event that would be traumatic in real life? There is a distinction between the real self and the fantasy self. No one wants to be raped. There may be unpleasant consequences to rape, but more importantly, it is terrifying and abhorrent. However, there are women who have these fantasies, and there really is not any evidence to suggest why it happens. The forced sex fantasy is frequently exciting, pleasurable, and arousing. Critella and Bivona juxtapose female rape fantasy with male

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<sup>66</sup> Clark-Flory."Bigfoot, Sexy? Erotica Author Explains." *Salon*.

<sup>67</sup> Joseph Critella and Jenny Bivona , "Women's Erotic Rape Fantasies: An Evaluation of Theory and Research" *Journal of Sex Research*, (2008) 45: 57-70.

fantasy about conflict and overcoming a villain. Nevertheless, there is no real reason for these fantasy except that it is pleasurable to the fantasy self.

In comparison, there is not a clear reason behind the motivation to write a rape fantasy fueled erotica novel except to appeal to this rape fantasy. It is noteworthy to point out that in the women's fantasy, Bigfoot is not only powerful and dominant, but also, he is a very tentative lover with procreation as his goal. Ultimately, these stories continue in the fifteen books to describe the girls lived experience with Bigfoot and the Bigfoot clan. They ultimately fall in love with Bigfoot and raise Bigfoot hybrids. This is notably absent from the stories men tell of Bigfoot. Bigfoot is an elusive creature that cannot be captured. He hides in the forests away from civilization. Especially in the films we have analyzed, there is an absence of multiple Bigfoots. It is always less about Bigfoot and more about the men in the stories. Bigfoot's gendering as the masculine daddy is finely different from the other Bigfoot's in this study, but it is still an advantage point of defining masculinity, how to act it out and react to it.

### **CONCLUSION: BIGFOOT AND MEANING (or how I Regained my Manhood)**

As stated throughout this study, there is no single vision of masculinity. The attempt to prescribe normative behaviors and characteristics through Bigfoot is futile. Masculinity changes over time and through history and events. There is a constant struggle between the ways to express masculinity. Ultimately, the one way that Bigfoot limits the discussion of masculinity is that his characteristics are always the same. There cannot be a true dialogue of masculinity when the comparison point is the same. How does one grow if the constant variable never changes to fit the time? One thing is clear about masculinity, it attempts to normalize itself by pointing out

what is and is not masculine. It defines itself by defining what other identities are and where they fit into or out of accepted standards. Bigfoot allows for an understanding of how people question their authenticity, place, and identity against and within the boundaries of the larger society. Men will always question if they are man enough, and until Bigfoot is found, he will continue to be the vessel to hold the conversation. To date, people still are hunting for the creature, horror movies are still being made about the creature, advertisements are still shown, and stories are still told about the creature. Every occurrence is about masculinity in some way, but it may not be the most effective way to hold the conversation. The reason is that Bigfoot is not man and cannot define the measure of a man. In our society, we cannot escape it. These escapist dreams no longer work. Technology is far too encompassing to go off the grid in any real way, and we are too reliant on the technology to go fully off the grid. Bigfoot is as antiquated as the masculinity he encodes. Men do not exist like this anymore, but the quest continues regardless. It is important to discuss how men make their masculinity, to remove the power that is inherent in an invisible identity by shining a light on an identity that seeks to make itself invisible.

If Bigfoot is an arena for men to play out anxieties about their masculinity, then we need a concrete way to discuss the issues of masculinity that is more plausible. The problem with Bigfoot as an outlet for this discussion is that it perpetuates a stricter masculine code, one that involves selfish livelihoods and continuance of power over women. Even further, the only need for women in these scenarios is for sexual release. The discussion of Masculinity would lead to its exposure. There have been more moves in recent years to include this discussion in gender courses in college and scholarly works, but the more discussions had about masculinity the less invisible it appears. The reason it is so important to discuss masculinity is to remove the power inherent in invisible identities. Power tends to lead to violence, and we need to talk about

violence and masculinity. This discussion would lead to a deeper analysis of masculinity, but it is a conversation that is not often happening.

As the privileged group, the dominance of masculinity is hardly questioned in mainstream media. Of course, it comes up in conversations about mass shootings, but nothing meaningful develops. As I have stated, men's gender is rendered invisible as members of the dominant group, but men are just as gendered as women. It is made to appear invisible, accepted as the status quo. In the status quo, masculinity and violence are so comfortably interlinked that it is impossible to separate the connections. This has been shown in several of the movies discussed. The only exception is *Harry and the Hendersons*, which is probably the most advanced concept of masculinity in the collection. But we consider this violent masculinity entanglement as natural. The common saying, "boys will be boys" echoes this sentiment.

The social conditioning of boys and men teach them the aggressive behavior. It is the essence of being a man in American culture. In addition to this aggressive behavior, women are supposed to be caring and compassionate, but men are taught not to be like women, "don't be a girl about it." For men, anger and happiness are the only acceptable emotions for them to express, and violence is an appropriate way of expressing that anger. The culture polices their masculinity in a variety of ways on a daily basis from the time they are born, from which colors are appropriate to wear, to which sports they can play, to the vehicles they drive, and the clothes they wear. This is how masculinity appears natural and non-changing because it starts from the reveal of the gender of the fetus. It is as if the rules of masculinity are ordained and not systematically enforced. Because of this assumption that it is natural, the aggression is never truly questioned but praised. Of course, if it goes too far right, it is considered deviant or evil, but we have a hard time seeing that the aggression is not natural but a construct of our society. There

is not nearly enough conversations and discussions being had about masculinity in the way that should be. In addition, talking about masculinity does not mean ignoring the violence inherent in the characteristics as defined by the culture. However, it does need to recognize that there is nothing natural or inevitable about it. Therefore in the meantime, monsters are used as a placeholder to hold these conversations.

Bigfoot embodies these conversations because to have a question about masculinity is in itself un-masculine, therefore effeminate. If it is a carefully coded and hidden question, the arena opens up a discussion. If Bigfoot allows men to revive an antiquated masculinity, then the antiquated masculinity continues the divided gender roles and bounded sexualities, and it makes the Bigfoot men problematic for reasserting that there is a correct masculinity is the one that marginalizes and controls, and functions as the correct masculine form.

Jeffrey Jerome Cohen writes in “Monster Culture (Seven Theses)” that monsters, in this case Bigfoot, refuse to participate in the “order of things” and threatens to demolish distinctions. “By revealing that difference is arbitrary and potentially free-floating, mutable rather than essential, the monster threatens to destroy not just individual members of a society, but the very cultural apparatus through which individuality is constituted and allowed”.<sup>68</sup> Bigfoot then is the “harbinger of crisis” as Cohen notes of monsters. Bigfoot appeared at a time of emergency that problematize the move towards a new masculine form and introduced a crisis. Bigfoot acts as an order to normalize the reassertion of the antiquated masculinity and enforce those needs of the men that long for this savage-type masculinity. Bigfoot becomes the temporary outlet that functions as a projection of the needs and desires these men wish to release. It is an escapist fantasy of anxiety and desire that ensures will always be enticed because built into the masculine

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<sup>68</sup> Cohen, *Monster Theory*, 12.

identity is the need to be recognized as a man.

Monsters are embodiments of lived experiences and are expressions of disparity through its otherness. Group reactions form monsters and serves as the ultimate incorporation of anxieties about history, about identity, and about humanity.<sup>69</sup> Monsters serve as image construction sites of producing and monsterizing the other and by doing so, lead to self-identification where reevaluation of cultural assumptions can occur. Through constructions of identities and anxieties, monsters produce a deeper knowledge of place in history and the history of knowing, as well as, self-knowledge and human knowledge; monsters ask the questions of how people perceive the world and how people have misrepresented what they have attempted to order. Until an open discussion about masculinity, we need monsters. Bigfoot is not the monster to learn from and evolve with in the modern age.

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<sup>69</sup> Cohen, *Monster Theory*, 4.

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