

JUNG, THE SHADOW, AND THE X-FILES

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CAPSTONE ABSTRACT

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This capstone explores Jung's theory of the shadow, personal unconscious, and collective unconscious, using *The X-Files* as its narrative transport. When television show *The X-Files* premiered on September 10, 1993, no one anticipated its impact on a generation of television viewers. *The X-Files* is an American pop cultural mainstay. The paradoxical brilliance of the show is that it both influenced and interpreted popular American culture. Something vital about our time in history speaks through the stories it tells. It is not the only science fiction television show to create legions of fans, spawn movies, books, comics, and general obsession in American geekdom. But it is the only television show which began in 1993, ran for almost a decade, and then returned, fourteen years later with episodes seeking transcendent answers about what it means to be human, and the possibility of knowledge, truth, and power in the era of Trump, fake news and social media.

Jung, the Shadow, and *The X-Files*

Introduction – *The X-Files*

I am interested in exploring Jung's theory of the shadow, personal unconscious, and collective unconscious, using *The X-Files* as its narrative transport.

When television show *The X-Files* premiered on September 10, 1993, it is doubtful anyone anticipated its impact on a generation of television viewers. From advancing the theory of alien intervention in human civilization, to creating “the Scully effect” (Lane), *The X-Files* is an American pop cultural mainstay. The paradoxical brilliance of the show is that it both influenced and interpreted popular American culture. Something vital about our time in history speaks through the stories it tells. It is not the only science fiction television show to create legions of fans, spawn movies, books, comics, and general obsession in American geekdom. But it is the only television show which began in 1993, ran for almost a decade, and then returned, fourteen years later with episodes seeking transcendent answers about what it means to be human, and the possibility of knowledge, truth, and power in the era of Trump, fake news and social media.

The X-Files is a valid source for critical analysis, and the perfect narrative vehicle to explore Jung's shadow. Television is a manifestation and projection of current collective consciousness, evolving with its own time. As Bambi Haggins argues in her own analysis of *The X-Files*, “Given that in their day, Shakespeare's plays were considered to be popular culture entertainment designed for the masses rather than a sort of academic elite, it seems appropriate to consider these complex texts in a similar

manner – in other words, looking at programs as cultural artifact and fan discussion as critical discourse” (14). The series is indeed complex.

During the original series run, Seasons One through Nine, from 1993-2002, *The X-Files* explored government lies, deceptions, cover-ups, alien intervention in human society, shadow governments, and a variety of paranormal events. Special Agent Fox Mulder is an open-minded believer in aliens and the paranormal, and Special Agent Dana Scully is a scientific rationalist. Together, they work together to solve the unsolvable cases the FBI is unable to classify and so labeled with an “X” during the Eisenhower era. While searching for the truth in events which lie outside the normal parameters of accepted knowledge, *The X-Files* directly and openly challenged myths of America’s innocence, and perhaps embodied America’s unconscious fears of emerging technology and increasing globalization. It is also conceivable *The X-Files* grew out of the conservative backlash in the 1980’s against the social progress of the generation before, and was an open, critical voice against dominant American cultural myths.

Even deeper cultural analysis has assigned fears of immigration, nationhood, and the divided government which grew out of the 1980s once the Soviet Union fell and the Cold War dissipated. Without a foreign foe, America turned on itself. “*The X-Files* is unmistakably a product of the Clinton era, in which government was consistently divided in power, practice, and vision. Clinton's troubled relationships with the military and with family values were the focus of repeated attacks directed by conservatives against Clinton personally and against the liberal agenda he claimed to uphold. National and domestic borders were hysterically claimed in danger; endangered, many of the most vocal insist, by the very man charged with defending them. Fox Mulder emerges as a perfect hero in

such a time, endlessly engaged in a struggle to defend home and country from threats that are never quite as alien as they might seem” (Kinney 55).

When the creators announced they were re-launching *The X-Files* in 2016, they conceded that the show’s relevance was based on its capacity to reimagine political and social narratives. “Harris and Carter pinpoint the series’ ability to articulate something urgent about contemporary political realities, and how it did so made for a uniquely postmodern reimagining of both the detective series and TV horror, as the FBI special agents sought to resolve mysteries only to find aliens and paranormal phenomena that often made rational narrative closure impossible” (Gellar 94). Our modern confrontation of global tribes, recent technological expansion, and changing consciousness also often makes “rational narrative closure impossible” (94).

Stories like this allow us to process the confusion, absurdity, and uncertainty about being finite human creatures in an increasingly noisy and conflicted world, poised on the brink of either unfathomable progress or destruction. The show is a study in the absurdity of the dichotomies we inhabit. “The role-reversal of male lead Mulder as believer and female lead Scully as scientific sceptic is well documented, but this delineation is more problematic than it often appears” (Abbott and Brown 4). The very fabric of it is woven from the conflict between Mulder’s sometimes absurd belief in the unexplainable to Scully’s strict scientific rationalism, not unlike our modern conflict between faith and reason. In the ultimate movement of absurdity, Mulder denies the existence of God but believes in aliens, and Scully is a devout Catholic but verifies truth only through the scientific method. Nothing is as it seems.

The stories we tell offer us insights into our subconscious processing of our confusing realities, as individuals and a collective. This paper will focus primarily on the relaunched series, though I will draw from the history of the show as the narrative unfolds.

Season Ten premiered in January 2016 and Season Eleven in January 2018.

Theory – Jung and the Shadow

A brief review of Carl Jung's theory of self, ego, and shadow is necessary before proceeding. Jung's theories focused on the oppositional nature of human identity, where both conscious and unconscious aspects of human personality make up the whole of the individual. An exchange occurs between the different facets of personality, as well as with the collective whole. Jung wrote:

In addition to our immediate consciousness, which is of a thoroughly personal nature and which we believe to be the only empirical psyche (even if we tack on the personal unconsciousness as an appendix), there exists a second psychic system of a collective, universal, and impersonal nature which is identical in all individuals. This collective unconscious does not develop individually but is inherited. It consists of pre-existent forms, the archetypes, which can only become conscious secondarily and which give definite form to certain psychic contents (60).

The psychic content of conscious, personal unconscious, and collective unconsciousness interact with one another continuously, and are projected onto other beings, as well as into myth and stories. Simply, the ego “forms... the centre of the field of consciousness; and in so far as this comprises the empirical personality, the ego is the subject of all personal acts of consciousness” (141). However, the ego's point of reference is both the conscious and unconscious minds, drawing from both sources. The conscious mind is drawn from voluntarily, the unconscious mind is not reproduced voluntarily, but the ego encompasses all of consciousness.

Within the totality of this consciousness, exists darker aspects of our personality, termed the ‘shadow.’ “Closer examination of the dark characteristics – that is, the inferiorities constituting the shadow – reveals that they have an emotional nature, a kind of autonomy, and accordingly an obsessive or, better, possessive quality” (141). We gain access to this shadow by understanding its projection onto the world. It is not the

conscious mind which creates from the shadow, but the unconscious mind, drawing from the personal unconscious and the collective consciousness and its archetypes. “Hence, one meets with projections, one does not make them... Projections change the world into the replica of one’s own unknown face” (146). Possessive and obsessive, when we meet projections of the shadow, we can be consumed. It sounds like the perfect fodder for an episode of *The X-Files*.

“It is the peculiarity of the human psyche that rather than face, accept, and integrate its own defects, brokenness and darkness, and attain some degree of wholeness, these elements are more easily projected onto others” (Woods and Harmon 171). It is easier to see our ‘shadow’ through myth, fiction, and poetry, and to comprehend our darkness when it is removed from us in degree and offered as story. From this Jungian analysis of psychic contents, we can arrive with an understanding that myths and stories are “a dialogue by way of symbolic forms put forth from the unconscious mind and recognized by the conscious in continuous interaction” (Campbell “The Hero” 407). The shadow projects through the unconscious, as it will, and presents itself for encounter.

More poetical and accessible, Robert Bly offered, “The literature of the American nation is only two hundred years old. How much of the darkness from the under the earth has risen into poems and stories in that time? All literature, both of the primitive and the modern peoples, can be thought of as creations by the ‘dark side’ to enable it to rise up from earth and join the sunlit consciousness again” (62).

Joseph Campbell wrote, “Your mythology, your imagery, has to keep up with what you know of the universe, because what is has to do is put you in accord with the universe as known, not as it was known in 2000 B.C. in the Near East”

(“Transformations” 22). Progress depends on the capacity to constantly reevaluate the wisdom in stories and myths, to bring consciousness to the dark projections of our psyche, to ask how the shadow speaks and what it means for us. It’s not meant to be easy, we are continuously warned, for as Jung wrote, “To become conscious of it involves recognizing the dark aspects of the personality as present and real. This act is the essential condition for any kind of self-knowledge, and it therefore, as a rule, meets with considerable resistance” (145).

The Personal Shadow, a Case Study: The X-Files “Plus One”

Season 11 of *The X-Files* offers a deliberate exploration of the manifestation of the hidden, unconscious shadow self, and is perfect to render the theoretical explanation of the shadow to storied form. In the episode “Plus One,” the story begins with a young man, Arkie Seavers, driving drunk. Music blares, he is driving too fast, police sirens arrive behind him, and he believes he is caught. His fear turns to relief as the police car passes him, to be replaced with terror as he turns to see himself sitting in the seat next to him. This other ‘self,’ grabs the wheel of the vehicle, and he screams at him, “What do you want?” The car crashes into a tree. The narrative switches to Mulder and Scully, in their basement office, discussing Arkie’s claim of seeing his double. Mulder tells Scully, as she questions the truth of his claim, that multiple people have made similar claims, in the same town, of seeing their double before apparently dying of their own hand, by suicide. Mulder and Scully travel to Henrico, Virginia to investigate, where they talk with Arkie, and their search leads them to Dr. Russel, the psychiatrist who treated the other people who killed themselves, at an inpatient hospital. In reviewing what happened, the following conversation unfolds.

Scully: “Your diagnosis is of a non-conforming type of schizophrenia.”

Dr. Russell: “That was my clinical opinion.”

Scully: “So, they were clinically ill?”

Dr. Russell: “They *became* mentally ill” (7:32).

Scully, Mulder, and Dr. Russel then stop by the door of a patient. The room’s walls are covered paper drawings, indiscernible from a distance. Mulder asks to look at the drawings and talk with the woman, seemingly out of instinct. Dr. Russel cautions against it, explaining, “She exhibits wild swings in personality, from benign to violent”

(8:15). Here again is a direct confrontation with one person's shadow self, actually manifesting in physical form. Mulder persists and they enter the room. The patient's name is Judy, though she asks to be called, "Little Judy," and we learn she is the benign personality. The art on the walls is actually completed games of hangman, which Judy explains she plays with her brother. As Scully probes how the game unfolds, Judy explains, "We play telepathically" (9:12).

From here, it is understood that the deaths of these people are somehow connected to this game of hangman, between Judy, her benign and violent personality, and her twin brother, Chucky Poundstone, all who are played by the same actor. Later, Scully and Mulder find the names of victims amidst those on the wall, and as the narrative unfolds, a hangman game kills Arkie, and his lawyer, Dean. In each instance, we see a doppelganger, or mirror image of the person killed actually carry out the act of murder. The implication is literally that shadow self is violent, dangerous, and lethal. Judy and Chucky somehow instigate this projection for the target of their hangman game. It isn't until they encounter Mulder and Scully that the game turns on them.

Before that though, Judy seeks to weaken Scully, poking at what is likely her most vulnerable spot – her lack of children. (In previous episodes, William, her son, had to be given up for adoption to protect him.)

Judy: Afraid I'm going to dirty your cheap little ensemble? You're nothing but a hosebag. How old are you? 40's? You're all dried up. Not even half a woman.

Scully: You can't hurt me Judy.

Judy: Nothing hurts like the truth (17:43).

This exchange does bother Scully and weigh down her psychic processes because later she asks Mulder if he thinks she is old. Still rational, despite confrontation with her darker feelings, Scully identifies a Jungian reason for the events as they are unfolding.

Scully: This Judy. She has some malign influence over these victims, and I'm at a loss to figure out what it is.

Mulder: Yeah, I agree. There is some evil in the air, Scully.

Scully: No, it's not evil. It's mental illness. There's some kind of psychic transference (19:07).

Mulder wants the events to have external causation. Scully insists that they are a result of internal psychic content, searching for the rational explanation even as the events themselves truly defy rational explanation.

Mulder: Like I said before, clearly there is a dark influence set loose in this town, Scully.

Scully: Well, by dark influence, again, I presume you mean evil, Mulder. But there is no such thing as evil. Evil is a concept, like the devil (27:01).

Later, when Scully and Mulder become a target of the hangman game, they both encounter their doubles. Chucky chooses Mulder for his hangman answer, and Little Judy chooses Scully. The names, each with six letters, and a U and L create a kind of *syzygy* between Judy and Chucky, and it grows in intensity as the narrative unfolds, both Mulder and Scully racing to confront Judy and Chucky, at the hospital and home. While Mulder panics at seeing his double, and races to Chucky's home, where he engages in physical altercation with his shadow self, Scully remains calm and rational as she reluctantly agrees to join him, heading to the hospital to confront Judy. Upon looking up to see her shadow self in the car's back seat via the rear view window, Scully says, "My rational mind knows that you are only a manifest psychic ideation born of latent hostility. Or maybe Mulder is right. You're evil incarnate, but that's all you are" (39:08). While Mulder wrestles with his shadow, Scully rationalizes it into powerlessness. The hangman game to spell out either Mulder or Scully fails.

We see Mulder struggling to get out from under a bookcase his shadow pushed onto him, now by himself. He runs around the corner to see Chucky dead, his neck broken. At the hospital, Scully avoids any physical altercation with her shadow, who disappeared from the back of her car. Outside Little Judy's room with two nurses, who have warned her repeatedly about the danger in the room, Scully instead wrestles to open the door into the room. It is dark and she turns on a light, also finding Judy dead, her neck broken.

Mulder and Scully's different reactions to the confrontation with their shadow is indicative of the character's basic response to life. Scully demonstrates the sort of moral conviction and rational self-examination necessary for Jung's shadow work. Whereas Mulder's blind pursuit of his projections creates chaos, struggle, and confusion, Scully's capacity to rationalize and detach allow her the strength of will to confront the shadow and recognize it as projection. Jung could have written the following about Mulder:

It is often tragic to see how blatantly a man bungles his own life and the lives of other yet remains totally incapable of seeing how much the whole tragedy originates in himself, and how he continually feeds it and keeps it going. Not consciously, of course – for consciously he is engaged in bewailing and cursing a faithless world that recedes further and further into the distance. Rather, it is an unconscious factor which spins the illusions that veil his world. And what is being spun is a cocoon, which in the end will completely envelop him. (47).

This episode of *The X-Files* explores the manifestation of the personal unconscious, shadow self. While Jung's description above fits Mulder's obsessive pursuit of the paranormal and aliens, it also explains what has become of Judy and Chucky, who are enveloped by their shadow selves and their projections. Unable to pull their rage back from their targets, the victims of their hangman game, they are eventually destroyed by their own unconscious impulses when they engage a victim,

Scully, with the capacity to recognize and disengage from her projections. Unlike other victims, who “became mentally ill” (7:32) and even Mulder, who panicked, Scully retained her objectivity, demonstrating Jung’s ideal psychic state to confront the shadow.

While this episode focuses on the shadow projection from personal unconscious, and offers a case study in Jung’s theory, much deeper insight is available elsewhere. At a pause in the action of the narrative, Scully and Mulder share an intimate conversation about the uncertainty of their path and future.

Scully: Sometimes I believe the world is going to hell and we’re the only two people who can save it.

Mulder: The world is going to hell, Scully, the President working to bring down the FBI with it (35:04).

While Judy and Chucky are stopped, what this tells us is much larger shadow looms on the horizon, defying narrative closure.

The X-Files, Season 10: Episode 1 “My Struggle” – January 2016

The narrative of Judy and Chucky unfolded with ease, but when *The X-Files* returned in January 2016 after fifteen years, the story struggled to find its footing. The show was long leveraged to criticize dominant culture, drawing stories from the public's blind trust in the government, and acceptance of global power structures. In 1993, the world was reeling from the social backlash, blind greed, deregulation, and reassertion of the political Right in the 1980s. The Civil, Student's, Women's, and LGBT rights movements of the 1960s and 1970s moved the world forward in social progress, and then met severe opposition in the 1980s. From AIDs to increasing globalization, emerging new technologies and MTV, the 1980s met change saturated with a greedy fog of trickledown economics and the veiled populism of deregulation and the white, heterosexual backlash of the Moral Majority. With this came a resurgence of traditional values and a wave of American patriotism and the reassertion of American supremacy.

Robert Hughes writes that the United States of America bases its supremacy on a handful of myths, told so well they're accepted as absolute, hidden and invisible, woven into the tapestry of American cultural life. America believes it is Chosen by God and Nature, a Christian Nation, and all of creation led to its emergence as the Millennial Nation (7). America also believes itself innocent in the history of creation, its ideals and values exalted above all other nations and cultures. The genocide of the indigenous people, slavery, classism, sexism, homophobia, xenophobia, and transphobia, all forgotten and relegated to some dusty corner where only liberal academics concern themselves with it.

Only it isn't. This clash between ideals and reality generates a shadow, which is then projected collectively in many different ways. In 1993, this shadow some light in the deep suspicion Mulder had for the United States Government, and the shadow government which really ran the world. America was not innocent, chosen by God and Nature, Christian, or the culmination of all that came before. America was, however, the last stop on the road toward global catastrophe, alien invasion, and germ warfare. The idea of a monotheist, creator God was also suspect to Mulder, and Scully's faith was constantly tested, the show most often erring on the side of the unexplained, paranormal, and Scully's insistence that science would one day explain everything, even God.

The second episode in Season One, "Deep Throat," takes Scully and Mulder to the military, where a pilot disappears after flying an aircraft made of alien technology. His family is left without answers, his comrades damaged and ill. The government is not the champion of its soldiers, but their greatest enemy. This begins a long series of confrontations between Scully, Mulder, and the government, where reality is at odds with the idealized myths Hughes describes.

Beyond the suspicion of American government, *The X-Files* routinely presented an uneasiness about modernity, and captured the terror and absurdity of human life, again and again. Men who dislocate everyone bone in the body and squeeze through air vents, in order to eat the liver of his victims, as in the episode "Squeeze" offered a glimpse into the collective fear that no matter how hard we try, we are never really safe. We may be thousands of years from the savannah and saber tooth tiger, but something might still eat us. "Clyde Bruckman's Final Repose," and "Jose Chung's From Outer Space," held human ridiculousness out for examination in open palms. This sentiment of horror movie

meets procedural investigative drama allowed for the exploration of individual and collective darkness not seen before. It emerged right as America moved into in a new era, charting course with the social and technological change leading into the new millennium. When it returned, it had a lot of ground to make up, a lot of recent history to digest as it began again to narrate America's situation in the world.

Just as the first episodes of the series covered the vast ground between government conspiracies and cannibalism, so did the relaunched series begin with similar sentiment. It needed to try to make sense of the post 9/11 world. "The Post- 9/11 enemy is much less identifiable, often discussed and represented as an abstract presence" (Gomez-Galisteo and Picarelli 77), where danger is hidden but simultaneously disbursed everywhere. "As an effect of this reconceptualization of threat as emerging and volatile, in the last decade fear has been engaged less as an object of knowledge and commentary, than as something that circulates contagiously among hypersensitive collectivities" (77). What is real news or fake news, real threat or just perceived threat, will occupy the relaunched series. This "circulating contagion" permeates the new series.

Season Ten, Episode One, written by series creator Chris Carter, "My Struggle" begins with a historical recap of Mulder's belief in aliens and government cover-ups of UFO sightings. ("My Struggle," initiates a larger story arc of episodes titled, "My Struggle II, III, IV," intended to provide narrative closure to series most important characters and story arcs, which will be reviewed later.) As the story unfolds, a similar review attempts to cover global developments since 2001. A Jimmy Kimmel clip discussing UFOs with President Obama provides an opportunity for Mulder to define the

underlining hesitation and insecurity of the relaunched series. Scully calls him and he answers, “My life has become a punch line” (6:16).

Mulder’s fear is the relaunched show’s fear – that perhaps what it has to communicate is no longer relevant. If myths and stories draw from the collective consciousness, and a well-spring of primordial experience, is there anything new to share in a world over-saturated with information in the technological age? Recall that Jung’s theory of the shadow and consciousness asserts that ego sits on top of a vast collection of knowledge, which is drawn from again and again for creation. There are only so many archetypes to explore.

The archetypes make up the actual content of the collective unconscious; their number is relatively limited, for it corresponds to ‘the number of typical and fundamental experiences’ incurred by man since primordial times. Their meaning for us lies precisely in the ‘primordial experience’ which is based on them and which represent and communicate... What are the myths of the ‘night sea journey’, of the ‘wandering hero’, or of the sea monster, if not the eternal knowledge of the sun’s setting and rebirth, transformed into images? Prometheus the stealer of fire, Heracles the dragon slayer, the countless creation myths, the fall from paradise, the mysteries of creation, the virgin birth, the treacherous betrayal of the hero, the dismembering of Osiris, and many of other myths and fairy tales represent psychic processes in symbolic images” (Jacobi 47).

How many times can Mulder chase after the truth of alien intervention or the paranormal? Is there truth to be chased at all? Is there really a ‘normal’ which can sustain the ‘paranormal’? Or is the world truly adrift in a sea of cosmic relativism, with no external, objective truth to grasp onto? Is Mulder like the hero of ancient myth, struggling with amoral gods, fighting against finitude, or he is the archetypal fool, rushing blindly forward to plummet from the cliff’s edge? Who is Scully? The rational scientist, goddess, or virgin giving birth to a child not conceived naturally?

“My Struggle” poses these questions. Scully has not forgotten about William, the son she gave birth to and was impregnated with by the show’s villain, the Cigarette Smoking man, a modern, amoral God pulling the strings of Earth’s shadow government. Mulder is uncertain his life means anything, as he’s ventured into the desert period of the hero’s journey, where the line between fool, martyr, and hero blur. “My life has become a punchline,” is a theme the relaunched series explores repeatedly. Scully has called him because their former boss, Walter Skinner, cannot reach him. Tad O’Malley, a far right internet sensation, wants to talk with them.

Mulder searches for Tad O’Malley, pulling up a news clip, while insuring the tape over the video camera on his laptop is secure.

Tad O’Malley: It all comes down to this. It’s a mainstream liberal media lying to you about life, liberty, and your God-given right to bear firearms.

Mulder: Why would I watch this jack-ass, Scully?

Tad O’Malley: 9/11 was a false flag operation. It was a warm-up to World War III. Now hear me on this. It’s all part of a conspiracy dating back to the UFO crash at Roswell (6:51).

What unfolds is a story about the government hoax of alien contacts, derived from actual truth, to distract people from a deeper conspiracy – the take over America, and then the world, by a group of multi-national elites. Tad O’Malley takes Scully and Mulder to meet Sveta, a young woman Mulder met years before, who claims to have been repeatedly abducted and experimented upon by the shadow government. Scully sequences her DNA to discover she does have alien DNA, and then, in sequencing her own, discovers she does as well. The narrative unfolds with disturbing revelation:

Mulder: The tentacles reach far back into the last century, but it wasn't until victories in Europe and Japan and the onset of the Cold War that political and economic conditions became perfect for actual execution. A conspiracy bigger and more secret than the Manhattan Project. No sooner had we defeated Germany than a new threat

started appearing in skies over America, drawn to Earth by the latest threat to extinction – the H-bomb. Explosions acting as transducers, drawing alien life forms through wormholes in spaceships using electro-gravitic propulsion. Advanced extraterrestrial species visiting us, concerned for mankind and the threat of our self-destruction, forestalling our annihilation through their own self-sacrifice. The crashes at Roswell. More importantly, places like Aztec. World leaders signed secret memos directing scientific studies of alien technology and biochemistry. Classified studies were done at military installations, S4, Groom Lake, Wright Patterson and Dulce - extracting alien tissue. Tests were done on unsuspecting human subjects in elaborately staged abductions, in craft using alien technology recovered from the downed saucers, including human hybridization through gene editing and forced implantation of alien embryos.

Sveta: Why do such a thing and lie about it? Our own government?

Mulder: Your own government lies as a matter of course, as a matter of policy. The Tuskegee experiments on black men in the '30s, Henrietta Lacks...

Tad O'Malley: But it's not hard to imagine a government hiding, hoarding alien technology for seventy years, at the expense of human life and the future of the planet. Driven not only by corporate greed, but a darker objective.

Mulder: The takeover of America.

Tad O'Malley: And then the world itself, by any means necessary, however violent, or cruel, or efficient. By severe drought brought on by weather wars conducted secretly using aerial contaminants and high-altitude electromagnetic waves. In a state of perpetual war to create problem-reaction-solution scenarios to distract, enrage and enslave American citizens at home with tools like the Patriot Act and the National Defense Authorization Act, which abridged the Constitution in the name of national security. The militarization of police forces in cities across the U.S. The building of prison camps by the Federal Emergency Management Agency with no stated purpose. The corporate takeover of food and agriculture, pharmaceuticals and health care, even the military, in clandestine agendas, to fatten, dull, sicken and control a populace already consumed by consumerism. A government that taps your phone, collects your data and monitors your whereabouts - with impunity. A government preparing to use that data against you when it strikes, and the final takeover begins (35:43).

This is how the series resolves the time between the end of Season Nine, a mediocre movie in 2008, and the beginning of Season Ten. During those years, change accelerated a pace not seen before. Social media connected the world, enabled revolutions, destroyed notions of privacy. Mobile phones shrunk in size but grew in complexity. Information

that filled thousands of volumes of books was compressed into digital files capable of being stored on tiny computers carried in pockets, jackets, and purses. From the turn of the millennium to 2019, at the time of writing this, the capacity of mobile phones surpassed desktop computers available in 2000. A noisy blur of information flooded the planet, from Tweets to Facebook likes, and broadband internet and satellites carried streaming television, news, and social networks to people all over the world. With so much information available, was there even an opportunity for conspiracy? How could anything stay hidden in such a state?

This is Mulder's concern, and the insecurity of the series as it begins. How does a story about the paranormal, hidden truth, conspiracies, and lies tell its story in such a situation? With so much visibility, can anything remain hidden? Neither Mulder nor the series needed to worry, however. Inside the first episode, in the dialogue just shared, the shadow draws from its wellspring of archetypes to produce a story which brings its myths up to date with the present, just as Campbell suggested they must. The government manipulates the weather, as the ancient gods did from Olympus. Aliens descend to Earth to intervene, and clash with the Gods of the shadow government, creating havoc, chaos, and confusion which hurts mere mortals – from Scully to Sveta. “The archetype as the primal source of all human experience lies in the unconscious, whence it reaches into our lives. Thus, it becomes imperative to resolve its projections, to raise its contents to consciousness” (Jacobi 49). The manifestation of the shadow may change from decade to decade, from the micro to the macro, but what it draws from remains the same.

By the end of “My Struggle,” *The X-Files* have been reopened by the FBI, Mulder and Scully are back to work. The world still holds enough mystery to warrant

investigation. Despite all our advancements, the culminating arc of the story defies rational closure, because no matter how far we've come, we're still not certain what our existence truly means, and what power we truly have to shape the course of our lives.

The X-Files, Season 10: Episodes 2-5: January – February 2016

The second episode “Founder’s Mutation,” begins with a computer programmer inserting a letter opener into his ear to stop a noisy stream of information, conveyed via a pulse. As Scully and Mulder investigate his death, they uncover another government conspiracy. The Department of Defense has endorsed experiments on children, which provoke a gene mutation which allows for all kinds of paranormal activity. The person responsible for the experiments, “The Founder,” is once again representative of a distant God, playing with mortals, manipulating their lives with power beyond mortal comprehension. Despite dominant culture ideals of a trustworthy government, once again, evil is dispensed under its direct influence and control.

The third episode, “Mulder & Scully Meet the Were Monster,” brings the narrative back to Mulder’s crushing doubt about his, and the show’s relevance. After the opening sequence, where a couple is sniffing gold spray paint in order to get high, and who then stumble upon a monster, human, and a handful of dead bodies, we find Mulder in his basement office, surrounded by files.

Mulder: Scully, since we've been away, much of the unexplained has been explained. The Death Valley Racetrack? Turns out it was just ice formations, moving the rocks around as it melted. Yeah, ice. Humility prevents me from recounting how I once thought it had something to do with a series of mysterious sightings of a rock-like creature in Colorado, which turned out to just be a publicity stunt by a local landscaping business. It's amazing, going through these archives with fresh, if not wiser, eyes, how many of these cases, whether it's The Amarillo Armadillo Man or The Hairy Whatsit of Walla Walla, can be explained away as fraternity pranks, practical jokes, or people making stuff up simply because they're bored and or crazy. And if that doesn't explain it, well then it was probably just ice (3:36).

Mulder is pulled from the brink of his doubt by Scully’s news that there is a case, with a monster in it. What they discover, however, is that the monster is not to blame for the

attacks and death of humans, but is himself, also a victim. The Were-Monster is an unknown peaceful reptilian species, who hibernates for 10,000 years, and lives on insects. He was lounging in the woods, looking at the moon, when he stumbled upon a human serial killer. The human serial killer attacks him, biting his neck, turning him human during the day.

As this narrative unfolds, the Were-Monster offers glimpses into the absurdity of being human. He explains to Mulder that upon finding himself human he felt a compulsion to put on clothes, and so took them from one of the dead bodies the serial killer left behind. Then, after clothed, he felt a horrible compulsion to “hunt down a job” (27:16), and he finds one, working at a cell phone store. He tells Mulder by the end of the day; he is the manager. Mulder, expecting him to say he wanted to hunt down a human, is disappointed and asks if he’s lying.

Mulder: Putting aside the logistics of no Social Security number, no references.

Were-Monster: I don't need any of that stuff. You see, now I possess the one Darwinian advantage that humans have over other animals – the ability to B.S. my way through anything! I mean, it's better than camouflage!

Mulder: You wouldn't happen to be, uh, BSing me right now about all this, would you?

Were-Monster: I don't know. Maybe? I don't understand half the things I'm telling you.

Mulder: I find that disconcerting.

Were-Monster: What's even more disturbing is what I did after work that first day. I was so exhausted, out of my mind, I committed a murder.

Mulder: Who did you kill?

Were-Monster: A cow (28:53).

The narrative moves to show the Were-Monster, in human form, standing in a drive thru line, ordering a double cheeseburger and fries. As the narrative continues, Scully discovers the true killer, the animal control officer shown at different points in the narrative. The Were-Monster is exonerated, and Mulder chases after him before the full

moon returns, they talk, and watches as he disappears back into the forest to hibernate. Mulder's doubt is assuaged, and his faith in the paranormal is renewed. The interplay of Mulder and the Were-Monster is deeply symbolic of the interplay between the ego and the shadow. "But paradoxical as it may seem at first sight, the shadow as 'alter ego' may also be represented by a positive figure" (Jacobi 112).

The Were-Monster is the symbolic embodiment of both the fear of irrelevance and the deeper fears of human life in the modern era. The job at the cell phone store, where he explains to customers, in non-sensical terms, how the device works, points to the uncertainty we feel about them and what they do to our lives. The murder of a cow speaks to a deeper, darker suspicion we have about factory farming and the animals we exploit. All creation is destruction, and to live, something must often die.

Episode three returns the series to a darker meditation of modern culture. In "Home Again," city officials are killed in their homes, strange evidence is left behind, and Scully's mother dies. These two storylines give the story a heaviness and depth not yet seen in the relaunched series, and as each unfolds, the shadow is felt with more intensity. "The shadow stands, as it were, on the threshold of the realm of the 'Mothers,' the unconscious" (Jacobi 112). In this story, while Scully's mother dies, and an artist called the Trashman creates a being from the fear, resentment, and hatred of the homeless people called the Band-Aid Nose Man. The Band-Aid Nose Man is the avenger of the homeless people who are evicted from their street camps to make way for neighborhood development. This theme of disenfranchisement at the hands of the system – whether it be through abduction or forced relocation of the homeless – is a recurring shadow element in both the classic and new series. From a pile of trash, the Band-Aid Nose Man

emerges from the primordial darkness, given birth to by shadow thought forms. The rising is reminiscent of the dark passage of birth and death.

In *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*, Joseph Campbell calls this movement from destruction to creation emanations and dissolutions. “The cosmogonic cycle pulses forth into manifestation and back into non-manifestation amidst a silence of the unknown” (228). This is the larger cosmogonic cycle of waking and deep sleep. It is the rhythm of the rising and setting of the sun. Primordially, before science explained the cosmos, and electricity gave us power over the rising of the sun, humans revered these cycles, worshiped them, and feared the dark. Predators and danger lurked when the sun disappeared, and when it returned, life returned. Now we know the sun doesn’t disappear, it just rotates from our vision. We know that when we close our eyes to rest, we heal our body. What we still don’t understand is the spark of life when a mother gives birth, or an artist creates. We fear the ultimate creative power of women, even as we still worship it. We still do not understand the journey of consciousness into death. There are still emanations and dissolutions which allude our understanding.

Trashman: I made them. I didn't mean to, but I made 'em. They'll go away, eventually. They're fading. But the Band-Aid Nose Man, he's different. (The camera turns to a sculpture of the Band-Aid Nose Man.) Tibetan Buddhists would call him a Tulpa. A thought form using mind and energy to will a consciousness into existence.

Mulder: Tulpa is a 1929 Theosophist mistranslation of the Tibetan word "tulku," meaning "a manifestation body." There is no idea in Tibetan Buddhism of a thought form or thought as form. And a realized tulku would never harm anyone, let alone kill.

Trashman: Okay. But I'm telling you. I spend a lot of energy in my art. I, uh, meditated on it. I willed it. What I wanted him to look like, what I wanted him to be, and why I wanted him. (Flashback to Scully giving birth.) I didn't bring him here. He came to me. (Flashback. Scully’s child cries.) But in the end, he told me what he wanted to be. All we do is hold the pencil. All we do is hold the clay. I think there must be spirits and souls floating all around us. And if you think real hard, or you want them *so* bad, they come to you. And then they become alive with a life of their own. This is what

came to me in my dreams. From some other place, yeah? But now it's alive and it's out there. Down to the Band-Aid I used to hold the clay in place. Who would copy this? And did you smell it? It smells like nothing on this Earth. It has its own life. Does what it wants. I just wanted to scare 'em, scare anyone that took dignity away from the homeless. That's where the violent idea popped in my head. It was just an emotion that ran through my head. An idea is dangerous, even a small one. But now he uses that violent idea. He thinks that is what he is supposed to do.

Scully: You are responsible. If you made the problem, if it was your idea then you're responsible. You put it out of sight, so that it wouldn't be your problem. But you're just as bad as the people that you hate (35:50).

Once again, even in her grief for her mother's death, Scully retains the capacity to see the shadow for what it is and engage with it rationally. Here, the Sacred Mother reasserts herself, in response to the careless destruction of life by man. She mourns her own mother, the loss of her child, and yet clearly sees that the Trashman has projected his shadow into the world. The story defies rational closure, because so does life and death. Yet, as always, we are propelled closer to resolution through the Divine Feminine presence of Scully.

This consideration for the Divine Feminine archetype transitions into the fifth episode "Babylon." This narrative concern two younger FBI agents Special Agent Miller and Einstein, Scully, Mulder, and a terrorist bomb in Texas. One of the terrorists has survived the suicide bombing, and the Agent Miller believes there is potential paranormal solution to the investigation. The FBI must find the remaining members of the terrorist cell before another bomb goes off. Agent Miller wants to employ some sort of telepathy, channeling, or clairvoyance to communicate the mortally wounded terrorist, who is kept alive by machines. After some back and forth in narration between the agents, both Mulder and Scully travel to Texas with the younger agents.

With Agent Miller, Scully attaches electrodes to the terrorist's head, wondering if they will be able to communicate with him by reading the output. She openly regrets not trying this with her mother. Mulder then arrives with Agent Einstein. His plan is to take mushrooms to induce a higher level of consciousness which allows him to communicate directly with the wounded terrorist. Amidst these attempts to communicate with the young man, his life is repeatedly threatened, by agents from other governmental organizations, and by a nurse, tasked with caring for him. She actually turns off his life support equipment and stands patiently by, waiting for him to die, until she is interrupted. "Instead of looking within ourselves and accepting our own weaknesses or the evil within, we go on projecting the evil onto others" (Rehmann and Khattak 1) is the shadow synopsis of these exchanges. Caught up in the blind hatred of the terrorists, many Americans project that hatred outward, in racism and xenophobia, rather than redirecting the strong emotions to deeper ethical questions which might increase compassion and understanding.

Scully successfully achieves her goal, confirming that the young man's consciousness is still inside his badly damaged body. Mulder, after a very humorous experience with the mushrooms, does indeed have a vision. He sees an older woman holding the young terrorist in her arms, wailing and crying, rocking him back and forth. In Mulder's vision, he is on a boat, propelled forward by singing slaves who are moving the rows in the water. The sky around them is gray and visibility is limited. Mulder walks toward the woman and the young man and he leans down to the young man who whispers in his ear. The imagery is deeply reminiscent of the crossing into the underworld in ancient myth, the waters beneath the boat dark, without visibility.

Later, when Mulder sees the same woman outside the hospital, trying to get in past angry protestors who want the young man dead, he knows she is his mother and brings her inside. Upon seeing her with her son, Mulder recalls his vision in depth and what the young man said to him. Finally, he recalls “Funduq. Babil al Funduq” (35:04) which is translated, “Hotel Babylon.” This is where the terrorist cell is hiding as they plan for another attack. Once again, Mulders belief in the paranormal is validated, and a mother, representative of the Divine Feminine, breaks through to her son, as she mourns him, and saves the day.

Noora (mother): Oh. My beautiful baby boy, Shiraz. You could not ever kill anyone. This is not how I raised you - to worship Allah through death. To be a man by following men. Your heart is too big for them. You see the faces of the innocent, and you lose your nerves. You cannot go through with the bomb.

As the narrative unfolds, the terrorist cell is stopped and Scully, Mulder, Einstein, and Miller leave Texas. Scully visits Mulder at his home where they engage in a philosophical conversation about the zeitgeist of our times.

Mulder: I saw things, though, Scully. Powerful things. I saw deep and unconditional love.

Scully: I saw things too. I witnessed unqualified hate, that appears to have no end.

Mulder: But how to reconcile the two? The extremes of our nature...

Scully: Is this received wisdom from your magical mystery tour?

Mulder: Yes. Courtesy of the shrooms, something else, something to trump all hatred. Mother Love (43:05).

A loud sound interrupts them, and they look up, the camera zooms out from the planet, showing Earth, the first and ultimate mother, from space. “Myth remains, necessarily, with the cycle, but represents this cycle as surrounded and permeated by the silence. Myth is the revelation of a plenum of silence within and around every atom of existence. Myth is a directing of the mind and heart, by means of profoundly informed

figurations, to that ultimate mystery which fills and surrounds all existences. Even in the most comical and apparently frivolous of its moments, mythology is directing the mind to this unmanifest which is just beyond the eye" ("Hero" Campbell 228).

The X-Files, Season 10 & 11: “My Struggle” January 2018-February 2018:

The overarching theme for the “My Struggle” series is to reunite Scully with her son, William, and provide rational closure for the decades long war between the Cigarette Smoking Man, Mulder, and Scully. As Season 10 ended in February 2016, the show left the storyline thoroughly open ended. In “My Struggle II,” an alien contagion has been released to the world. Scully is not susceptible to it and the antibodies in her blood can protect others from it. With Agent Einstein, she is racing to isolate the specific genome needed to save everyone. Tad O’Malley is also back, trying to warn everyone and point the blame at the shadow government. Outside the hospital where Scully and Einstein work to find a cure, the world devolves into chaos and panic as people begin to die.

The episode ends with Scully on a bridge, racing to get to Mulder and administer the cure she holds in an IV bag. She stops outside his car as she is blinded by a descending, bright light. The scene is reminiscent of Scully’s first abduction in the sixth episode “Ascension” from Season Two. Surrounded by many other people, Scully can only look up at the sky, her hand over her eyes as an unknown aircraft descends. The image fades to black and Season Ten ends with uncertainty about whether or not it would return.

When it did return, in January 2018, it returned again to a completely different world. When Scully stood on the bridge, and the scene faded to black, the world had not yet experienced the shock of Brexit or Donald Trump. One wonders whether this plot device was already planned when the show ended, or if it used the horrible contagion in a way that nothing else could. “My Struggle III” shows Scully seizing, having experienced all of the events in “My Struggle II” as a vision of what was possible. She

awakens from the dream, learns it was not real, but carries a message through to Mulder, insisting she listen to him. “My Struggle III” is Scully, pressing against the inevitability of the death of millions, and the takeover of the world by the ‘shadow’ government, led by the cigarette smoking man.

Upon waking, Scully’s nightmare ends but her journey to find William, somehow tied up in her vision of the end of world. As the narrative unfolds, we understand that the ‘shadow’ government is also looking for William. He is the product of genetic mutations, infused with alien DNA, carried to term by Scully, and a profoundly powerful being. His DNA can help stop the alien contagion, and we learn he sent the powerful vision to Scully as warning. Not unlike the mythological stories of ancient past, the son born of woman by unnatural means is the salvation of the world. The series relaunch ends with “My Struggle IV.”

Mulder and Scully, after finally encountering William directly in episode five “Ghouli,” and learning of his capacity to communicate telepathically and manifest form from thoughts, try to track him down. He is on the run from the shadow government, and not wanting to put his mother at risk, he keeps himself hidden from her. In the end, he helps Mulder and Scully finally defeat the Cigarette Smoking Man, and somehow, Scully learns she is pregnant again, this time with Mulder’s child. Birth and death, endings and beginning, emanations and dissolutions, resolved for once with the promise of new life. Scully, the divine feminine redeemed, her mother love rewarded.

The X-Files, Season 11: Monster of the Week

Episode six, “Kitten,” concerns Walter Skinner’s past, as a soldier in Vietnam. Following the same instinct as other stories in *The X-Files* long run, the government, establishment, and state is shown to be an enemy. Flashbacks take the narrative back to Vietnam, where a young Skinner must kill a child who is sent to detonate a bomb in the camp. His friend, once naïve and innocent, collects the ears of those he kills, strung around on a necklace. In the narrative, it is his son now who is killing, in the same way he taught, the cycle of violence continuing.

Episode eight, “Familiar,” Mulder and Scully are called to investigate the death of a child, and stumble upon a cycle of dysfunction and chaos perpetuated by people. The villain is a scorned woman, who upon learning of her husband’s affair, summons a demon. Similarly, in Episode nine, “Nothing Last Forever,” a strange cult follows an actress, well past her prime, who is kept alive through the transfer of life force energy from young victims in a strange surgical procedure.

These three episodes represent stand-alone story lines for the series, what is known in *The X-Files* lore as “monster of the week” episodes. In almost all such episodes, narrative closure is offered which defies rational acceptance. What these episodes offer is insight into the shadow other, who may be a paranormal monster or a stranger, known and unknown both. These stories satiate the shadow’s need to find a projected target, and in “Kitten,” when the Vietnamese and the outsiders are killed, “Familiar” when the perpetrator is an outsider demon, and “Nothing Lasts Forever” when outsiders to the cult are viewed as objects for use, it is manifesting its basic xenophobic drive. This “recurring xenophobic drive to basic unconscious process whereby we

external what is ‘strange’ within us to an external ‘stranger’. The result is a denial that we are strangers to ourselves, a denial which takes the form of negating aliens... We fool ourselves into believing that we have purged that singular sense of anxiety” (Kearney 73).

Powerfully, in “Familiar,” the shadow projection is not controlled or truly realized by the woman who summoned it. Not unlike other horror stories, borne from the same collective consciousness of shared archetypes, myths, and images, the projection is let loose on the world, wreaking unimaginable havoc, completely uncontrollable. Jung wrote, “Let us suppose that a certain individual shows no inclination whatever to recognize his projections. The projection-making factor then has a free hand and can realize its object – if it has one – or bring about some other situation characteristic of its power” (146).

What we can’t say is that what scares us the most is ourselves, so we create monsters, demons, and scary others to do our dirty work for us. “Most strangers, gods, and monsters – along with various ghosts, phantoms and doubles who bear a family resemblance – are, deep down, tokens of fracture with the human psyche. They speak to use of how we are split between conscious and unconscious, familiar and unfamiliar, same and other. And they remind us that we have a choice: (a) to try to understand and accommodate our experience of strangeness, or (b) to repudiate it by projecting it exclusively onto outsiders” (Kearney 4).

The X-Files, Season 11: Artificial Intelligence & Human Evolution

The remaining episodes of Season 11 attempt to make sense of Trump, Brexit, fake news, anti-intellectualism, and new technology. The second episode, titled just, “This” begins with Mulder and Scully sleeping on the couch. Langley, an older friend and computer hacker genius, who died some years before, appears on Mulder’s cell phone. Langley’s consciousness was somehow uploaded into a virtual computer environment, where he is with others like him. The idea was to create eternal life, but instead, purgatory was created, where their minds and consciousness are exploited for nefarious reasons.

Russian operatives chase Mulder and Scully as they endeavor to find the source of Langley’s misery, and turn off the simulation and servers for the virtual paradise Langley and others are trapped in. In this process, Mulder and Scully discover that the Russians have the capacity to copy anyone’s consciousness painlessly when they use a cell phone and upload it to the virtual reality database. In the end, it is once again Scully who completes the mission, turning off the servers, against all odds. As Mulder asks the simulation leader if he and Scully can be uploaded together, she explains the reason for the simulation. “Life on this earth all human life, most animal life is about to be crushed. Burned to the ground. The computer simulator down the hall is necessary for our evolution as a species. When we leave this planet, this life will have evolved into that” (38:21).

The paranoia about technology and how it will influence human evolution is explored again in episode seven “RM92bG93ZXJz.” This is a story about a night out for Scully and Mulder at a sushi bar managed entirely by robots. Neither of them speaks

during the episode with each other or any other humans. Instead, they place their orders on touchscreens, brose their cell phones, attempt to navigate frustrating interactive systems, and eventually, run for their lives. The premise is simple: Their food is not prepared adequately so they leave, and Mulder declines to add a tip to the final bill.

This offends the artificial intelligence running the restaurant, and it then follows them, in the futuristic self-driving car which takes Scully home, her home control system, and even, the automated floor vacuum that chases her through the house. For Mulder, he is unable to access his bank account, internet, and is met outside by a fleet of flying drones. When he and Scully reunite later in the evening, their plight only ends when Mulder responds yes to the notification on his phone, asking him if he wants to leave a tip.

If we are afraid of our own strangeness, as explored in the previous episodes, we're even more afraid of what this new technology we've created will do to us. In *Homo Deus*, Yuval Noah Harari writes, "Now humankind is poised to replace natural selection with intelligent design, and to extend life from the organic realm into the inorganic" (73). Given this current course, the future of humanity feels as though it belongs to computer artificial intelligence, advanced algorithms which can plan the best route to work and rewrite mutating genes to resolve cancer.

The shadow, as we've seen, can manifest from elements of the personal unconscious and the collective unconsciousness. Jung wrote, "The more general and impersonal the condition that releases the unconscious reaction, the more significant, bizarre, and overwhelming will be the compensatory manifestation" (128). In both of these episodes, the premise feels so far-fetched and over exaggerated. Is our future truly

having our consciousness uploaded to computer servers when we answer the cell phone? Will we really become even greater slaves to the digital technology of the 21st Century? Will it eventually invade our bodies, allowing us to accelerate biological, organic evolution with non-organic components? Recall Campbell, “Even in the most comical and apparently frivolous of its moments, mythology is directing the mind to this unmanifest which is just beyond the eye” (Campbell 228). These questions linger in the collective unconsciousness, manifesting in such stories, the shadow projection of our deeper fears, looking for a target.

The X-Files, Season 11: Trump

This truly extraordinary story, episode four, called “The Lost Art of Forehead Sweat,” consists of a broadly comic but blistering satire of xenophobia and obfuscation of truth, complete with a birther conspiracy reference and an alien visitor who promises to build a wall to block humans from outer space, taken word for word from a Trump speech. ““We are building a wall. We can't allow your kind to infiltrate the rest of the cosmos. You're not sending us your best people. You're bringing drugs, you're bringing crime, you're bringing rapists. And some, I assume, are good people. But we have no choice, believe me” (Keveney). The path to “Make America Great Again” is exposed as the path to make America white, heterosexual, male, and Christian again.

The overarching premise is the Mandala Effect, a new term in collective consciousness which asks if a dimensional portal has been slipped based on shared, seemingly false, collective memories. It is also the question many rational human beings have asked since the election of Donald Trump. “Is it possible none of this is really

happening and we have somehow slipped into another dimension?" The episode also openly wonders whether objective truth is possible in an era of disinformation, fake news, and social media. Mulder encounters the real life Dr. They, the villain who is responsible for modifying collective memory and creating the Mandala Effect.

Dr. They: It's my new platform: "phony fake news." It's a presentation of real facts, but in a way that assures no one will believe any of it. Agent Mulder, your time has passed...It's a time when people of power thought that they could keep their secrets secret and were willing to do anything to keep it that way. Those days are passed. Gone. We're now living in a post-cover-up, post-conspiracy age. No doubt, the kids will come up with some catchphrase for it. "Po-co" or something. They'll say, like, "Oh, that's so po-co." It'll make you wish you really were dead...

Mulder: To be honest, I'm not believing any of this.

Dr. They: Well, believe what you want to believe that's what everybody does nowadays anyway. You're only proving my point, you twit. (CHUCKLES) But, full disclosure, you're right. I can't control people's minds. Although it turns out you don't really have to. All you need is some people to think it's possible. And then you've sown the seeds of uncertainty. All you really need is a laptop.

Mulder: So that's what this has all been about? The spread of online disinformation?

Dr. They: Maybe. You know, our current president once said something truly profound.
He said, "Nobody knows for sure."

The story unfolds with comic precision, what is really happening is never disclosed. The encounter with the Donald Trump alien may have happened or not. We learn that humans are barred from leaving the solar system because we lie, and the intergalactic alien nations don't want us to infect the rest of the cosmos. Mulder's opening fear, "My life has become a joke," is brought to closure here, but is not assuaged. The narrative leaves us wondering if Mulder's quest for the truth is the ultimate joke. Scully redeems the case, finding that their informant, a man named Reggie, who claims to have been their partner, their memory of him erased by Dr. They, is actually a mental

patient, escaped from the hospital. In the end of the episode, it is Scully who decides to accept life as it is, once again, the character most willing to confront the shadow projections in the world and incorporate them for self-knowledge and personal evolution. Mulder follows her lead, finally, even if he is still unsure.

The other critical aspect of this episode is this fear of lost memories, modified memories, and erasure, which is a long standing preoccupation of the series, brought into the conscious forefront of this episode. As Christy Burns wrote, “The program’s various narratives eke out an understanding of these resistances to insensitivity and oppression within the contemporary culture of urban alienation, and in that sense, this very postmodern show sympathizes with those marginalized by American normative society and potentially erased in the name of technological advances. These motifs, moreover, allow *The X-Files* to weave portions of counter histories into the broader narrative of Scully’s and Mulder’s resistance to a governmental (and eventually global) conspiracy” (201). As mentioned before, the show is leveraged to create a narrative structure through which the stories of the oppressed, erased, and marginalized are given voice and retribution.

This episode also provides an opportunity for us to confront the manifestation of our collective shadow in Donald Trump, fake news, and the anti-intellectualism rampant in America today. As Jung wrote, “Affects occur usually where adaptation is the weakest, and at the same time they reveal the reason for its weakness, namely a certain degree of inferiority and the existence of a lower level of personality. On this lower level with its uncontrolled or scarcely controlled emotions one behaves more or less like a

primitive, who is not only the passive victim of his affects but also singularly incapable of moral judgement” (146).

If stories and myths provide insight into the personal and collective shadow, an in depth study of Donald Trump and fake news will tell us all we need to know about the contents of our current collective consciousness. The collective fears of modernity, technology, and increasing globalization have found a target in Donald Trump, and all he represents. Paradoxically, as projections from the unconscious tend toward, as the collective projection of these shadow fears, he projects his own, creating a cycle of dysfunction and chaos. Not unlike the demon summoned in “Familiar,” Trump was let loose on the world, as shadow projections are, and the only thing to do now is wait for the energy to dissipate and hope not too much destruction is wrought. As the episode wraps up, Scully says, wistfully, echoing all our hopes, “I want to remember it how it all was” (43:11).

Conclusion

It is true any story could be leveraged to explore the projection of the shadow. Great stories are drawn from the totality of consciousness, when writers filter the unconscious through the conscious ego mind, framing the narrative for exploration. The power of stories is not to be underestimated. “Story, as it turns out, was crucial to our evolution – more so than opposable thumbs. Opposable thumbs let us hang on; story told us what to hang on to” (Cron 102). Stories speak to our ideals, those myths which present what we aspire to be, as surely as they give us the avenue through which to project our darkness.

Leslie Marmon Silko wrote,

They aren't just entertainment.

Don't be fooled.

They are all we have, you see,

all we have to fight off

illness and death.

You don't have anything if you don't have the stories (1).

I suggest the shadow requires projection, and is most healthily projected into stories, like *The X-Files*, for resolution, rather than onto other beings. The psychological compulsion to do speaks to a need in human nature towards increasing resolution, which is likely coupled with the drive towards evolution. The resolution of shadow elements, projected, identified, and incorporated is the path to wholeness, self-knowledge, and

peace. Neurosis is the result of repression, the shadow impulses fighting to find a path out of the unconscious.

As Jung wrote, “The psyche, as a reflection of the world and man, is a thing of such infinite complexity that it can be observed and studied from a great many sides... Everyone makes for himself his own segment of world and constructs his own private system, often with air-tight compartments, so that after a time it seems to him that he has grasped the meaning and structure of the whole” (23). *The X-Files*, Mulder, and Scully is just one lens through which we can explore our darker fears, compulsions, and shadow. Given its blatant acceptance of the darker side, the shadow manifests with particular intensity, and personally, I want to believe.

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