

August 2022

## Rural Masculinities in American Scripted Television Series of the 2010s

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RURAL MASCULINITIES IN AMERICAN SCRIPTED TELEVISION SERIES OF THE 2010s

by

Paul Doro

A Dissertation Submitted in  
Partial Fulfillment of the  
Requirements for the Degree of

Doctor of Philosophy  
in English

at

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee

August 2022

## ABSTRACT

RURAL MASCULINITIES IN AMERICAN SCRIPTED TELEVISION SERIES OF THE 2010s

by

Paul Doro

The University of Wisconsin-Milwaukee, 2022  
Under the Supervision of Professor Elana Levine

The 2010s featured a significant increase in the representation of rural masculinity on television. Much of the increase can be attributed to unscripted programming. Reality series have received considerable attention from scholars, particularly in regard to their representation of stereotypes. This dissertation examines the representation of masculinities in three scripted television series that aired during the 2010s and are set in rural America. The series provide perspectives on rural masculinities that can be placed in conversation with discourses on reality series set in rural environments. *Justified*, *Rectify*, and *Outsiders* depict male characters that veer away from stereotypes and are difficult to pigeonhole. The male characters embody masculinities that both adhere to and reject traditional masculine identity. These include representations of men not frequently portrayed on twenty-first century television: a conservative lawman not afraid to embrace an increasingly diverse world; another lawman, terrified of violence and conflict; a reserved, meditative man trying to figure out who he is; and a man who initially embraces traditional masculinity and demonstrates an ability to change. These series also serve to condemn traditional masculinity and argue that male characters who adopt a more progressive viewpoint are better positioned to find stronger physical and mental health. The three texts aired during a time of consequential social and cultural shifts, allowing this dissertation to enhance existing scholarship of and the discourse surrounding masculinities and twenty-first century television.

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## **Chapter 1: Industrial Branding, Social Context, and Masculinities on Twenty-First Century Television**

### **Introduction**

The 2010s saw an increase in representations of rural masculinities on television. This includes several scripted television series that explore being a man in rural America at a specific point in time. As R.W. Connell explains, masculinities come into existence at particular times and in particular places (*Masculinities* 185). Connell describes this as social constructionism, which is ethnographic and concerned with the ways that masculinities are constructed in a specific setting (*The Men and the Boys* 9). Evaluating media objects centered on rural masculinities has the potential to provide consequential insight into masculinities during a specific time period. John Beynon provides a useful definition of masculinity while also noting that it is now more common to use the term masculinities. He says there is no uniform masculinity and adds that no one is born with masculinity; rather, it is something into which men are acculturated, something composed of social codes of behavior which someone learns to reproduce in culturally appropriate ways (2).

The goal of this dissertation is to examine specific televisual texts that aired between 2010 and 2017, a time of consequential social and cultural shifts, to determine how television constructed versions of rural white masculinities. This time period saw an increase in the representations of rural masculinities on television. The series considered provide perspectives of rural masculinities that can be placed in conversation with discourses on scripted series set in urban locations as well as reality TV series set in rural environments. I demonstrate how masculinities on three scripted television series reveal meaningful cultural insights about their historical and cultural moment. Television is fruitful for a project analyzing rural masculinities because of its long form storytelling capabilities. A television series has ample time to

sufficiently explore representations of men who reside in rural settings. Character development is privileged on television and it provides abundant opportunity to become familiar with people, towns, and landscapes. In addition, even in the age of fragmented audiences, television shows reach a large audience. I examine what these representations of rural white masculinities say about notions of masculinities in twenty-first century culture and place cultural discourse in conversation with three contemporary, scripted series in order to evaluate broader conversations about masculinities that occurred at the time the shows aired. I reveal new ideas and perspectives on the broader field of television studies by investigating the interconnectedness among television and masculinities. Furthermore, analyzing discourses of rural white masculinities that surface on television informs ongoing conversations about the role of television in cultural debates. I demonstrate that the discourse of masculinities in media between 2010 and 2017 produced meaningful insights about our culture and are an aspect of television deserving of further study.

The three scripted series that comprise the focus of this dissertation are *Justified* (which aired six seasons on FX from 2010-2015), *Rectify* (which aired four seasons on the Sundance Channel between 2013-2016), and WGN America's *Outsiders* (which aired two seasons in 2016-2017). *Justified* is about a U.S. Marshal who is reassigned to work near his childhood home in the poor, rural coal mining towns of eastern Kentucky. *Rectify* revolves around a man who faces difficulties upon a return to his small Georgia hometown after 20 years on death row. *Outsiders* focuses on a clan living off the grid and the struggle to keep control of their land in the hills of Appalachia in the face of pressure from a nearby town and a large corporation.

These programs provide a perspective on rural masculinities that can be placed in conversation with media and scholarly discourses on scripted series set in urban locations as well

as reality TV series set in rural environments. Situating these specific texts within a broader cultural context reveals meaningful insights into the cultural environment that articulate versions of masculinities. Consequential social and cultural shifts occurred during the time period in question including automation, globalization, demographic changes, and the continuing struggle for gender parity. In addition to a present-day setting, these shows also have a broad geography in common. I examine how the communities of Harlan, Kentucky (*Justified*), Blackburg, Kentucky (*Outsiders*), and Paulie, Georgia (*Rectify*) are constructed as places experiencing difficulties due to internal and external forces. These forces are acutely felt in the diegetic communities and demonstrate how place informs the construction and articulation of masculinities.

These three scripted series depict male characters that veer away from stereotypes and are difficult to pigeonhole. The men on *Justified*, *Outsiders*, and *Rectify* are complicated and embody masculinities that both adhere to and reject traditional masculine identity. There are noteworthy representations of men not frequently portrayed on twenty-first century television in such series: a conservative lawman who is not afraid to embrace an increasingly diverse world; another lawman, one who is terrified of violence and goes out of his way to avoid conflict of any kind; a reserved, soft-spoken, meditative, and hesitant man trying to figure out who he is; and a man who initially embraces traditional masculinity to an extreme degree and demonstrates an ability to dramatically change his ways and learn from his mistakes. The series also serve to condemn traditional masculinity and argue that male characters who adopt a more progressive, enlightened viewpoint are better positioned to find stronger physical and mental health.

This dissertation's chapters are organized thematically, with each chapter discussing all three series. The current chapter establishes a production context by delving into how the series

were branded, including how channels presented these series to audiences and the ways they were discussed in industry trade journals and popular press. The channels' branding of these series along with the larger industrial discourses surrounding the shows can reveal how the television industry conceives of rural masculinities at a time when the industry's diversity is under scrutiny due to the underrepresentation of women and minorities in front of and behind the camera (Brown). The main concern of the second chapter is geography. The two major components in this chapter are social constructionism and neoliberalism. Concepts of freedom and legality are the central focus of chapter three. It examines questions of who these fictional communities recognize as legitimate authority figures and how freedom is defined in them. The fourth chapter deals with temporal nostalgia and the manner in which the men on the shows yearn for the past. Collectively, *Justified*, *Outsiders*, and *Rectify* and their representations of rural masculinities provide meaningful insights into gender and racial discourses during the 2010s, a time of major social and cultural change in the United States.

Men in America, particularly white men, featured prominently in various media and scholarly discourses in the 2010s. The titles and headlines tell the story. Some, like Amanda Lotz's *Cable Guys: Television and Masculinities in the 21st Century* and Michael Mario Albrecht's *Masculinity in Contemporary Quality Television*, are scholarly texts focusing primarily on scripted series set in urban locations. Television critics complement those works with books like Brett Martin's *Difficult Men* and Alan Sepinwall's *The Revolution Was Televised*. The interest in masculinity during this period extends beyond television. Texts that examine white masculinity in twenty-first century culture in a broader sense include Michael Kimmel's *Angry White Men: American Masculinity at the End of an Era* and Jared Yates Sexton's *The Man They Wanted Me to Be: Toxic Masculinity and a Crisis of Our Own Making*.

Men on reality television series, typically men in non-urban spaces, are also a regular component of the 2010s discourse on twenty-first masculinities. A viewer did not have to look far to find images of rural men in this era. During a ten-year period ending in 2015, more than 125 reality TV series set in rural America aired on television (Jicha 36). The vast majority of these series focus on male characters and many of them, including *Duck Dynasty* (A&E, 2012-17), *Buckwild* (MTV, 2013), and *Moonshiners* (Discovery Channel, 2011-Present), have been written about extensively by scholars and television critics alike. These works have closely scrutinized how white, rural masculinities are depicted in reality television.

This consideration of the cultural landscape and the various media and scholarly discourses surrounding men, particularly white men, in rural America during the 2010s is an integral component of this dissertation. I examine the conversation around white men on reality television and the widespread problematic depictions of rural white masculinities in ways that reinforce stereotypes of these men as trash and hicks. This includes exploring the moniker “hicksploitation” and its prevalence on television.

Zeroing in on the broader cultural landscape in the 2010s and the ways in which rural white masculinities are featured in media and scholarly discourses serves as an entry point to examine relevant industrial factors. This allows me to establish context concerning the television landscape in the 2010s. I examine the industry branding of *Justified*, *Outsiders*, and *Rectify* as well as the industrial discourses surrounding them to see how they were positioned in a competitive television landscape. The 2010s is the era of peak TV and audience fragmentation. With several hundred scripted programs airing annually, no series commands a wide audience, and cable channels target specific audiences. Here I consider the intended audiences and identify who FX (*Justified*), WGN America (*Outsiders*), and Sundance Channel (*Rectify*) were targeting

with their respective series as they tried to distinguish these shows and their intended audiences. By considering the manner in which these series were presented to potential viewers and the industrial discourses surrounding them, I examine how the television industry understood white rural masculinities and audiences in the 2010s.

In addition, I consider the existing scholarship on white masculinities on scripted television. In recent years scholars have afforded considerable attention to white masculinities and complex male characters on scripted television with a specific focus on series set in urban locations like *Mad Men* (AMC, 2007-15), *Breaking Bad* (AMC, 2008-13), *24* (FOX, 2001-10), and *The Shield* (FX, 2002-08). The examination of these reality TV and scripted series will be situated alongside consideration of a social shift taking place. Many American white men did not respond well to the election (and reelection) of the nation's first African American president. I investigate the news media's attempts to explain white men and their struggle with this social shift.

The news media were similarly fixated on white masculinities during this time period. There was much discussion about race in America prior to and following the 2012 presidential election. Much of this discourse was framed around how President Obama struggled with white male voters. Even as the number of white male voters dropped to an all-time low of 34 percent, they were Mitt Romney's most reliable voting bloc and he won them by 25 percent (Negrin). Shortly before the 2012 election Lois Romano argued that white men were receiving more attention than usual after decades of being overlooked in favor of other, more rapidly growing voting demographics. Plenty of attention was given to Obama and racism as it relates to white men and his difficulties winning their support (Romano). This focus on white masculinities during the Obama presidency shifted while he remained in office. In 2015, following an

announcement that he was running for president, the news media became enamored with Donald Trump and his appeal to white men. As early as summer 2015, writers were expounding upon Trump, his rhetoric, and how white men responded to it (Osnos).

### **Ducks, Gators, and Hillbillies: CBS, Reality TV, and Rural Masculinities**

With limited exceptions, the male-centered serials that have received the most attention from scholars and television writers are scripted series centering on white men in urban spaces. In books, academic journals, and other publications, there has been a plethora of scholarship and critical analysis of scripted series with white male protagonists that aired on television during the 2010s. However, you did not have to look far to find men on television in rural settings. Starting in the mid-2000s, the number of reality TV shows featuring white men in rural spaces rose dramatically until they ultimately peaked in the 2010s. Karl A. Jicha identified 127 rural-based reality TV shows that aired between 2005 and 2015 (36). The number of new rural reality series in a single year peaks in 2014, with 35, and the total number of new shows from 2011-2104 is 98 (Jicha 46). The series aired on a wide array of channels including Discovery, A&E, National Geographic, History, and Animal Planet. These series' casts are overwhelmingly male, and the few series that do feature key female cast members are the exception (Jicha 54).

During the 2010s, many of these rural reality series were among the most popular shows on television. By 2013 A&E's *Duck Dynasty* had become one of the biggest cable hits in history. Other ratings standouts include two series on the History Channel, *Swamp People* (2010-Present) and *Mountain Men* (2012-Present). These and several other rural reality series regularly competed for slots in the top 25 (Jicha 40). Von Doviak echoes Jicha and posits that shows that at one time might have been considered niche programming became some of the most popular series on television. He singles out *Duck Dynasty*, *Swamp People*, and Discovery Channel's

*Moonshiners* (2011-Present), noting that there is a clear demand for rural reality TV as these and other series have been drawing large audiences. While not every series was a hit and some were quickly canceled, the sheer ubiquity of rural reality TV series and the large number of channels airing them demonstrates their popularity in the 2010s.

The volume and popularity of rural reality TV series resulted in a substantial amount of media attention and scholarship on such series throughout the 2010s. There are several book chapters in edited volumes about reality television, rural America, and media representation. In addition, there is a wide array of scholarly articles that cover everything from regional identity and masculinities to stereotypes and working-class professions. The news media has also devoted significant coverage to rural reality series, including daily newspapers and digital publications. One news outlet even popularized a term that has come to be used frequently. In a 2013 segment about them NPR referred to these series as “hicksploitation,” reality series that evoke stereotypes and revolve around working-class, white Southern culture (Deggans). The totality of this, the number and popularity of these series combined with recognition from scholars and the news media, demonstrates that rural reality TV series permeated the culture in a meaningful way and provided a considerable amount of examination of rural, white masculinities given that white men comprise the vast majority of cast members on these series.

One of the most glaring, unifying themes that emerges when all of this writing is appraised is a concern that rural reality series traffic in stereotypes and perpetuate negative representations of rural Americans. Scholars and critics deliberating about 21st century rural reality television repeatedly object to how rural men are portrayed. However, it is noteworthy that these concerns are not limited to reality TV series airing in the 2010s. Distress over representations of people living in rural America applies to series airing long before the 2010s

including sitcoms dating back more than 50 years. In *Rube Tube: CBS and Rural Comedy in the Sixties*, Sara Eskridge focuses on a period lasting roughly a decade that featured a large number of rural sitcoms on television, primarily on CBS. From about 1960-1970, some of the most popular series on television were rural comedies, including *The Andy Griffith Show* (CBS, 1960-68), *The Beverly Hillbillies* (CBS, 1962-71), *Green Acres* (CBS, 1965-71), *Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C.* (CBS, 1964-69), and *Petticoat Junction* (CBS, 1963-70). Eskridge details the traits of these rural comedies and says that they have much in common. She finds that while not all of the representations are problematic, there is consistent use of rural stereotypes. They utilize Southern accents and rural otherness to generate laughs, and the characters with the heaviest accents are intended to be the funniest (46-47). In addition to accents, these series also feature characters who lack education, dress shabbily, are confused by modernity, and live in rundown conditions (74). While the content is typically wholesome and the majority of the characters are lovable, fear of outsiders is always justifiable and trouble comes almost exclusively from outside the community. (95). Eskridge acknowledges that not all of the series mock rural residents and some of the characters are sympathetic, but each perpetuates stereotypes to some degree and they all include characters who are meant to be laughed at simply because they are a resident of the rural South and have an accent (77).

What troubles Eskridge at least as much as the negative representations of rural Southerners is the manner in which each rural comedy goes out of its way to completely ignore the outside world as it presents a peaceful, white, and kind world. There are no people of color anywhere to be seen and you would never suspect that racism existed anywhere in that region of the country (94-95). Eskridge argues that these series existed to be escapist entertainment that allowed people to forget about the social, economic, and political concerns that were constantly

in the news. They had a “mudsill” effect and allowed viewers to feel superior to others (10). Rural Southerners were comic relief and these series anesthetized an audience looking to believe, at least for 30 minutes, that the world is a nice, safe, white place (117).

Anthony Harkins covers similar territory in his book *Hillbilly: A Cultural History of an American Icon*. He describes hillbilly as meaning various things depending on who is using it and in what context (6). It is meant to denigrate working-class Southern whites and position them as “other.” It is also similar to “redneck” as is used to insult rural Southern people (4). However, some Southerners have embraced the term and employ it in defense of their value system and cultural heritage (8). Harkins writes about hillbillies on television and covers many of the same series as Eskridge. He describes the characters on CBS’s rural sitcoms as sanitized hillbillies who are innocuous and have broad appeal. He believes that the representation on these series isn’t entirely negative but many of the characters are ignorant, naive, and cartoonish caricatures. Harkin also mentions the “rural purge,” something that comes up frequently in writing about the popularity of rural sitcoms throughout the 1960s. Despite good ratings, CBS canceled all of its rural shows in 1970-71 because their audience consisted of the least desirable demographics to advertisers: children, the elderly, blue-collar workers, and small-town residents (202). Following the purge, rural series did not entirely disappear but they never regained the popularity they experienced in the 1960s.

Long before Eskridge and Harkins chronicled rural stereotypes on television, Horace Newcomb shared his objections to televisual portrayals of rural Americans. In an article entitled “Appalachia on Television: Region as Symbol in American Popular Culture,” Newcomb laments the ways in which rural Americans are depicted on popular television. He contends that Appalachia serves as a stand-in for what is rural in America and that the standard image for these

people has been designed to “elicit laughter and ridicule” (156). He is particularly critical of *The Beverly Hillbillies*, which he chastises for depicting its characters as “shiftless, moonshine swigging, ignorant and culturally isolated” (159). Newcomb, whose critique also mentions *Green Acres*, *Petticoat Junction*, and *Gomer Pyle, U.S.M.C.*, believes that television is othering rural Southerners in harmful ways that position them as objects of derision (156).

Some analyses of rural representation on television take a broad, historical view, such as Gabe Bullard’s “The Weird History of Hillbilly TV.” He distinguishes between the South as it really is and “the South” as it is portrayed on television. Bullard discusses many of the CBS series that Eskridge covers, summarizing them as representing an alternative South defined by simplicity, silliness, and safety. The characters reject outsiders, embrace nostalgia, and embody old stereotypes of the region. He notes the “rural purge” and long disappearance of rural Americans on television that began in the 1970s before a resurgence commenced in the 2000s with rural reality series. Bullard says that the new reality stars held up the same old stereotypes and that, much like the older series, these newer ones rely on laughing at people who are backward in their thoughts or ways of living (Bullard).

In his broad overview of shared themes across rural reality series, Jicha states that not all representation reinforces negative stereotypes. On some series that focus on dangerous jobs and work environments rural people are portrayed as hard-working, purposeful, and brave. Still others depict rural residents as having strong family values and an admirable commitment to working closely with family members. However, Jicha determines that the majority of rural reality series convey overwhelmingly negative stereotypes and, collectively, that reality series that center on rural Americans offer harmful representations (52). They portray rural people as desperate, greedy, dysfunctional, loud, and socially inept, with appearances and behaviors that

are outlandish and atypical. Characters are stuck in the past, uneducated, and gullible. Many series make fun of rural people and use subtitles to help viewers understand them (Jicha 48-50). They are also predominantly male and white (Jicha 54). Jicha's conclusion is that rural reality series "create and reinforce popular misconceptions" of rural residents and fail to capture "the rich diversity of people, places, occupations, and lifestyles" that constitute rural America (52).

In *Reality TV*, June Deery chronicles the recent rise and popularity of reality television. She devotes a section of the book to what she labels "The American Redneck" and contends that many reality series highlight working-class figures and other groups that have not appeared on television much (19). Deery adds that the rural residents on reality TV series are frequently colorful, marginal, eccentric, and meant to be laughed at. The series dwell on obesity, vulgar taste, and excess and the characters are feral and edgy. She argues that series with "rednecks" embody prejudice against the poor as they portray rural people as being backward, ill-informed, and politically conservative (139-141).

Still other analyses take a narrower approach and focus on a limited number of series. Jimmy Dean Smith devotes a chapter in the book *Small-Screen Souths* to Hicksploitation TV. He mentions a handful of series like *Coal* (Spike TV, 2011) and *Moonshiners* but Smith pays particular attention to MTV's rural reality series *Buckwild* (2013). He takes issue with the channel and how it encourages and profits off of the dangerous behavior of its cast while the series also presents negative stereotypes. The characters on the series are depicted as routinely fighting, swearing, womanizing, shooting, and riding ATVs with no regard for safety. Three male cast members are repeatedly shown engaging in dangerous behavior (166). They represent the "hillbilly fool," an archetype that "is usually lazy, or inept, or an outlaw on the fringes of the

economy” (168). Smith chastises MTV for proudly exploiting the infantile cast of the series and essentially championing reckless behavior (173).

While much of the scholarship and critical analyses focus on the stereotypes and predominantly negative representation of rural Americans on reality TV series (and the major characters on these series are almost exclusively white men), other writing examines masculinities on rural reality series. Deery offers an overview of American reality television series that center on working-class jobs and believes that they glamorize and romanticize manual labor and outdoor endeavors. This glamorization and romanticization becomes a celebration of traditional masculinities. The men who participate in manual labor and outdoor adventures are macho, stoic, and brave. They represent a fantasy of rugged independence and their physical prowess is worthy of admiration and emulation (143-144). Essentially these series champion traditional masculinities that subscribe to the notion that ideal manhood is strong, stolid men doing dangerous work with their hands.

Susan M. Alexander and Katie Woods reiterate the notion that many reality television series champion traditional masculinities and state that “reality television today offers men a site to learn about being a man” (150). They add that images men see on reality television including rural reality series like *Deadliest Catch* (Discovery Channel, 2005-Present) and *Swamp Loggers* (Discovery Channel, 2009-12) allow “white male viewers to imagine (re)creating and living in a white male utopia, in which they have economic and cultural dominance because these are believed the rightful privileges due men” (152). In their analysis of reality series with all-male or mostly male casts, they reveal that two of the most popular genres are job-focused and survivalist programs (154). Alexander and Woods write that the jobs tend to portray men in stereotypically masculine activities like fixing up cars, mining, fishing, logging, or driving large trucks (161).

The work they do reinforces stereotypical ideas about what “real men” do: they hunt, make manly things (beer) and collect manly objects (tools or car parts), survive outdoors, and fix up cars (162). The traditional masculine traits that these men embody while confronting the wilderness or renovating a car encourage men to revere traditional masculinities and emulate them in their own lives. They can and should do something to prove their manhood and these series demonstrate many things they can do (164). The male-dominated worlds of these series tell men to take back their power and dominance via manly activities.

Julie Haynes takes a much narrower approach and examines two specific rural reality series in order to analyze white masculinities on reality television: *Swamp People* (History Channel, 2010-Present) and *Billy the Exterminator* (A&E, 2009-17). Haynes touches upon stereotypes and working-class masculinities. She contends that both series categorize the white male characters as “others” while simultaneously framing them as heroic and superior largely due to the adeptness they demonstrate on the job (84). Each series invites the viewer to laugh at the characters. Subtitles are used on *Swamp People* and call attention to the eating habits and clothing of the characters, presenting them as unusual (80). *Billy the Exterminator* features banjo music and swamp imagery as it emphasizes humorous and outlandish aspects of the region (83). It also uses heavy accents for laughs. At the same time, the white male characters are measured against people of color and always positioned as superior. *Swamp People* presents its central characters as authentic swamp people when compared to African American and Native American hunters (82). *Billy the Exterminator* uses music similar to what is heard on *Bonanza* (NBC, 1959-73) and *Rawhide* (CBS, 1959-65) to frame him as a western hero while the program suggests that his African American client is a poor slob entirely responsible for their problems

(84). The hard-working white men on these series are positioned as representing a genuine, first-rate, working-class masculinity worth emulating.

Hamilton Carroll sees white masculinities being advocated for on reality television series, specifically those focused on working-class labor (263). He singles out *American Chopper* (2002-10; 2018-19), a Discovery Channel series about a father and son who run a custom motorcycle shop in upstate Newburgh, New York (not quite rural with about 30,000 residents), but his analysis recalls other examinations of rural reality series that valorize blue collar men and working-class labor. Carroll describes the central figures on *American Chopper* being framed as blue-collar men who achieve the American dream through hard work. He adds that manual labor is celebrated even as it all but disappears in the United States (266). This is because Americans are infatuated by blue collar labor and series that valorize it speak to efforts by white men “to respond to and regroup in the face of particular social and economic challenges” (265). This series and others like it portray men working with their hands in a male-dominated environment as honorable and admirable. They also tap into many people’s nostalgia for a time when that was far more common.

There are two major takeaways when considering scholarship and critical analyses of rural reality series in their totality. The first is the prevalence of negative stereotypes on these series. As Alison Slade and Amber J. Narro make clear, for many decades television programming has portrayed Southerners as slow, dumb, inferior, and prejudiced. Their dialect and living conditions are mocked and intended to be laughed at. They argue that these long-standing stereotypes continue in reality television programming focused on Southerners, understood as rural residents due to the authors defining portrayals of the South as depicting it as a backward region full of poor, white, rural inhabitants. They find harmful images of rural

Americans on television to be little changed over time and contend that they are one of the last remaining acceptable stereotypes in modern mainstream media (9). These negative stereotypes are customary on rural reality television throughout the 2010s, and since the majority of these programs feature all-male or majority-male white characters, the reductive images are frequently channeled through white men. The result is an overall unflattering portrayal of rural, white masculinities, a problem that is compounded when one considers how many of these series there are as well as how popular many of them are.

The other major takeaway is that even when rural reality series manage to limit or avoid long-standing negative stereotypes of rural Americans, the depictions of rural, white masculinities are rooted in traditional masculinities that are aligned with stereotypes of ideal manhood. As Alexander and Woods point out, “in the simulated world of reality television, men embody traditional masculine traits” (162). They perform manual labor and work with their hands. They fish, hunt, and demonstrate mastery of the outdoors. They build or collect things like weapons, tools, or cars. These series tell men that they too can reclaim their masculinity by “restoring a motorcycle, cutting down trees, or prepping for social collapse” (164). The men on these series are encouraging men to take action and prove their manhood which in turn will allow them to imagine a world that is economically and culturally dominated by white men like themselves (152). The ways in which they can prove their manhood are tied to notions of traditional masculinities. The implication is that real men own guns, fix cars, and work outdoors. They are rugged and independent. They are capable of surviving in any environment. It is an old-fashioned masculinity that these series actively celebrate.

The CBS sitcoms and other rural comedies from the 1960s did not fade into obscurity. Those examples of rural media representation are easy to find today. Rural reality series

presenting stereotypes that have existed on television for decades are competing with many of the series that helped introduce those stereotypes to television in the first place. Eskridge writes that many of the rural-themed series from the 1950s, 1960s, and 1970s have never been off the air because of reruns. She identifies channels like TBS, Nick at Nite, and TV Land as devoting large chunks of their programming to series like *The Beverly Hillbillies*. These series maintain a loyal fan base and over the years younger generations have watched them on video, cable, and online (13). With multiple generations of viewers across many decades, the total viewership of these series is large. Eskridge connects rural comedies to rural reality series, saying that rural reality series have much in common with rural sitcoms including Southern caricatures (14). While scholars and critics raise objections to the negative stereotypes so prevalent on rural comedies, their enduring popularity suggests that audiences continue to enjoy them. The same can be said of rural reality series. There is a plethora of criticism of the harmful images on these series but producers persist in making them and audiences continue to watch them.

The popularity of these series over many decades has several explanations. There is the mudsill effect and the idea that segments of the population enjoy entertainment that essentially encourages them to feel superior to others (Eskridge 10). Laughing at others allows people to forget about their own troubles or feel that their own life isn't as unfortunate as others. The nostalgia factor is another significant element of the appeal of these series. They present an ideal rural simplicity free of current events and the outside world's problems (Slade and Narro 14). Viewers associate the simple rural life with an America of the past, a time when people didn't lock their doors and trouble only existed in urban areas. The reality of the America viewers are nostalgic for is immaterial. They believe it existed and long for it, and these series (past and present) depict it. Another reason for the appeal of these series is the portrayal of a world that

endorses white patriarchy. White men are the focal point and the series permit viewers to imagine a world where white men dominate economically and culturally (Alexander and Woods 153). This ties into the nostalgic appeal of these series. The past is a time when a male-dominated culture raised no eyebrows and that world exists on these series. Also, these series appeal to urban viewers (who comprise a majority of the audience) by showing them an America that in many cases they are completely unfamiliar with (Jicha 41). Many people enjoy seeing things on television that are not representative of their own reality.

Some scholars and critics also identify a specific socioeconomic component to the appeal of rural reality series, one that flirts with the notion that part of the appeal of rural series in general lies in the fact that they represent an old-fashioned, male-dominated world. The rise of rural reality television parallels one of the most dire economic periods for the American worker since the Great Depression (Jonsson). White American men in particular experienced a significant deal of anxiety and fear during this time period. The economy got worse, a middle-class lifestyle became more elusive, and white men faced social and cultural changes as women achieved increasing social and economic power while the country grew more racially and ethnically diverse (Alexander and Woods 166). Rural reality television provided some comfort in light of this economic stress and the changing outside world. It is comfort food and a welcome diversion from life's troubles. It also showcases people (men) who make their living by using their hands and the resources around them, which sometimes involves living off the land. Viewers often have a positive response to images of rural Americans crafting a livelihood for themselves and their families far from city centers and without relying on others for employment or material goods. Viewers tend to admire those who achieve success by working with their

hands and imagine doing the same. They may watch these series and either dream of forging a similar path or forget about the outside world for a while.

The desire for a world that never was or a world that could return explains the appeal of rural reality television. Nostalgia and patriarchy reign supreme. Reality has little to do with it. Viewers may want to escape it or they may want to refashion their world so that it looks nothing like the one they are living in. As pervasive and harmful as the negative stereotypes in rural television are, they are not the only dilemma posed by these series. Their endorsement of traditional masculinities and male-dominated spaces potentially positions the series in opposition to an increasingly diverse outside world. Alexander and Woods worry that viewers come away with the idea that traditional masculinities and male-dominated spaces are preferable and worth fighting for (164). As a whole, it is fair to say that scholars and critics have consistently objected to the portrayal of masculinities on rural television, whether it is rural comedies in the 1960s or rural reality series in the 2010s. There are examples of more flattering representations, but they are the exception to the rule. Reinforcing negative stereotypes, championing traditional masculinities, encouraging nostalgia for a world more imaginary than real, and envisioning a white male utopia are more often than not what viewers of rural television can expect to find.

### **Finding an Audience During Peak TV: Cable Channels and Industry Branding**

Alongside the boom in rural reality television, in the 2010s the television industry also included an expansion in scripted programming of all kinds. In August 2015, FX CEO John Landgraf gave a widely discussed speech at the Television Critics Association summer press tour. He outlined the state of television to journalists covering the event, telling them that the industry had reached a point of “peak TV,” which Landgraf described as a period of excessive original programming (Press, “Peak TV”). At that time, when there were more than 400 scripted

series on television, *Justified* and *Rectify* were airing on FX and Sundance Channel, respectively. *Outsiders* was months away from launching on WGN America. All three series were on television at a time when broadcast and cable channels and streaming services were competing for viewers. The volume of series, channels, and streaming services means that no series commands a mass audience. Gone are the days when 50 million people watched an episode of the same series as it aired. Amanda Lotz calls this era of television the post-network era (*The Television Will Be Revolutionized* 7). Technologies (DVR, VOD, digital cable) have drastically changed how we watch television. She identifies the mid-2000s as the starting point for this era and describes it as consisting of a collection of niche audiences. The number of shows means that audiences are fragmented and a given series only reaches a niche audience (*Television Will Be Revolutionized* 4-5).

This time period involved more than just technological changes that influence how viewers consumed and engaged with television. The content was also going through a transition. Some terms frequently used to describe the post-network era of television are complex TV, quality TV, and prestige TV (generally referring to scripted television). This is not to suggest that high-quality television series did not exist before this era. Plenty of exceptional series aired in the preceding decades. What is noteworthy is the number of series aggressively aiming to fall under the complex TV or quality TV umbrella. Jason Mittell says complex TV is a recent development that is now commonplace (11). He defines these television series as featuring highly complex and elaborate forms of serial narrative leading to formal experimentation and risky programming. They have a narrative complexity that includes confounding storytelling and spectacles (43). Many of these series tinker with temporality and aim to disorient viewers (Mittell 26).

Quality TV can be seen as complementary to complex TV. They describe many of the same series. Sarah Cardwell says that quality television consists of strong production values, heavy themes, and considerate characterization and performances. She adds that quality series deploy an author function that signifies prestige and a sense of artistic integrity. These series also anticipate a high level of audience engagement (26-27). Finally, Eric Thurm explains that prestige TV is a label intended to denote quality and is associated with specific channels like HBO, FX, and AMC. He says that ingredients shift (male anti-hero; cinematic aesthetics) but that the one constant is seriousness. The characters are serious people doing serious things (Thurm). These terms are a frequent component of television discourse in the 2010s.

One way to differentiate a series is to sell it as quality or complex, with an emphasis on certain implied attributes. That could mean highlighting the involvement of a well-known author or drawing attention to complicated storytelling like the use of flashbacks. Lotz argues that because of fragmented viewing in the post-network era (and since so many channels and streaming services are pitching complex/quality series) a series needs to distinguish itself in certain ways. One tactic is to position a series as culturally relevant and touching upon timely themes or topics (*The Television Will Be Revolutionized* 37). Michael Newman and Elana Levine state that authorial branding functions as a marker of distinction. Promotional materials for a series treat the TV auteur as a celebrity and present the series as distinct because of a single author (55-57). Chuck Tryon notes that some channels aim to present the channel itself as distinguished and a home to distinct series worth seeking out. He highlights HBO (“It’s Not TV. It’s HBO.”) and Netflix (“TV Got Better”) and their respective campaigns to persuade viewers that they have quality television for those looking for it (108-110). In a competitive television

environment, channels take particular approaches to position and differentiate their series as they seek an audience.

When considering the promotional strategies utilized by FX (*Justified*), Sundance Channel (*Rectify*), and WGN America (*Outsiders*), it is useful to examine each channel and determine their image and standing at the time each series made it to air. *Justified* debuted in March 2010 while *Rectify* first aired in April 2013. *Outsiders* premiered in January 2016. FX circa 2010 was more established as a home for scripted television programming than Sundance Channel in 2013 or WGN America in 2016. While FX first launched in 1994, it was in 2002 that it started to make a name for itself as a place for noteworthy television. That year saw the debut of *The Shield*, a series popular with critics and audiences that helped put the channel on the map. Other notable series soon followed including *Nip/Tuck* (2003-10), *Rescue Me* (2004-11), *Damages* (2007-12), and *Sons of Anarchy* (2008-14). By 2010 FX was one of the highest-rated cable channels on television and the channels ahead of it were known for other programming like sports (ESPN) or unscripted series (History Channel) as opposed to original, scripted television (Andreeva, “Year-End Cable Ratings”). It was a major player competing with channels like AMC and HBO for viewers and recognition from critics.

The same cannot be said of Sundance Channel and WGN America. Though the Sundance Channel also dates back to the 1990s, it was primarily known for showing independent films and its association with Robert Redford and his Sundance Film Festival. It was not known as a place to find original, scripted television. When the channel formally announced *Rectify*, in June 2012, it was owned by AMC Channels. It was Sundance Channel’s first wholly owned scripted series. Similarly, WGN America was not primarily known as a channel airing original, scripted television at the time of *Outsiders*’ premiere, though the series was not its first foray into that

domain (*Manhattan* launched in July 2014 and *Salem* debuted in October 2014). At the time it was more known for being home to Chicago Cubs baseball than anything else. In 2013 and 2016, respectively, Sundance Channel and WGN America are working to establish themselves as channels with original, scripted series, but both are in the early days of that effort. For all three, a big part of what these new series are copying is the focus on white men and other thematic issues, only in a rural setting.

*Justified's* creator and showrunner, Graham Yost, set about distinguishing the series upon FX's July 2009 announcement. At the time the series was called *Lawman*, but the title was changed to *Justified* prior to its March 2010 debut. As Yost explained, the series centered around U.S. Marshal Raylan Givens (Timothy Olyphant), a character who appears in several works by Elmore Leonard. Leonard is a best-selling and prolific writer whose work has been adapted into several movies including *Jackie Brown* (1997), *Get Shorty* (1995), and *Out of Sight* (1998). Yost (and others involved with the series) continually connected the series to Leonard and sang his praises. He said that they are working hard to channel Leonard and that "we're all big fans of his." Yost added that Leonard also writes memorable bad guys and that *Justified* would prominently feature its villains. He notes that he hoped to meet with Leonard in person to discuss the series in the near future (Schneider) Around the time the pilot episode of the series aired in 2010, Yost told reporters that he got everyone on the writing staff a bracelet that says "WWED," meaning what would Elmore do (Pierce, "FX's 'Justified' is What").

Several of the movies based on Leonard's writing were well-received by critics and audiences and his status as a prominent author was long cemented by 2009, so the effort to pitch the series with his name was sensible. Yost was not the only person involved with the series to do so. Landgraf also praised Leonard prior to *Justified's* premiere, labeling him one of the best

crime novelists in the country (Martin). Many of the series stars shared Yost and Landgraf's admiration for Leonard and credited him for their interest in being part of the project. Timothy Olyphant claimed that he routinely received bad scripts and for years hoped to get his hands on something related to Leonard, knowing it would be quality material. Joelle Carter, who stars as the female lead, Ava Crowder, cited Leonard as the main draw (Timberg). The Elmore Leonard adulation from FX, cast, and crew persisted as the series continued. While the final season was airing in 2015, Yost repeated his praise of Leonard, saying that the goal was always to respect the (by then) late writer and that Leonard deserved most of the credit for the much-heralded dialogue (Gross).

While tying *Justified* to Elmore Leonard was the most consistent promotional tactic, marking the series as being akin to a western was also part of the effort to distinguish it (especially by Olyphant, who in 2010 was well-known for starring in the HBO western *Deadwood*). At the time of the premiere a western series on television was exceedingly rare if not nonexistent. It was a way to declare that your series was unlike anything else on television, and despite their rare status at the time, it is a familiar (and once popular) genre. Olyphant described his character as a guy born 100 years too late who “fancies himself a bit of a cowboy” (Bierly). He complemented this point by adding that Raylan is a throwback who is befuddled by paperwork and bureaucracy (Keveney). There were also many references to Raylan's fondness for his Stetson, something he is rarely seen without. Yost added that the character “combines elements of Leonard's western- and crime-writing traditions” (Keveney). The notion that Raylan is a distinct protagonist who calls to mind an old-fashioned hero was significant in pitching the series to potential viewers. The male anti-hero of earlier scripted series with an urban setting became a modern cowboy in rural America.

Similar to the way that the promotion of *Justified* emphasized its pedigree, in announcing *Rectify* in June 2012, Sundance Channel General Manager Sarah Barnett and ITV Studios Managing Director Maria Kyriacou, a producer of the series, spoke about its quality. Barnett raved about the “quality and distinction” of their “outstanding show” and Kyriacou referred to the series as being a first-class drama with wide appeal. Sundance Channel also referred to a popular, critically acclaimed series airing on AMC in an attempt to define *Rectify* as a notable series. The series announcement noted that it was from “the producers of the Emmy Award-winning series *Breaking Bad*” (“AMC Networks Sundance Channel”). Considering the notoriety and reputation of *Breaking Bad* in 2013, which is when the final season aired, Sundance Channel aimed to communicate that viewers can trust in the quality of another series from the same producers.

Quality and references to producers do not tell you much about a specific series, though, and quality is fairly ubiquitous as a descriptor of television programs. Barnett and others involved with *Rectify*, including star Aden Young and creator/writer/showrunner Ray McKinnon, revealed what they believe are distinguishing characteristics of the series. Barnett and McKinnon drew attention to the focus on the immediate aftermath of someone’s release from death row after two decades (in this case that someone is Young’s Daniel Holden). Barnett praised the “textured, emotional, immediate, visceral story” about the first week of Daniel’s release, adding that there’s truthfulness to his adjustment experience (Champagne). McKinnon recalled seeing real-life cases of guys being released after decades of incarceration and pondering what that must have felt like. He became interested in a moment-by-moment exploration of Daniel’s life starting right after he is released (Willmore). For Young, the appeal was authorship. Insinuating that

many media texts are about a guy released from death row, he said that the script he read had a solid anchor, and the “anchor was Ray and his unique take on life” (Moore “Rectify”).

The depth of the storytelling was also remarked upon by Barnett, McKinnon, and Young, and depth brings to mind terms like complex TV and prestige TV. McKinnon likened *Rectify* to a novel, noting that the series lacks a traditional narrative engine and contains chapters that build off one another and intertwine (Willmore). Young stated that the series is not an ordinary procedural crime drama. Rather, it is “a very delicate, in-depth look at the re-connections trying to be forged by this family” after Daniel’s release (Pierce, “New This Year”). Barnett praised the “breathtaking lyricism” and deliberate pace of the storytelling, pointing out that the first season doesn’t definitively answer whether or not Daniel is truly innocent. She added that there’s much to explore when it comes to who Daniel really is and how he reenters the world, claiming that the characters are psychologically believable and layered (Champagne). The language employed by Barnett, Young, and McKinnon to describe *Rectify* suggests a desire to attract viewers open to something intricate and substantive.

Similar to Sundance Channel hoping *Rectify* would be a successful entry into scripted television, WGN America expected *Outsiders* to put them on the map. A familiar focus on fictional white men was shifted to a rural setting. WGN America president Matt Cherniss acknowledged the competitive television landscape and challenge of finding success when his channel is a new player in the well-established world of scripted cable television (Justin). To classify the series as worth seeking out in such a competitive environment, those involved with *Outsiders* commented upon how different it is from everything else on television, its complexity, and its relation to current events. The story of a clan that has lived in seclusion on a mountain for 200 years suddenly faced with forced removal from their home, several cast and crew assert that

the series is unlike anything on television. Rosemary Rodriguez, a director of two episodes, said the series deeply explores “a world that I’ve never seen done this way before.” Actor Billy Hepfinger, who plays a police officer, believed the series will succeed “because there is nothing like it on television” (Rutkoski). Actor David Morse, who stars as family patriarch Foster Farrell and is a veteran of series like *St. Elsewhere* (NBC, 1982-88), *Treme* (HBO, 2010-13), and *True Detective* (HBO, 2014-Present) said he signed on because he liked the world creator Peter Mattei crafted and felt that it was something he had never seen before (Mancuso). The insinuation was that a series centered on people living off the grid without modern technology or any connection to civilization marked *Outsiders* as brand-new television territory and something to make time for given that distinctiveness.

There were also many references to the timeliness of *Outsiders*. Mattei, who was a writer and showrunner in addition to being the creator, was influenced by Occupy Wall Street and the financial crisis. He saw them as a way to explore matters of money and living in contemporary America without technology in addition to depicting a struggle between those with money and power and those who lack financial resources and influence. (Moore “Outsiders”). Mattei also explained that the rural region where the series is set and its current dilemmas is an influence. He cited poverty, drug addiction, paranoia, and coal mining as informing his writing (Lynch). Rodriguez found parallels between the Farrell clan and the men making headlines for occupying a wildlife refuge in Oregon, viewing the clan as living their own way and shunning the ways of the outside world (Rutkoski). These attempts at connecting *Outsiders* to current events and topics that are part of a larger cultural discourse is a way to position it as culturally relevant, different, and deserving of attention.

Another tactic used to distinguish the series were frequent allusions to its alleged complexity, boldness, and quality, terms often applied to earlier scripted series with a focus on white men. Mattei praised WGN America for its risk-taking and desire to make series that are different (Lynch). He also expressed his desire to create an intricate world free from notions of good and bad. Mattei said *Outsiders* contains shades of gray and resists depicting an energy company as clearly in the wrong for wanting the Farrells off the mountain. He highlighted the tension between caring about the environment with enjoying modern conveniences like air conditioning and electricity as a reason to avoid simplistic storytelling (Owen, “Outsiders Finds”). Morse pointed to the writing and three-dimensional characterizations as strengths, specifically mentioning his own character and how he gets to examine who he is and why he is, making him extremely interesting (Eichel). Residing close to complexity, quality also came up in reference to the series. Cherniss noted that while strong ratings were not a sure thing, quality was in the channel’s control and series like *Outsiders* on WGN America are quality programs (Justin). Rodriguez boasted that it will appeal “to urban art-house enthusiasts who love dark, gritty cable shows with great stories and great actors” (Rutkoski). The implication was that WGN America was looking to establish a name for itself in the land of cable separate from being a broadcaster of Chicago Cubs games and it was doing so on the backs of good, scripted television series.

The intended audiences for *Justified*, *Rectify*, and *Outsiders* were, at least in part, viewers who watch popular cable channels like FX, viewers familiar with the scripted series that received much consideration from scholars and critics. *Justified* is looking to build on the success of earlier series that helped establish FX, including *Rescue Me* and *Sons of Anarchy*. Sundance Channel and WGN America were trying to appeal to viewers who helped make FX a successful

cable channel (though FX is not the only applicable channel; there are also AMC, HBO, Showtime, TNT, USA, and others who have series that are part of the discourse regarding highly regarded and/or popular scripted television). FX president John Landgraf viewed the channel as akin to HBO or Showtime. A month before the debut of *Justified*, they announced their largest lineup of new scripted series. FX was ambitiously aiming to expand upon recent gains in total channel viewership. It ended 2009 with double-digit growth in primetime viewers and added more than 100,000 viewers in the advertiser-coveted 18-to-49-year-old demographic since Landgraf took the reins in 2005 (Umstead, "A New Rx for FX"). The first breakout FX scripted series, *The Shield*, ended in 2008 and its final episode drew 1.8 million viewers (Hibberd). The season one finale of *Sons of Anarchy*, which grew into a huge hit for the channel, performed better with 2.4 million viewers (Levin). In early 2009 FX announced a return date for season 5 of *Rescue Me* and also renewed it for a sixth season due to its strong ratings. Season four of the series averaged 2.8 million viewers including 1.9 million in the coveted 18-to-49 demographic (Martin). *Justified* was being released into a cable television landscape where those FX series are considered critical and audience successes.

*The Shield* is about Los Angeles police officers; *Rescue Me* is about New York City firefighters; and *Sons of Anarchy* is about California motorcycle gangs. Each is a male-dominated series with significant amounts of action, violence, and machismo and each performed well for FX. Prior to its 2010 premiere *Justified* was promoted in a way that put it in conversation with these series while also marking it as distinct. Trailers emphasized action, violence, and machismo. There are shootings, shootouts, standoffs, explosions, threats of violence, and mention of crime and lawlessness. Men point guns at one another and promise to resolve conflicts with firearms. It seemed tailored to viewers who like series about conflicts

between law enforcement and criminals along with plenty of men in dangerous situations, all of which can be found in those earlier FX series. The promotional materials also emphasized ways in which *Justified* is different, particularly the setting. They reference Kentucky and make clear that this series locates itself far from urban environments. There are also hints that the series contains western DNA. In addition to shootouts between lawmen and criminals, there are moments of Raylan, a lawman always in a Stetson, being heroic and directly challenging bad guys. It calls to mind the cowboys and bandits of westerns. Women are only briefly glimpsed and don't appear integral to the narrative. While other dramatic, scripted series were airing on FX at the time, the highest-profile series were the aforementioned male-dominated ones and the *Justified* promos suggested the new series would appeal as well to the viewers of those programs.

Sundance Channel did not have internal comparisons for *Rectify* as FX did for *Justified* since it was the channel's first original, scripted television series. It was the channel's attempt to break into scripted drama and expectations are different for a new series on a channel with no track record of original, scripted television. They aimed to appeal to viewers who already watch Sundance Channel for other programming, primarily independent films. *Rectify* held its world premiere in January 2013 at the Sundance Film Festival, the first time the festival screened a television series. One of the stars of the series, Abigail Spencer, stated that *Rectify* shares a similar indie spirit and is a very independent thinking show, suggesting that the storytelling should appeal to those who are fond of the films that screen at Sundance and air on the Sundance Channel (Pierce, "New This Year").

Sundance Channel was also aware of Sunday night's reputation as a night of appointment viewing. At the time series like *The Good Wife* (CBS, 2009-16), *Mad Men* and *The Walking Dead* (AMC, 2010-22), HBO's *Girls* (2012-17) and *Game of Thrones* (2011-19), and *Downton*

*Abbey* (PBS, 2010-15) aired on Sundays. The glut of high-quality series on Sunday nights caused channels to rethink what night to launch their new programs. Sundance Channel decided to air *Rectify* on Mondays in order to give it a better chance of finding an audience. Barnett said that as a small channel just moving into the scripted arena unable to compete with the marketing of a larger channel they believed that Monday provided a stronger opportunity. She added that a Monday airing also allowed them to promote the series on sister channel AMC on Sundays along with paid promotions on other channels (Morabito). The hope was that the same viewers who make Sunday appointment television would have more awareness of and time for a series of similar quality on Monday nights.

The AMC connection represents more than just a marketing opportunity for *Rectify* and Sundance. *Rectify* was pitched to and developed at the channel several years before its premiere. It came very close to being an AMC series and when Sundance Channel decided to move into scripted series, Barnett says *Rectify* was an easy choice (Champagne). It is easy to imagine that the channel believed they could reach the same viewers who became the audience for AMC series like *Mad Men* and *Breaking Bad*.

WGN America recognized some of the same challenges that Sundance Channel faced as it expanded into original, scripted television. Cherniss said it is hard for new cable series to generate awareness and find an audience, especially when a series is on a channel most known for airing baseball games. His approach was to apply what he learned while working under Kevin Reilly at FX when Reilly was that channel's president and hedge his bets by getting behind several series rather than invest in one big series. Cherniss noted that everyone wants the next *The Walking Dead* but it's safer to populate a channel with quality programming (Justin). As he worked to develop a channel with no real brand, Cherniss downplayed the importance of

ratings. He claimed that it was more meaningful to define WGN America as a home for provocative dramas and have people consider them a destination for high-quality content. At the outset he was more concerned with helping to brand the channel as opposed to bringing a mass audience. Specifically referring to *Outsiders*, Cherniss stated that he wants a passionate audience that can be broadened out at a later time (Rose). Cherniss insinuated that a quality audience is more important than a large one, at least initially, and that if the series are good they will find enough viewers.

Believing in your product and the idea that if you make enough good television series the audience will follow is one approach to finding viewers, but it is not the only one WGN America took. They also aired the premiere of *Outsiders* ad-free in an effort to appeal to viewers in an ultra-competitive landscape while also making the first three episodes available to watch online on various platforms (Crackle, Facebook, and the WGN America and Sony YouTube channels). Cherniss said that it gives viewers a pure and uninterrupted introduction to the world of the series (Umstead, “WGN America Sets”). This was a way to try and generate buzz and give people a chance to watch multiple episodes at a time when streaming services were beginning to make entire seasons of a series available at once. Trailers for *Outsiders* highlighted violent conflict between men in an effort to appeal to viewers who gravitate towards series that revolve around men aggressively clashing with one another. There are shots of fighting and other struggles as well as shootings, explosions, and threats to kill. Voiceovers and snippets of dialogue promise confrontation and bloodshed. The setting is unique but in other ways it appeared similar to cable series that are action-heavy and male-dominated, and WGN America was chasing viewers who watch those series.

The period from 2010-2017 was a time when cable series about complicated men were some of the most talked about and visible programs on television, as in the difficult men and anti-heroes mentioned in books like *Cable Guys* and *The Revolution Was Televised*. Series like *Breaking Bad*, *Mad Men*, *Rescue Me*, *Dexter* (Showtime, 2006-13), *The Walking Dead*, and *True Detective* were all on the air during this time period and drove much of the discourse about twenty-first century television. Ratings for these series varied but they were a major part of the industrial discourse. They received significant attention from awards groups, critics, and others who write about television. People went online to read recaps and discuss episodes. Channels like FX, Sundance Channel, and WGN America wanted their new series to be part of the same conversation. This is why cable channels were after prestige programs. They wanted viewers of those series and fans of those channels to find *Justified*, *Rectify*, and *Outsiders*. FX was looking to build on their successes and continue being mentioned alongside AMC, HBO, and Showtime while crafting their own identity. Sundance Channel and WGN America hoped to someday be where FX was in 2010.

Airing series that were part of the cultural discourse and received significant attention from entertainment media also had financial ramifications, specifically in terms of cable system and advertising fees. As Lotz explains in *We Now Disrupt This Broadcast*, cable channels also gambled on scripted series in a competitive environment because of subscriber fees, the fee cable service providers pay to cable channels. A series like *Mad Men* allowed AMC to increase the fees cable providers paid the channel by two cents per subscriber from 2007 (when it debuted) to 2010, which added up to nearly \$23 million a year. As production costs exceeded advertising revenue, contributing to a rise in subscriber fees gave the series more value. That is what cable channels are after when they develop scripted series (*We Now Disrupt This Broadcast* 85).

The viewers that these channels craved are in the 18-to-49 demographic. TV has long sought that demographic. Bauder writes that advertisers prefer them because they believe that their consumer preferences are still forming. He adds, several years before *Justified* had debuted, that all the channels seek to conduct their business with advertisers in the 18-to-49 demo. This continued to be the case in the 2010s, especially the first half of the decade, which was known as “the Golden Age of Cable.” In 2012 the number of scripted shows on cable surpassed broadcast TV and in 2013 cable TV generated more than \$10 billion in ad commitments, surpassing broadcast for the first time (Adgate). All these series led to a lot of people watching television. According to Nielsen, in 2010 Americans watched more TV than ever before (Stelter). The 18-to-49 demo remained desirable during this era. Pallotta uses *Mad Men* as an example to explain why a small audience is permissible if they are the right audience. He writes that the ratings for that series weren’t that great. When the first half of its final season aired in 2014, it ranked #21 among all the dramas on cable. The amount of media attention and recognition it received seems disproportionate to its ranking. However, Pallotta argues that it makes up for the ratings with “influence and affluence,” something all advertisers desire. More than half of viewers are between 23 and 54 and live in households with incomes of more than \$100,000. That allows AMC to charge more for ads and means they can overlook the ranking. AMC’s president credits the series with putting them on the map and setting a standard for its ability to reach a selective, influential audience of tastemakers. This is what AMC, FX, Sundance Channel, WGN America, and other channels desired in the 2010s: a younger audience with disposable income and discernible taste that allowed them to charge more for ads and higher per subscriber fees from cable systems while also enhancing or establishing the channel as a place for quality TV. This

would be somewhat short-lived given how quickly streaming supplanted cable by the early 2020s.

Industry discourse helped position these series and carve out a potential audience for them, discourse that extends beyond how the cast, crew, and channel executives positioned them. Critics and television writers played a role in determining how *Justified*, *Rectify*, and *Outsiders* were understood and received upon their arrivals. While Yost and cast members regularly sang his praises, critics and television writers also spotlighted Elmore Leonard when talking *Justified*. In a series preview two months before its premiere, *The Los Angeles Times* published “Hollywood taps Elmore Leonard again.” The story is as much about Leonard and his writing career as it is about *Justified* and it credits the author with giving the series a promising pedigree (Timberg). Reviews of the first season also drew attention to Leonard. The subheading of *Slate* writer Troy Patterson’s review is “Elmore Leonard’s *Justified*” and Leonard is mentioned again in the first sentence. The association between the series and its originator permeated the discourse around *Justified* (this despite Leonard having no real involvement with creative decisions prior to his death in 2013, though he received an honorary executive producer credit).

Industry discourse also positioned *Justified* as being right at home on FX. *Variety* stated that the testosterone-fueled drama is right in the channel’s wheelhouse (Levine). A review in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* described it as another quality series on FX and mentioned it alongside *The Shield* and *Sons of Anarchy* (Owen, “‘Justified’ Another”). Though the series was often placed in conversation with other FX programs and viewed as a logical fit for the channel, it was also marked as being at least somewhat unique and different from other FX series. Timberg noted the “unusual setting.” *Miami Herald* TV critic Glenn Garvin wrote that the series is difficult to categorize due to a blend of “post-modernist cop cynicism and redneck chic.”

Another writer pointed out the novelty of setting a western in the back hollows of Kentucky (Storm). The summation was that *Justified* shares similarities with other FX series while simultaneously containing distinguishing characteristics, positioning it as familiar but not overly so.

*Rectify* was characterized as being atypical in large part due to it being particularly contemplative and deliberately paced. *IndieWire* called it “meditative” and labeled Daniel as being unlike any other character on TV due to his stillness (Willmore). Champagne echoed Willmore and wrote that Daniel is notably quiet and unique especially as a lead character. Similar language is found in critical assessments of the series. *NPR* said that it is an unusual show that moves at its own pace and features a distinctive premise and approach (Bianculli). Owen found that *Rectify* is sober-minded, challenging, and slow-paced but rewarding for viewers who prepare themselves for something serious and offbeat, adding that Daniel is fascinating but equal parts enigmatic and exasperating (Owen, “‘Rectify’ a Moody”). Hinckley said that it moves at a measured pace and offers its own rewards for those willing to be patient as they wait for something to happen. There was no discussing this series without highlighting its reflective, strange, and demanding nature. A main takeaway is that it was something of a singular text in television.

The most commonly referenced features of *Outsiders* were the setting and its similarities to FX. Justin noted that it takes place “in the recesses of the Appalachians.” Villarreal described the series as centering on “a family of outsiders living in a mountaintop abode” in the hills of Appalachia. Rutkoski wrote that it is “set in the rugged hills of Appalachia.” While where it takes place is a distinguishing characteristic of *Outsiders*, there was frequent mention of FX and its similarity to one of that channel’s most popular series. *Variety* said that *Outsiders* brings an

FX vibe to WGN America as the channel aims for “FX lite territory,” adding that the series contains a hint of *Sons of Anarchy* (Lowry). Owen believed that comparisons to *Sons of Anarchy* were inevitable since the series also focuses on characters who reside outside of the mainstream (Owen, “Current Events Boost”). Justin said the series is like *Sons of Anarchy* in a different location. Gray threw in another FX series and described *Outsiders* as a “*Sons of Anarchy*-meets-*Justified* drama.” The clear insinuation in the industry discourse was that WGN America wanted to be like FX and *Outsiders* is similar in setting and story to well-known FX series. It was consciously aiming to follow a template set by another cable channel that had, by 2016, fully established itself.

### **Masculinities in the Media: Writing About White Men in the 2010s**

At the time, 2015 was a record year for new scripted television production, the year when FX CEO Landgraf defined “peak TV.” According to FX, a total of 409 scripted series aired “in primetime on broadcast channels, basic cable, pay cable, and streaming services” that year (St. James). That figure represented nearly double the number of scripted series that aired in 2010 (Andreeva, “Number of Scripted”). During this time period a substantial amount of scholarship and popular criticism are devoted to masculinities on television, with particular focus on white men on series set in urban locations. With more and more channels and a smaller overall audience for individual series, there was an increase in the number of shows being made in an effort to reach a fragmented audience.

Series on cable and premium television like *Breaking Bad*, *Mad Men*, *Hung* (HBO, 2009-11), and *Dexter* have received significant attention from scholars and television critics. Lotz’s *Cable Guys* examines each of these series, designating them as a “male-centered serials” that blend established narrative strategies and uncommon characterization (*Cable Guys* 55). She

notes that in 2010 representations of masculinities are ubiquitous on television and these series interrogate the challenges of being a man in the 21st century (*Cable Guys* 1). Lotz identifies characteristics these series share including white male protagonists and urban settings. These and other shows she writes about depict men in metropolitan environments like New York City, Detroit, Miami, and Los Angeles (*Cable Guys* 76-78).

In addition to featuring a white male protagonist in urban locations, the majority of the shows under discussion in *Cable Guys* were airing in the 2010s: *Breaking Bad*, *Mad Men*, *Hung*, and *Dexter*. Lotz describes these series as focusing on white men experiencing an identity crisis (*Cable Guys* 84). The protagonists are outlaws who challenge simple notions of good or bad and frequently resort to crime but mainly for economic reasons. The series encourage viewers to have complicated reactions about these men and suggest broader cultural anxieties surrounding masculinities. They portray multifaceted men showcasing a variety of masculinities. Despite complexities and nuance, Lotz contends that these men are mainly interested in restoring their fading patriarchal power (*Cable Guys* 83).

Albrecht's book is complementary to Lotz's and examines many of the same series. He writes that this period of time features myriad versions of masculinity on television and adds that series like *Breaking Bad*, *Hung*, and *Mad Men* emerge during a specific historical and cultural moment. This moment consists of anxieties about masculinity and efforts by men to preserve their power and privilege. Albrecht argues that these scripted series depict masculinity as multifaceted, contradictory, and complex (5). Echoing Lotz's contention that the protagonists of these series seek to reclaim patriarchal power, Albrecht says that these men are engaged in remasculinization projects (67).

The scripted series that scholars like Lotz and Albrecht turn their attention to were also examined by writers and television critics such as Brett Martin and Alan Sepinwall. Martin, a correspondent for *GQ*, is the author of *Difficult Men: Behind the Scenes of a Creative Revolution*. His book argued that the late 1990s and early 2000s was a revolutionary time for television. Martin examined series like *Breaking Bad*, *Mad Men*, and *The Wire* (HBO, 2002-2008) and claimed that they represent a new golden age for TV while contributing significantly to our culture. Sepinwall, a television critic for *Rolling Stone*, wrote *The Revolution Was Televised: How The Sopranos, Mad Men, Breaking Bad, Lost, and Other Groundbreaking Dramas Changed TV Forever*. His book took a more expansive look at the television landscape but a majority of the text was devoted to male-centered serials including *Breaking Bad* and *Mad Men*. Sepinwall contended that they are among a dozen innovative series “that changed the medium and the culture at large forever.”

Interest in white masculinities during the 2010s wasn't limited to fictional creations on television series. Scholar Michael Kimmel, who has written extensively on men and masculinities for decades, writes about white male identity in this time period in *Angry White Men: American Masculinity and at the End of an Era*. He concludes that American white men are full of anxieties, fears, and rage due to tremendous economic, social, and political shifts (6-7). Kimmel finds that white men have “aggrieved entitlement” and see the world as increasingly taking from them what has always been and is rightfully theirs (93). Kimmel's examination of white masculinities encompasses a broad swath of the nation and isn't limited to a specific geographical position.

*The Man They Wanted Me to Be: Toxic Masculinity and a Crisis of Our Own Making* takes a more personal approach as it scrutinizes white masculinities in twenty-first century

culture. Scholar Jared Yates Sexton incorporates anecdotes from his childhood and applies them to a broader analysis of white male identity in the 2010s. He takes up some of the arguments Kimmel makes and posits that the social, economic, and political shifts taking place in America are causing men to double down on toxic masculinity (191). Sexton says that men are responding badly to the patriarchal order being challenged and are only doing damage to themselves by resisting change and fighting against the world as it progresses and shifts all around them (28). Also, like Kimmel, he argues that white men see themselves as victims in a changing world (Sexton 216).

In addition to scrutiny from scholars and critics, the news media gave considerable attention to men in rural America (white men in particular) throughout the 2010s. Two major political occasions were part of the catalyst for this news media recognition: the election of Barack Obama in 2008 and the ascendancy of Donald Trump prior to and after his election in 2016. White male antipathy to the nation's first African American president generated news media coverage during Obama's two terms as did Trump's outreach to the same group starting around the time he announced his candidacy in June 2015. *Reuters* wrote about Obama struggling to win over white rural voters in April 2008 (Hurdle) and *The Christian Science Monitor* wrote about white backlash to him two weeks after the 2008 election (Jonsson). In 2012 *CBS News* published "Will White Men Sink Obama?" It discussed his obstacles with white men in general and zeroes in on working class white men in the South, noting that Romney led him by 40 points with that voting bloc (Montopoli). After the 2012 election many stories mentioned how poorly Obama did with white male voters, particularly working-class white men and men in the South. In 2014 *Newsweek* reported that Obama performed poorly with working-class white men, especially in the rural South (Cooper). Several post-mortems that examined Obama's two

terms in office discussed the overall loss of support among white and white male voters that occurred between 2008 and 2016 (Malone; Jaffe and Eilperin). Many noted that Trump's win in 2016 was partly due to his strong numbers with white voters, and a lot of those people voted for Obama in 2008 and 2012 (Beauchamp).

The news media started taking notice of Trump's popularity with white men, including rural, working-class white men, in 2015. In August of 2015 *Reuters* noticed that a key Trump constituency was beginning to emerge: white working-class voters without a college degree. They added that he was performing particularly well with the male members of that group (Gest). A month later *The Atlantic* echoed that story and said that Trump was polling extremely well with white men without a college degree (Brownstein). These stories continued through 2016 (and beyond). An *Associated Press* piece published less than a month before the 2016 election recounted Trump's appeal to white men, especially working-class white men without a college degree (Sedensky). Many stories examining how Trump won were published post-election, including one in *NPR* that discussed his strong performance with rural Americans, who were far more likely to be white and have more residents without a college degree (Kurtzleben).

News media coverage of white men isn't always explicitly connected to Obama or Trump. Or those men were footnotes rather than focal points of the stories. A drop in income among working class white men was written about extensively. In October of 2016 *CNN* published a story stating that those men made less in 2016 than they did in 1996 (Luhby). Concerns about the overall health of working-class white men were on the news media's radar in the 2010s. In late 2015 *The Washington Post* noted that the mortality rate for white men without a college degree dramatically increased between 1999 and 2013 (Bernstein and Achenbach). There were also stories about working class white men without college degrees feeling alienated

and left behind. *CNN* published one in May 2016, noting that blue collar white men are out of work and angry (Luhby). Similarly, Kimmel's 2013 book *Angry White Men* received significant news media coverage. Throughout the 2010s the news media wrote stories about angry white men and whether or not society was experiencing a masculinity crisis. Simply put, during the 2010s there was a plethora of news media coverage of working class, blue collar, rural white men. Generally speaking, the subjects of these stories were portrayed sympathetically. They felt angry, lost, nostalgic, and ignored as the world around them changed and employment opportunities dissipated. They felt that life was increasingly difficult and solutions were not forthcoming, and what they wanted was for people to pay some attention to them and their plight.

## **Conclusion**

The cultural landscape was saturated with media representations of white men in the 2010s. The news media were writing about the status of white men during the Obama presidency and the early days of Trump (the 2015 announcement of his candidacy). On television, white men were at the forefront of scripted series that capture the attention of the industry as well as academics, series like *Mad Men* and *Breaking Bad*. They are even more prominently featured on reality TV series, and the volume and popularity of these series leads to widespread examination of them by scholars, critics, and others who write about the industry. In many cases the men on reality TV series reside in rural parts of the country. The sum total is a hefty amount of writing about white men and masculinities, with rural, white masculinities getting their fair share of the coverage. Generally speaking, white men have a starring role in television and cultural discourses throughout the 2010s.

However, that does not apply to rural, white men on scripted television. The 2010s did not feature many scripted television series about rural, white men and there hasn't been as much scholarship about *Justified*, *Rectify*, and *Outsiders*. These three series offer an outlook on rural masculinities that can be placed in conversation with media and scholarly discourses on scripted series set in urban locations as well as reality TV series set in rural environments. Situating these specific texts within a broader cultural context can reveal meaningful insights into the cultural environment that articulates versions of masculinities. This dissertation adds to existing scholarship of and the discourse surrounding masculinities and twenty-first century television.

The second chapter examines the ways in which the influence of a rural setting informs and shapes television masculinities. Understanding masculinities means factoring in time and place and identifying the types of masculinities that are considered hegemonic. I draw upon Connell and Messerschmidt to inform an understanding of hegemonic masculinities. Connell defines them as forms of masculinity that are culturally exalted over others (*Masculinities* 76). Messerschmidt notes the significance of location in hegemonic masculinities, stating that they are constructed locally and regionally (75). There is a sense of urgency regarding the communities in these shows, and a precariousness that is the direct result of the effects of neoliberalism. I examine how the instability and hardship in these fictional towns are connected to neoliberalism and how neoliberalism influences masculinities. The importance of setting and how it shapes masculinities involve more than just neoliberalism's impact on the towns. Other forces influence these fictional rural communities. There are issues of devotion to land, rightful ownership of land, and fear of outsiders on these series. I consider questions of who is best suited to help a community and how masculinities on the series are informed by male characters and the men around them.

Law enforcement officers and criminals figure prominently in all three shows. In chapter 3, I examine questions of authority, legality, and freedom. This includes analyzing male characters on both sides of the law as well as one who was recently set free after lengthy incarceration. I examine *Justified* in relation to classic westerns as well as twenty-first century scripted series. In addition, I explore the issues and quandaries McDonald highlights and use them to showcase the different types of masculinities Raylan and Boyd embody. I also analyze how their masculinities embody more progressive positions. Legality and authority are tied closely together on *Outsiders* as the town and the clan battle one another in legal and extralegal ways. The depiction of their confrontation allows the show to delve into matters of rightful land ownership. On *Rectify*, legality and authority are tied to different concerns. Legal issues persist for Daniel after his release from death row after two decades of incarceration. The adjustment to freedom directly informs Daniel's search for an identity which includes the matter of what type of man he wants to be.

In the fourth chapter, I examine the influence of nostalgia on the formation of masculinities. For many rural, white men the past was a time when economic stability existed because they could provide for their family. Nostalgia here is about an emotional yearning for times and places that cannot be attained (Hogan and Pursell 69). Those who long for the past in these series call to mind Linda Hutcheon's characterization of nostalgia as "something imagined and romanticized through memory and desire due to dissatisfaction with the present" (193). Those memories, not always imagined, represent a "reflective nostalgia" that fixates on historical points in time and is more about individual memory (Hogan and Pursell 70). The past and old forms of masculinities have different meanings for the male characters on these shows. I also explore the complexities of generational masculinities and the ways in which the masculinities of

the father shape the masculinities of the son. For the male characters on these series, old ways of life and the construction of masculinities are connected to father and son relationships. Fathers and paternal figures (or their lack thereof) are key to exploring masculinities on these shows.

The conclusion summarizes the main arguments of the dissertation while also covering some of the limitations of the project. It also references directions for future research and mentions other scripted twenty-first century series that share similarities to the three series examined in the dissertation. There are also larger questions posed about the representations discussed that leave the reader with thoughts about TV and broader society.

## Chapter 2: Rural Settings and the Social Construction of Masculinities

### Introduction

*Justified*, *Rectify*, and *Outsiders* all represent masculinity as an identity that is pointedly affected by economics, land, and outsider status, meaning whether or not characters on the series fail to be accepted by a community or actively reject others perceived as not belonging in a community. In particular, these series foreground the ways that the economic context of neoliberalism, the geography of their rural, Southern settings, and their characters' membership (or lack thereof) in a particular group inform and shape the kinds of masculinities their characters embody. The social and economic health of the fictional communities help explain the cultural conditions in these rural Southern towns and position the male characters who live in them. Daily life is bleak and there is not much optimism to be found. The scripted creations face uncertain futures rife with a lack of opportunity and little reason to be hopeful. These male characters frequently resort to extreme measures in an effort to forge a path that offers a little light at the end of the tunnel, and their desperation under challenging circumstances mirrors the real-world insecurity many rural men experience. In this chapter, I focus on these rural environments and argue that the series' settings are ones of urgency and anxiety. This allows the programs to comment on the neoliberal shifts that result in economic instability for many of the male characters residing in Harlan, Blackburg, and Paulie.

The experiences of these characters are connected to broader social, economic, and cultural shifts in the United States in the later 2000s and early 2010s. As many scholars have examined, there has been a distinct absence of wealth and opportunity for many Americans in this period. These economic conditions in turn influence the social construction of identity categories such as masculinity. Michael Kimmel and Abby L. Ferber declare that the 21<sup>st</sup> century

iteration of rural economic insecurity has left many rural men feeling abandoned and vulnerable (124). The weight of that precariousness is represented in the male characters of *Justified*, *Outsiders*, and *Rectify*, fictional representation of the real-world effects of neoliberalism. Marian Meyers defines neoliberalism as “a rise in income inequality and a decrease in social mobility” that results from reducing social welfare and privileging the market and private companies (3). She adds that neoliberalism is the belief that economic prosperity is only possible if society is free from market regulation and public services (6). If the market is unfettered by regulations and other government interference, individuals are free to succeed on their own merits and everyone should have equal opportunity to achieve economic stability. In this framework, an individual’s failure to succeed is entirely their fault and society has no obligation to support them. Meyers argues that neoliberalism increases economic inequality by slowing or reducing wages and lowering the standard of living (11). I propose that these series represent communities facing economic instability and hardship, and in doing so the programs point a finger at neoliberalism and its influence on masculinities. Connell argues that constructions of gender are linked to place, and these series are set in places permanently marked by neoliberal economic policies (*The Men and the Boys* 9). As a result, the male characters in these series have limited opportunities to provide for themselves and their families. I argue that these representations suggest that the emphasis on traditional masculinities in such contexts are harmful to the male characters and their fictional communities.

The impact of neoliberalism on these rural, Southern communities is not the only environmental factor informing the way that these series speak to and about masculinity. Another major force influencing these communities is land: both devotion to it and rightful ownership of it. The men of Harlan, Blackburg, and Paulie are impacted by their interactions with external

agents including wealthy corporations and individuals with no ties to the local community. This is especially relevant in *Justified* and *Outsiders* as on each series an energy conglomerate seeks to begin mining operations near Harlan and Blackburg. The status and authority of the male characters on these series is challenged by those external agents as they attempt to purchase land and exert influence over the communities. In these aspects of their narratives, the series speak to the relationship between hegemonic masculinity, land, and power over the environment for rural identities in early 21<sup>st</sup> century American society (Hogan and Pursell 73). The fictional narratives often center significant conflict between the external agents and the rural communities over questions of rightful ownership and stewardship of the land. In this chapter, I explore the ways that these series connect land to masculine identity and the question of who is best suited to help a community. Male characters on these series exhibit behavior that is detrimental to those around them as they seek to exert control over the land in their towns while believing they are doing what is best for their fictional communities.

The towns themselves factor into the behavior of the fictional male characters, reflecting what scholars have said about the significance of location for real-world men and how they form their masculine identities. The social aspect deserves considerable attention when considering the development of masculinities. The rural, Southern locations on these series play an integral role in shaping masculinities. To understand what types of masculinities emerge during specific moments it is necessary to recognize time and place. This more ethnographic focus to interpreting masculinities, called social constructionism, is defined by R.W. Connell as centering on the specific and local (*The Men and the Boys* 9). Campbell, Bell, and Finney add that masculinity is socially constructed in different social and historical places and argue that social constructionism is connected to hegemonic masculinities (9-10). Examining hegemonic

masculinities in a particular place can provide insights into their social construction. I will address social constructionism and how the masculinities of the men on *Justified*, *Outsiders*, and *Rectify* are shaped by the people and places around them during a specific period of time.

Many rural residents in the real world are skeptical of people who are not from the area, rendering a small town an unfriendly place for a newcomer. That dynamic is at play in the fictional world of these series. The hostility from the men and rural communities on these series towards the external agents not only stems from fears over who controls land and has authority in the towns. There are questions of who the outsider is to a particular community, and outsiders come in different forms. In this aspect of the series, these programs engage with another aspect of twenty-first century life in rural America. Robert Wuthnow argues that real-world rural places are not fond of outsiders, thus it matters to rural dwellers that residents have roots in the local community (16). Sharon Bird adds that in rural America big business is often seen as the enemy and struggles to build a connection with locals (78). Distrust of individuals and organizations from outside the community raises the issue of who the outsiders are actually trying to help and who will benefit from the actions they are proposing. Neoliberalism plays a role here as often it means more privatization and less concern for the health of the community and those who live there.

Still, on these series, what is being represented and commented upon is not as simple as unanimous dislike of and resentment toward outsiders. There is too much at stake for residents of these fictional towns. Despite significant skepticism from the rural communities, not all characters are opposed to the presence of outsiders due to economic reasons. For the right opportunity, outsider status can be overlooked. Loyalties and principles often run up against self-interest, and male characters are prone to shift allegiances if they believe it will give them

quicker access to power, influence, or financial security. There are also varying perceptions of who the true outsider is, who deserves access to land, and who is entitled to the benefits the land provides. I will discuss how these series define outsiders and how discourse surrounding outsiders plays a role in constructions of masculinities.

“Outsider” has many different meanings in these series. It is not limited to corporations looking to embed themselves in Harlan and Blackburg in order to profit off of the land. On *Outsiders*, an entire community living on a mountain on the outskirts of Blackburg is treated as a band of outsiders by those in the town and the energy company looking to mine in the area. Having lived on the same mountain for two hundred years, the residents of that community view those in Blackburg *and* the corporation as the outsiders. On *Justified* and *Rectify*, the protagonist is the outsider. On the former, U.S. Marshal Raylan Givens returns to his hometown of Harlan after many years away. On the latter, Daniel Holden returns home to Paulie after spending two decades on death row. Neither man feels welcome or comfortable upon returning home. These men’s stature in these communities is partially determined by whether or not they are identified as outsiders. In this chapter, I explore how outsider status informs masculinities in these fictional towns in terms of how being an outsider factors into social interactions between male characters while also showing how outsiders work to make sense of the ways in which their community impacts how they view themselves as a man.

### **Money, Place, and Status: Real-World Concerns Regarding Rural, White Masculinity**

The masculinities of the characters on these series are informed by their ability to make money, who has control of physical spaces, and how they are treated by others in the fictional towns or how they perceive those who are not from there. Their representations correspond with that fact that financial position, land stewardship, and an understanding of where they fit in their

community are factors guiding how men in rural America constructed masculinity during the 2010s. According to the census bureau, rural is defined as an area with a population density of less than 500 people per square mile and a place with fewer than 2,500 people (Ratcliffe et al. 3). At the outset of the 21<sup>st</sup> century, economic conditions in small towns were unstable, and many were in decline. Urban centers were not easily accessible to their residents. Job opportunities were few and far between and the towns had fallen on hard times. Industries that once provided family-supporting jobs had packed up and left. Many men were out of work and even those who were gainfully employed struggle to attain or maintain financial security. There was a general sense of discomfort and unease in many rural communities. Wuthnow documents this as he explains the fragile state of small towns in this era and the ways in which they feel left behind. The precariousness rural communities feel stems from a belief that they are either misunderstood or ignored (9). Wuthnow adds that good jobs have been scarce, if they exist at all, and that it is exceedingly difficult to attract business (70). Compounding the problem is the notion that the government isn't aware of or doesn't care about their needs (Wuthnow 97). Men maintain pride in their communities but there is a deep sense of urgency about the future and little hope things will get better.

Scholars have noted that neoliberalism is responsible for leaving rural communities behind and creating significant social and economic turmoil in small towns across the country. Meyers presents an overview of neoliberalism and notes that its rise has caused seismic shifts in the economic, political, and cultural landscape in the U.S. and worldwide (3). She defines it as the state creating and preserving strong private property rights, free markets, and free trade. Those advocating for neoliberal policies contend that in order to liberate individual entrepreneurial freedoms, the state should reduce or eliminate market regulations (5). Meyers

adds that neoliberalism advocates for reliance on private companies, private individuals, and free markets to generate economic growth and promote social welfare. Therefore, there is no need for the government to involve itself with public services. Instead, the government should enact policies and laws that advance the free market (6). Neoliberalism's emphasis on individualism, deregulation, and slashing the state's involvement in social welfare holds wide appeal in rural communities that already distrust the government and exhort personal responsibility and local solutions to community problems.

However, these beliefs do not inoculate residents of rural communities from the effects of neoliberalism. The negative consequences of neoliberal policies have permeated real-world rural communities and continue to mold them. Wuthnow argues that rural communities are part of middle-class culture threatened by policies that favor the affluent (43). The beneficiaries of policies that favor corporations and private enterprise are wealthy individuals who promote neoliberalism precisely because it preserves and expands their wealth. This favoring of the well-to-do greatly exacerbates economic inequality. Meyers writes that neoliberal policies result in stagnant or declining wages and a corresponding standard of living (11). Resources are distributed based upon merit and those who do not rise up and achieve upward mobility are solely responsible for their shortcomings and undeserving of a safety net to protect them (Meyers 194). Rural areas find it challenging to compete in a global economy privileging unfettered capitalism, corporations, and privatization. They face hardened obstacles including the lack of an educated workforce and existing infrastructure.

The lack of employment opportunities and the inability of men in rural America to find jobs that support a family result in threats to their identity. If men are unable to function as providers, if they fail to attain financial independence, they are likely to feel unstable, insecure,

and like less of a man. Kimmel and Ferber stress that rural economic insecurity has led to white, rural men feeling vulnerable and under siege. Those men see the American dream as a relic of the past and unattainable in modern society (123-24). Kimmel explores this trend in his book *Angry White Men*, detailing the downward mobility white men have experienced due to seismic economic shifts, which has caused feelings of severe economic anxiety (219). The financial precariousness and belief that they are losing economic privileges that once were once something they could count on leads to men feeling emasculated (Kimmel 255). Rural men are frightened of economic instability because it directly threatens their identity. Being a man means being a provider. To be a provider, a man needs gainful employment with a family-supporting wage. The increasing difficulty of securing financial stability in rural America leaves men in those communities insecure about their manhood and place in the world.

Neoliberalism's real-world effects extend to the construction of masculinities. Levi Gahman sees neoliberalism as directly influencing rural masculinities. He contends that rural men have embraced neoliberalism's emphasis on competition, independence, and entrepreneurialism. They see themselves as a commodity and the world as a marketplace (252). Ideal manhood is defined by individualism, skills, work ethic, and self-reliance. Men's worth is determined by how well they succeed in the marketplace and any hardships they endure are seen as the result of not working hard enough. This means that regardless of the workplace environment rural men focus only on themselves and are not inclined to support co-workers or worry about anyone else (Gahman 258). For rural men, accepting and practicing neoliberal ideals is the best way to achieve success and exhibit exemplary masculinity. This form of hegemonic masculinity remains rooted in traditional notions of men being providers and solely responsible for the financial well-being of their family.

In rural communities, notions of manhood are influenced by more than neoliberalism. Land, including who owns it and who should be responsible for stewardship of its resources, also informs the construction of masculinities. That fidelity to land is not entirely removed from neoliberalism. Rural communities feel a close kinship with their natural environment but temper that with pocketbook concerns. Hochschild contends that rural Americans worry about the health of the environment but balance it with allegiance to the importance of job growth and economic development (50). They also do not trust the government to properly protect the environment in their communities and believe federal agencies are prone to overregulation that does more harm than good (Hochschild 52). In other words, they believe that those living in rural communities are in the best position to responsibly manage the land and accompanying resources. It should be left to them to decide how best to protect the natural environment and generate economic opportunities. Government can help by reducing regulations and getting out of the way. An affinity for land and being responsible for it factors into the shaping of masculinities in rural communities.

The desire to have power over the natural environment is tied to hegemonic masculinities and rural masculine identity. That identity is constructed by a relationship with nature and oversight of its resources (Barlett 63). Or, as Hogan and Pursell put it in their examination of real-world rural masculinities, rural hegemonic masculinity requires dominance over nature (73). It is important for rural men to believe that they have control and influence over their natural environment, and they do not want those from outside the community to have that power. Their identity is destabilized if they lack control over their surroundings, be it outright ownership or having a say in what happens to the land in their community.

A third factor that threatens rural, white masculinity has to do with who is perceived as belonging in a community. Outsiders play a critical role in the development of masculinities. The anxiety rural white men feel about their economic standing and prospects for a stable future providing for their family is partially informed by rural men's attitude towards those they perceive as outsiders. In addition to economic instability and demographic decline, Hochschild identifies cultural marginalization as one of the three biggest fears of rural white people (221). The demographic and cultural changes they fear stem from a belief that others are taking what is rightfully theirs and diminishing their cultural capital. This is especially acute in rural white men nationwide. Metzler notes that in twenty-first century America rural white men have more competition and less prestige (52). This causes them to resent anyone else regarded as securing benefits or privileges that in the past were exclusively allocated to them.

Kimmel directly addresses this in *Angry White Men*. He argues that white men see themselves as victims who believe their loss of power and influence is due to immigrants, women, the government, and people of color (16-17). As rural communities tend to be white and insular, it is important that residents have roots in the community and there is a general fear of diversity. Racial others and newcomers tend to be excluded and there is concern about outsiders changing the fabric of the community (Kimmel 146). For rural white men, the term "outsider" is applied liberally. An outsider can be the government, an individual or organization new to the community with no local connections, a woman, a person of color, or even someone with ties to the community who is deemed insufficient. There can be an arbitrary nature to who is categorized as an outsider and why. Neoliberalism only intensifies hostility towards outsiders as it causes people to feel like they are constantly in fierce competition with one another. This makes it easier to label someone an outsider regardless of how fitting the designation is.

## **Constructions of Rural, White Masculinity on *Justified*, *Outsiders*, and *Rectify***

Neoliberalism and its effects, as chronicled by scholars, play an important role in these scripted series. The fictional towns of Harlan, Blackburg, and Paulie are portrayed as feeling the economic effects of neoliberalism and the series depict neoliberalism as doing great harm to them. They are rural communities experiencing social and economic turmoil, and that factors into the construction of masculinities and the perspectives these series offer on rural, white masculine identity. Harlan and Blackburg are represented as being in Kentucky coal country. Mining operations are a central component of the narrative in each series. On *Justified*, a long-operating mine has ceased being the job provider it once was and by the end of the series will be closed altogether. A company called Black Pike is set on starting a large-scale operation and filling the void left by the other mine. Despite frequent mention of economic hardship in Harlan on the series, the organization receives a relatively cold welcome from the community. This is somewhat uncharacteristic of what one might expect considering the lack of good-paying jobs in the region. In the season two episode “The Life Inside,” the series’ main antagonist Boyd Crowder (Walton Goggins) laments local economic conditions and notes that outside of the mine there are not many legal employment options around town. In another season two episode, “The Spoil,” an executive sent to convince local residents of the mine’s potential assures them that people will be well-paid and taken care of. However, the promise of good jobs and a stimulated local economy is met with significant resistance. The reluctance to embrace Black Pike aligns with what Hochschild says about rural America and their feelings about big business. They view corporations as greedy and uninterested in helping the little guy (47). Harlan’s residents are weighing their need for jobs against their distrust of a large company with no local ties.

One resident who figures prominently in *Justified's* second season, Mags Bennett (Margo Martindale), is aware of the neoliberal tendency to put profits above all else. Mags runs a vast criminal enterprise and in the season's first episode, "The Moonshine War," kills a man for encroaching on her territory. She also operates a small general store and is generous with her earnings, making her something of a beloved figure in Harlan. Mags is immediately in conflict with Black Pike and its local representative, Carol (Rebecca Creskoff). Mags disputes the notion that the company is interested in helping Harlan and providing local residents with good-paying jobs. She alleges that Black Pike has a history of plundering and polluting and doesn't understand Harlan or its people. Publicly, she opposes the company and their efforts to ramp up mining operations and implores the town to side with her.

Notwithstanding her belief that the corporation is selfish and only interested in lining its pockets, ultimately, she is looking out for her own best interests, not the community's. Mags wants to be in a position to enrich herself. Later, in the season two episode "Brother's Keeper," when she attempts to broker a deal with the company in exchange for her support, Mags insists the money is for the community's future. She responds to Carol's offer with her own, asserting that it be "sufficient to provide for my kin and this community for generations to come." This belief that a community can look out for itself is a core tenet of neoliberalism, which asserts that a community should protect its citizens without any reliance on the state. It can solve its own problems without assistance from the government or external entities that don't understand or care about it. Mags believes she alone is best-suited to protect and support Harlan. Even if she lines her own pockets in a deal with Black Pike, Mags insinuates that the community will understand because they respect and trust her. Even though she hasn't been there long, Carol observes that the community looks to Mags as a wise elder who takes care of it. Residents might

not trust Black Pike, but they trust her. If Mags cuts a deal with the company that enriches her and that wealth is redistributed in town, it is Mags supporting Harlan, not Black Pike. That is how Mags would present it. The reality is a different matter. There is little evidence that Mags is enriching or improving the community. She does more harm than good and is running a criminal enterprise. She murders people and destroys families. Also, Mags isn't providing jobs or doing much to stabilize a town that's fallen on hard times. Harlan isn't doing itself any favors by adopting neoliberal thinking and putting all their faith in Mags just because she's a local. Closer scrutiny reveals that Mags places herself above the community and isn't backing up her declarations of caring about what's best for Harlan with actions.

On *Outsiders*, a large corporation and a mine are also at the heart of Blackburg and its struggles with neoliberalism. The community is in the process of housing its own mine as an energy company, One Planet, aims to begin operations in the near future. One Planet has already established itself in town and has an employee, Haylie Grimes (Francie Swift), whose primary responsibility is winning support from local residents. As with Black Pike in Harlan, the company promises good jobs. The implication is that there will not be any resistance from a place so desperate for work, and there is little doubt that Blackburg is hurting. In the season one episode "Messengers," an out-of-work local resident, Breece Dobbs (Jeb Kreager), argues with his gainfully employed brother-in-law Wade Houghton (Thomas Wright), a local police officer, about what's best for the town and its future. Wade is skeptical of One Planet and their intentions. Breece contends that the town has been a "dump" for the last decade, pointing out that there are no jobs. This is reinforced in the next episode, "Rubberneck," with images of local men standing around a One Planet office, desperately hoping for temporary work of any kind.

Breece's sentiments are echoed at a town hall meeting to discuss the mine and employment opportunities, which occurs in the "Messengers" episode. Many people, especially men, support One Planet and their endeavors. However, there is also some opposition to the mine. Breece's wife Ledda (Rebecca Harris) leads a group of local residents fighting against One Planet. One of the group's main concerns is the corporation polluting the local water supply, and the Farrell clan has evidence that One Planet is guilty of water contamination. The skepticism of One Planet and their intentions to help the community is shown to be well-founded. Company executives are portrayed as cruel elites who view people in Blackburg and the clan with derision and contempt. In reality, they have little if any concern for local residents and their plight. They are a faceless, heartless corporation concerned only with making as much money as possible. Blackburg has been left behind to fend for itself and almost everyone is struggling financially, but there is ambivalence about a large corporation being the solution, and neoliberalism means that even gains come with a steep cost, like the poisoning of the local water supply in exchange for employment opportunities.

Paulie does not have a mine or a company in town hoping to start one, but it faces some of the same problems as Harlan and Blackburg. There are several references to the community being in a state of decline as long-standing businesses close while a Dollar Store opens. Characters anguish over money and express concerns about precarious financial situations. This is especially true of Ted Talbot (Clayne Crawford), stepbrother of *Rectify*'s protagonist Daniel Holden (Aden Young). Along with his father, Ted runs a small business selling tires in Paulie that is experiencing a decline in sales. He obsesses about money and worries about being able to adequately provide for his family. In the season one episode "Sexual Peeling," he refers to "uncertain economic times" and asks that Daniel stay away from the store, believing he would be

bad for business. Ted also frequently argues with family members about the business and its condition. A large chain of tire stores offers to buy the business, leading to conflicting feelings about the right course of action.

For Daniel, the family business is an employment option but not one he finds appealing, and Paulie does not have much else to offer. Like Ted, he finds himself in a position of uncertainty and vulnerability. This precarity is the direct result of neoliberalism. Julie A. Wilson writes that neoliberalism spreads insecurity and risk, leaving people feeling socially and economically powerless (44-45). Ted can sell the business to a large corporation with deep pockets, but he will be out of a job with no prospects or any notion of what he wants to do. If he does not sell the business, it is likely to go under in a relatively brief period of time.

Neoliberalism privileges the large, wealthy chain store and dictates that if Ted is unable to successfully compete in the private market, it is solely his fault, and no assistance is coming. Similarly, Daniel is entirely on his own. He regains his freedom but after two decades of incarceration has limited job opportunities, something that is compounded by living in a struggling rural community. In the season one episode “Jacob’s Ladder,” he is forlorn and lost, wondering if he can make it on the outside and admitting that he doesn’t know what to do. This is true in a general sense, but also in terms of what he’s going to do for money. Daniel is nearly 40 and has no real skills or job prospects. He has no clue what he wants to do for work.

These series also represent neoliberalism’s effects in their representations of the masculinity of their male characters, something scholars have documented. Levi Gahman sees neoliberalism as directly influencing real-world rural masculinities in his study of rural, working-class masculinity in Kansas during the 2010s. He contends that rural men have embraced neoliberalism’s emphasis on competition, independence, and entrepreneurialism. They see

themselves as a commodity and the world as a marketplace (Gahman 252). He suggests that according to neoliberal discourse, ideal manhood is defined by individualism, skills, work ethic, and self-reliance. Their worth is determined by how well they succeed in the marketplace, and any hardships they endure are because they didn't work hard enough. This means that regardless of the workplace environment rural men focus only on themselves and are not inclined to support co-workers or worry about anyone else (Gahman 258). For rural men in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century US, accepting and practicing neoliberal ideals is the best way to achieve success and exhibit exemplary masculinity. This form of hegemonic masculinity remains rooted in traditional notions of men being a provider and solely responsible for the financial well-being of their family. This neoliberal construction of masculinity in rural communities is integral to each of these series and their male characters. Self-worth is directly connected to how much money they make and their ability to provide for female characters. The series portray the harmful effects of a man believing that he is only worthwhile if he is the sole source of income. The result of that line of thinking is harmful behavior that negatively impacts relationships and fails to bring the male characters contentment.

These series' engagement with questions of neoliberalism and rural masculinity is exemplified in the character of *Justified's* Boyd Crowder. Crowder personifies the dedication to entrepreneurialism and self-reliance that Gahman sees in real-world rural men. The difference is that the fictional Boyd is also a criminal. The lack of opportunity and overwhelming belief that a man is solely responsible for his own success while also being the sole provider of a comfortable life for their partner controls his worldview and guides Boyd straight to criminal activities. He convinces himself that the best, if not only, way to make enough money fast is by breaking the law. This mostly just brings him trouble. For a brief moment, he contemplates a different life. In

season two of the series Boyd is working at a mine, a place he worked as a younger man before he deployed to Kuwait. Upon his return Boyd became a small-time criminal willing to do anything for a dollar. In an attempt to leave his lawbreaking days in the past he resumes working at the mine. In the season two episode “The Life Inside,” when he and Raylan discuss Boyd working at the mine again, he states that there “are not many other legal employment options in the region.” Boyd tells Raylan that he means to work, keep his head down, and stay out of trouble. He seems to mean it, but this pursuit of the straight life does not last long, all because Boyd yearns to be a provider. He is in love with his late brother’s widow Ava (Joelle Carter), who is having serious money problems and can’t pay her mortgage. This desire to take care of Ava serves as the impetus for Boyd’s return to criminal behavior.

The return to criminality allows Boyd to indulge in behavior that more closely aligns with what he views as his true identity. He envisions himself an outlaw and describes himself as such on numerous occasions. In the season four episode “Outlaw,” Boyd turns the tables on some rich guys who try to exploit him for their own benefit by getting him to commit crimes for them while making promises they have no intention of keeping. “Sit your white-collar ass down” he says to them, adding “I am the outlaw.” To Boyd, being an outlaw at least partially means a willingness, even an eagerness, to do anything for the right price. This zeal for making money by any means necessary paired with a confidence in his ability to do so is one way that Boyd is similar to the rural men Gahman writes about. Boyd might see himself as an outlaw, but he also considers himself to be something of an entrepreneur. In another season four episode, “Foot Chase,” he describes himself as a self-made man akin to a rich banker without a college education. By this point he has robbed banks and poker games, sold drugs, and even worked on behalf of Black Pike. In the sixth season he attempts to partner with a man buying up land in the

Harlan region in anticipation of the state legalizing marijuana, seeing it as a chance to get rich in a legal way. In the season six episode “Sounding,” Boyd calls himself an “entrepreneur” while discussing the potential of a legal marijuana business. In “Foot Chase,” Boyd reveals the reason for his criminal endeavors: giving Ava the life he imagines she wants. Handing her money for a down payment on a house, he says that crime is a means to give Ava a house, kids, legitimacy, and a respectable name. Boyd’s traditional masculinity anoints him as the provider whose duty it is to support both of them. He also fancies himself Ava’s protector and tries to control her activities and limit her involvement in his endeavors essentially because, in his eyes, it is for her own good. Boyd has a patriarchal outlook and subscribes to the idea that it is a man’s job to use whatever skills he has to provide for and protect a woman. This mindset has ties to neoliberalism and the belief that a man’s worth is determined by his ability to commodify himself and succeed in the free market, allowing him to use an entrepreneurial drive that preserves his standing as family provider. To a degree, *Justified* is sympathetic with this. It acknowledges that times are tough in Harlan and opportunities for gainful employment for Boyd are limited. However, the criminal life is not the answer. Boyd never finds the stability and good life he’s looking for, and his crimes cause a great degree of harm, to others and himself.

A similar dynamic is at play on *Outsiders*. Hasil Farrell (Kyle Gallner) was raised on Shay Mountain amongst the clan. He meets, begins a relationship with, and impregnates a woman in Blackburg, Sally-Ann (Christina Jackson). The couple is facing a challenging and uncertain economic future. Hasil is extremely bothered by the fact that Sally-Ann works a menial job as a grocery store clerk while he is unemployed. His mindset is similar to Boyd’s in that he firmly believes a man should be the moneymaker in a family and he is willing to do anything to attain provider status. First he works for One Planet even though they are trying to force the clan

off the mountain they have called home for 200 years. In the second season, Hasil exhibits behavior that echoes Gahman and the claim that self-commodification is a component of neoliberalism and rural masculinity. He wants to work and is open to any kind of employment, but his opportunities are limited by geography and his background. He gives legitimate work a chance as a day laborer but is taken advantage of by his boss. Like Boyd, he turns to illicit activities in an effort to make large sums of money as quickly as possible. Hasil transforms his body into a money-making venture and begins boxing for cash in an underground fight club. He continues to fight for money after Sally-Ann pleads with him to stop. He prioritizes being a provider over his physical well-being and the concerns of his partner. Hasil sees fighting for money as his only real opportunity to support his family and eliminate the need for Sally-Ann to work, and he believes both of those are his responsibility. Once again recalling Boyd, Hasil has a patriarchal mentality that ignores a woman's agency in favor of a narrow-minded focus on how he can attain financial independence for his family. He displays a traditional masculinity that presumes all a woman wants is for a man to work so she does not have to. If more conventional employment is not possible, Hasil is more than eager to use whatever skills he has to enhance his value in the marketplace.

Though most of the men in Blackburg are on the margins in the show's narrative, neoliberalism influences the construction of their masculinities. The severe lack of family-supporting employment opportunities renders the men desperate for work. In their desperation they are willing to break the law or exhibit brutish behavior if it means making money or gaining a foothold with One Planet. Early in season one of the series a group of men waits outside of a One Planet satellite office hoping for day labor. They are all out of work and this is now a daily routine. It is easy to exploit their predicament, which is precisely what Haylie does near the

conclusion of the first season. In the penultimate episode, “All Hell,” she is increasingly distressed about law enforcement and One Planet’s failure to remove the clan from Shay Mountain, so she hires a group of local men to serve as a vigilante squad and attack the clan. These men do not hesitate to resort to dangerous, illegal behavior on behalf of a corporation whose employees privately belittle them. The risk of physical harm or imprisonment pales in comparison to being unable to make money and support a family. They see an ability to intimidate others, even putting themselves at risk physically and legally, as skills they can leverage in the marketplace. If it makes them valuable to One Planet it is worth doing. The swift turn to potential vigilantism is a marker of traditional masculinity justified as necessary and even righteous if it supports a man’s ability to provide for his family.

The man on these series who most explicitly sees financial success as a main component in manhood is *Rectify*’s Ted. Operating the tire store consumes him to the point where it damages his relationship with his father and plays a contributing factor in the dissolution of his marriage. Ted firmly believes it is his duty to provide for his wife, Tawney (Adelaide Clemens), and his standing as a man is solely determined by how successful the tire store is. He frequently expresses concerns over money, the business, and the state of the economy and is sensitive about any potential threat to the store. In the season one episode “Drip, Drip,” after learning about Tawney welcoming Daniel into their church community, Ted chastises her for potentially harming the business with churchgoers. He is also anxious about losing a contract with the county and secretly takes out a bank loan to establish another revenue stream for the store. In her study of real-world rural masculinity, Sharon Bird argues that men who operate small businesses in rural areas frequently tie their masculinity to business performance. She says that such men believe that if their business is successful then they are fulfilling their role as a husband and

provider, and if their business fails then they fail as a husband and provider (76). This applies on *Rectify* with Ted. This devotion to money and being the sole deciding factor in his status as a man reveals how he constructs masculinity. Ted is steeped in traditional masculinity. He refuses Tawney's help with the business and is adamant about her not getting a job, regardless of how she feels about it. In the season two episode "Charlie Darwin," he lashes out at Tawney after she asks questions about his business plans and the loan. Ted is consumed with proving himself in the marketplace and allows that to dictate how he defines manhood. It brings him nothing but misery. Work issues and thinking so much about money and how he's going to make it put a severe strain on his marriage. He treats his wife poorly and she in turn grows increasingly unhappy. It has an extremely toxic effect on Ted, his behavior, and his life.

The downside of neoliberalism is portrayed on these series. Neoliberalism has a detrimental effect on the fictional communities of Harlan, Blackburg, and Paulie, as well as the male characters who call each town home. The communities are in precarious economic condition and the outside world has all but forgotten about them. They have little or nothing to offer the free market and the government is not going to help them. Harlan and Blackburg are promised rescue by a corporation with no local ties or a vested interest in improving the lives of town residents. There are no guarantees that the communities themselves will benefit. Due to concerns like pollution and other environmental calamities, Harlan and Blackburg could actually find themselves worse off than they already are, and as regulatory oversight is never mentioned or alluded to there would be no one to prevent environmental catastrophe or intervene once it commences. Paulie faces even greater uncertainty as no corporation is looking to do business there. It is dying with no possibility of a lifeline. These series showcase neoliberalism's propensity to exacerbate economic divisions. The male characters are portrayed as being directly

affected by the deteriorating economic conditions, which informs the kinds of masculinities they embody. With limited viable employment prospects, Boyd, Hasil, and other men in Blackburg transform themselves into commodities and desperately seek to profit from whatever skill set they can leverage regardless of the legal or physical ramifications. Ted's entrepreneurialism is more literal as he co-owns and operates a small business, but he shares the fixation on making money by any means necessary. The constricted focus on financial success with little regard to the consequences is connected to each man's emphatic belief that they are obligated to provide for a woman. What the woman desires or the notion that she might be able to help are dismissed or ignored. These men are beholden to traditional masculinity even as it threatens them financially, physically, and legally while also endangering the relationship that is the source of their actions.

These series are critics of the masculinities of Boyd, Hasil, and Ted even as they offer a degree of sympathy for them. They acknowledge the precarious financial situations and limited options the men have in their quest to secure gainful employment capable of supporting a family. They portray the fictional communities of Harlan, Blackburg, and Paulie as facing severe challenges with little hope for a better future. Black Pike and One Planet are greedy corporations, not saviors. Ted can sell the business, but that's a short-term solution at best. The decisions these men face are not easy ones. However, there are limits to the sympathy we are invited to have for these characters, and ultimately the male characters are depicted as misguided for exhibiting a rigid adherence to traditional masculinity. Whatever obstacles they face, it doesn't justify their actions and how they treat their partners. Boyd shuts Ava out and tries to control her and their future, but in the end he loses her and finds himself in prison. Hasil won't allow Sally-Ann to work or sever all ties with the clan, and he puts his health at risk in the fight club before winding

up shot on the mountain after trying to help the clan as they are under siege from law enforcement. Ted finds himself divorced and miserable after he pushes Tawney away with his behavior. Whatever the men's problems, the series assert that the answer is not an embrace of traditional masculinity that involves neglecting their partner while trying to exert complete control over their financial situation. Insisting that they are the provider, no matter what, leads to imprisonment, solitude, desolation, or likely death. None of them is better off. In these series, neoliberalism is portrayed as damaging not only economic structures but the very gender identities of rural men.

### **Masculinity and the Impact of Land Management and Status in the Community**

It is not just neoliberalism that informs manhood in these fictional rural communities. Also having an impact on the development of masculinities on these series are issues involving the physical environment, such as ownership of the land and who is best suited to leveraging the resources it has. Devotion to land is related to neoliberalism. As Hochschild says, in the real world, rural communities believe the natural environment has its place, but they also prioritize economic matters. Taking care of their physical environment must be carefully weighed against economic concerns like business development (50). They believe their communities, and not outsiders like the federal government, are in the best position to oversee the land and whatever resources it has. Rural communities should determine how the natural environment can be protected while not neglecting economic opportunities. If federal agencies want to make themselves useful, they can cut regulations and make sure they aren't in the way of job growth. This fealty to the natural environment and managing it factors into the construction of masculinities in rural areas. Having power over land is connected to hegemonic masculinities and rural masculine identity. It is about dominance over nature and its resources. Rural men want

to have control and influence over land, and they don't want those from outside the community to have that power.

These dynamics are at play in the fictional communities depicted in *Justified* and *Outsiders* in particular. This is especially true of Big Foster (David Morse), who leads a faction of men on the mountain and has substantial power and influence there. In *Outsiders*, he is convinced of his dominion over Shay Mountain. Considering how much of their daily life depends on it, the clan has a close relationship with their natural environment. They rely on the land for their very survival. Their food, water, shelter, and clothing come from it, and the land also helps protect them when necessary. They have lived in much the same way, in the same place, for two hundred years. There is no limit to what Big Foster will do to keep the clan on Shay Mountain. In the season one episode "Decomp of a Stuck Pig," he says that it is his duty to protect the clan. Foster sees himself as solely responsible for ensuring their survival in the face of threats from One Planet and Blackburg. He acts unilaterally despite not being in charge of the clan, overseeing a group of men who do whatever he says. For Big Foster, the corporation and the town do not own the land. It rightfully belongs to them, and no one has the right to force them to relocate. Considering the resources and firepower of One Planet and Blackburg, the odds would seem to be stacked against Big Foster and the clan. However, he goes to great lengths to fight back and only digs in deeper when it appears as if forcible removal is imminent. Big Foster and his small band of men respond with force as he believes this is the only way One Planet and Blackburg will listen to them. They destroy One Planet property, kidnap one of its executives, and even kill the sheriff. The fact that the last attempt to remove the clan from Shay Mountain had ended in bloodshed only emboldens Big Foster. He believes the town is entirely responsible for what transpired in the past and whatever he does to them now is justified by their refusal to

let the clan stay where they are. His self-anointed role as protector of the land (and by extension the residents of Shay Mountain) is part of Big Foster's masculine identity. He thinks he is doing what is in the clan's best interest and that those outside of their community deserve no say in what happens to the land they call home.

This is in direct contrast to how the men in Blackburg understand ownership and rightful oversight of the land. In "Messengers," it becomes clear that most of the community is against the clan and wants them gone. They do not believe that the clan owns the land or deserves to have a voice in what happens to it. With the exception of Wade, the men in town do not think the clan should continue to live on Shay Mountain. They might care about their natural environment, but in the spirit of neoliberalism they see the land as an economic opportunity. The land should be mined in order for them to have jobs. For them the land is a resource with the potential to restore their masculinity by providing them with work that allows them to take care of their family. That takes precedence over any environmental concerns or claims from the clan about who rightfully owns the land.

On *Justified*, local control plays a central role in Harlan's relationship with its natural environment. Echoing Hochschild's observations about residents of rural communities and their feelings about the environment, Harlan is wary of external forces being responsible for what happens to its land. Despite the community's desperation for job opportunities, there is skepticism about Black Pike's efforts to launch mining operations. However, it is during the sixth season of the series when matters of land ownership and stewardship shift to the forefront. Boyd and Raylan take issue with Avery Markham's (Sam Elliott) plan to buy up land in the community in anticipation of the state legalizing marijuana. As Boyd and Raylan see it, Markham is a recent transplant with no ties to Harlan and he aims to get rich off the land there.

In “The Trash and the Snake,” Raylan expresses his displeasure with what Avery is doing. Raylan does not like someone from out of town using coercive measures to get locals to sell their land. For him it is more of a law-and-order issue, and he sees himself as a protector of the area’s law-abiding citizens. His masculinity is informed by his ability to safeguard folks from potentially criminal behavior. Boyd’s concern strays from Raylan’s. He has long expressed his distaste for carpetbaggers and those who attempt to establish themselves in Harlan with their eyes on profiting from residents by taking advantage of them. Boyd thinks he needs to protect Harlan from Avery. The land is not his even if he can afford to buy it. His opposition to Avery isn’t merely altruistic. Boyd sees the land and marijuana legalization as a chance for him to go straight and become wealthy. In “Burned,” he states that if Avery gets the land he’s after, Harlan won’t benefit, only Avery will. His masculinity is informed by his ability to provide for Ava. Avery stands in the way of Boyd being able to accomplish his goal of supporting Ava by making money in a way that does not run afoul of law enforcement. He is determined to not let an outsider damage an endeavor that would enrich him and restore his masculinity.

Another significant factor in the development of masculinities is those who exist, or are perceived to exist, outside of the community. The anxiety real-world rural white men feel about their economic standing and prospects for a stable future providing for their family is partially informed by their attitude towards those they perceive as outsiders. In addition to economic instability and demographic decline, Hochschild identifies cultural marginalization as one of the three biggest fears rural white people have (221). The demographic and cultural changes they fear stem from a belief that others are taking what is rightfully theirs and diminishing their cultural capital. This is especially acute in rural white men. Metzl notes that in twenty-first century America rural white men have more competition and less prestige (52). This causes them

to resent anyone else regarded as securing benefits or privileges that in the past were exclusively allocated to them. Kimmel directly addresses this in *Angry White Men*. He argues that white men see themselves as victims who believe their loss of power and influence is due to immigrants, women, the government, and people of color (16-17). As rural communities tend to be white and inward-looking, residents prefer surrounding themselves with those who have local backgrounds. People who are new or racially other tend to be rejected. Neoliberalism enhances animosity towards outsiders and creates a sense of fierce competition between groups. This makes it easier to label someone an outsider regardless of how fitting the designation is. The fictional characters on these series frequently encounter those they define as an outsider, or are themselves the outsider, and it shapes the construction of masculinities.

On *Justified*, outsiders figure prominently into the narrative of several seasons, and there are times when outsiders should be feared. The series continually establishes that Boyd, whatever his faults, is at least superior to the outsiders. They always have nefarious intentions and cannot be trusted, which validates Boyd's hostility to them. They are bad men bringing serious trouble to town. Outside of Boyd the central antagonist in season three is Robert Quarles (Neal McDonough). Quarles moves from Detroit to Harlan in an attempt to take over the underground Oxycontin market. Boyd and Raylan are unified in their dislike of Quarles (this is not the last time the adversaries will feel that way about a bad guy). Quarles resorts to stereotypical insults of the locals, dubbing Raylan "Jim Bob" and feigning surprise that a piano teacher isn't a banjo teacher. In "Thick as Mud," Quarles approaches Boyd about working together. Boyd rejects the offer and calls Quarles a "carpetbagger." Raylan doesn't use the word but sees him the same way. In "The Man Behind the Curtain, while having an adversarial conversation with Quarles, he takes pain to remind him that he's from Detroit and not Harlan. In

the same episode, Boyd's disdain for Quarles is revealed as so severe he refuses to turn on Raylan and help Quarles soon after Raylan admits to Boyd that he'd like to kill the man from Motor City. That is one way the series goes to great lengths to highlight that Quarles is much worse than Boyd. Boyd might be perpetually feuding with Raylan, and in the first season finale, "Bulletville," Raylan shoots and nearly kills him, but Boyd is loyal to a fellow Harlan resident over the Detroit transplant. That Quarles isn't a local isn't enough though. He is portrayed as a violent addict who derives pleasure from torturing and murdering young men. He is a monster, and by season's end, in "Slaughterhouse," Boyd and Raylan do their part to make sure that he meets a violent end. The nefarious outsider is vanquished and Harlan defeats Detroit. The series posits that there is nobility in ridding Harlan of an outsider who brought terror and violence with him. Boyd and Raylan are portrayed as protecting the community from someone much more dangerous than Boyd. It is good that they get rid of Quarles, a vicious, remorseless killer with no redeeming qualities.

Drawing a contrast between Boyd and outsiders intent on harming Harlan continues in the fourth season. In the second episode, "Where's Waldo," a preacher, Billy (Joseph Mazzello), and his sister, Cassie (Lindsay Pulsipher), set up shop in town. Boyd immediately suspects that they are up to something and investigates. Billy and Cassie are aware of Boyd's activities dealing drugs and criticize him for doing so, accusing him of exploiting people. Boyd is livid that outsiders come to town and immediately make assumptions about people and places. He calls Billy a false prophet and accuses them of going from town to town and profiting off poor locals while making empty promises of salvation. The insinuation is that Boyd would never engage in such behavior and cares deeply for the locals and their well-being. In the next episode, "Truth and Consequences," when he tries to pay Cassie off to get them to leave town, she demands a

building for their congregation. Realizing that it won't be easy to get the siblings to leave Harlan, Boyd reveals their scam by having Billy handle poisonous snakes. The preacher is bitten and dies, and the scheme is over. Boyd is vindicated and once again saves the community from outsiders with harmful intentions.

The sixth season of the series features Avery Markham, another outsider who moves to Harlan hoping to strike it rich. Avery begins buying up land in anticipation of the state legalizing marijuana. Raylan dislikes him because he uses strongarm tactics to get locals to sell their land to him. Boyd doesn't like him because Avery is looking to get rich in the place Boyd has always called home. He sees legalized marijuana as his meal ticket and is set on preventing Avery from cashing in. In order to stop him, Boyd uses the community itself. At a public forum over the future of Harlan as it relates to Avery's plans, Boyd insists that the community will not benefit from Avery. In "Burned," when making his pitch to Loretta (Katelyn Dever), a young local woman who also wants in on the marijuana business, Boyd tells her that he is bad, but Avery is worse and asks her to "keep Harlan for Harlan."

As the series has established by this point, the outsider is always worse. They seek to profit from the community but not do anything to help it. Boyd and his masculinity are restored by being a protector. Whatever his other flaws, he has Harlan's best interests at heart, cares about its people, and will do whatever it takes to defend it from outsiders. This echoes neoliberalism and the contention that a community should look after itself and is in the best position to know what needs to be done to improve its standing. Boyd knows how to take care of Harlan better than any outsider does. He is a self-made businessman who can protect and support the community. That is how Boyd would present it. In reality he is a criminal responsible for doing a lot of damage to the community. It is just that he sees himself as standing up for Harlan and the

series aids him by repeatedly presenting outsiders as worse and the community as in need of protection from them. Boyd's masculinity, traditional and problematic in many ways, is at least partially redeemed by contrasting him with villainous outsiders and allowing him to rescue Harlan from their clutches.

In certain respects, Raylan is also an outsider, something of a stranger in his hometown. Though he was born and raised in Harlan, he has been away for many years and returns as a member of law enforcement. His return forces him to become reacclimated with people on the other side of the law. This influences his masculinity as in many ways Raylan embodies traditional masculinity, but he also wants no part of being associated with the male characters in Harlan. He is quickly at odds with many of the people in the community, especially Boyd, his primary adversary over the course of six seasons, and his estranged father, Arlo (Raymond J. Barry). A recurring theme is that no one wants Raylan in Harlan, and everyone knows he doesn't want to be there, either. Raylan is a thorn in Boyd's side and his criminal endeavors are always interrupted by his old friend, who has made putting Boyd in prison his life's mission. Raylan's boss, Art (Nick Searcy), finds him constantly insubordinate, difficult to manage, and routinely flirting with the wrong side of the law. Raylan's co-workers at the marshal's office share Art's view of him and only work with him because they have little choice (and Raylan much prefers working alone). Arlo consistently has a scheme going and breaks the law on a regular basis, and in addition to trying to sabotage his father's schemes Raylan delights in telling him what a terrible father he is. The only person who wants Raylan out of Harlan more than Boyd, Art, and Arlo is Raylan. He is there as punishment and would never have chosen to return, and he spends most of the series' six seasons plotting his exit. Raylan also positions himself as an outsider. He alludes to the frequency with which he interacts with criminals and corrupt public officials. He is

exceedingly cynical with little regard for Harlan or its residents. Raylan imagines that he is different from and superior to everyone there. This is particularly true of men in Harlan. He often remarks upon the questionable character and criminal nature of its male residents. He is not amused when someone opines that he is similar to Arlo or shares traits with Boyd. Adopting the perspective of an outsider allows Raylan to convince himself that his masculinity is divergent from and preferable to other masculinities in Harlan. In the first season's "Fathers and Sons," after Arlo finds himself involved with some bad people, Raylan insults him and says he's only in trouble because of his own bad decisions. He feels no sympathy for him. Raylan's habit of insulting criminals repeats itself frequently throughout the run of the series. He trades barbs with all manner of bad guy, asserting his own superiority in the process. In the second season's "The Moonshine War," he tells a sex offender who took Loretta that he desperately wants to shoot him, but he's trying hard to shoot fewer people. The putdowns and threats are a way to draw a contrast between himself and the criminals in Harlan.

The series complicates its perspective on Raylan's masculinity, much as it does with Boyd's. Raylan is not as much of an outsider as he thinks he is, and he has more in common with Boyd and Arlo than he admits. He shares some of Boyd's traditional masculinity and sees it as his obligation to take care of and protect women (even as he is the one responsible for them being in danger in the first place). Raylan constantly tries to play savior when he believes a woman is in trouble and gives little thought to their desire for his protection or their ability to solve their own problems. He gives little credence to their agency and inserts himself into their lives regardless of the extension of an invitation. Like Boyd, Raylan is also quick to solve problems with violence. He enjoys shooting people and occasionally manufactures a scenario where shooting someone is necessary to save himself. He also bends or ignores the law when it

suits him. There is a reason other people regularly tell Boyd and Raylan how intensely they dislike them. That extends to Raylan and Arlo. Raylan insists he is nothing like his father, but those who know both men see similarities. They are aware of Raylan's distaste for Arlo but wonder aloud how much the two are alike. Art says the two share a short temper and stubbornness. Raylan favors envisioning Harlan and its male residents as representatives of toxic masculinities he left behind but in reality the lawman is analogous to Boyd, Arlo, and the community he was raised in. He is not the outsider he appears to be or thinks of himself as.

The community itself plays a central role in shaping Raylan's masculinity. In a way Harlan functions as a guide to what kind of man he doesn't want to be. His status as an outsider after being away for so long factors into how he assesses other men in the community regardless of their profession, economic status, relationship to him, or flirtations with law enforcement. Raylan has a dim view of the men who reside there and does not let the fact that he was raised in Harlan soften his position. For him there is a direct connection between place and masculinities. Raylan frequently and fervently expresses how he feels about Boyd, Arlo, the Bennett brothers (Dickie, Coover, and Doyle), and others, dripping with contemptuousness at what he perceives as boorish, idiotic, and unlawful behavior. In season two's "The Spoil," noting that Boyd and Doyle are engaged in criminal activities, he snaps that they are both corrupt and deserve each other. Later in season two, in "The Reckoning," when Arlo's actions get his wife, Raylan's stepmother, killed, Raylan tears into Arlo about why he was away from the home when Helen was killed. He seethes with anger and contempt, which is how Arlo usually makes him feel. The Crowe family, which includes criminal cousins Dewey and Daryl, is a regular thorn in Raylan's side, and he is not fond of them. In season five's "Whistle Past the Graveyard," he says he thinks of the Crowes like cancer, and he's working on a cure. Raylan unleashing verbal abuse upon

male characters is a consistent theme. His endless irritation over being forced to return to Harlan is influenced by his feelings about the men there. In Raylan's eyes they are a feckless and nefarious group and the only thing about being in their presence that brings him joy is the prospect of arresting them. He routinely informs Boyd and Arlo that he would not hesitate to slip the cuffs on and would in fact be happy to do so.

Raylan's masculinity is often positioned as being superior to Harlan men. He is heroic on a regular basis (and other characters refer to him as Wyatt Earp or Gary Cooper, men who were heroes or played them), rescuing people from men like the sex offender who kidnaps Loretta, or a man named Jed in season two's "Reckoning," who is going to be killed by Doyle Bennett and framed for Helen's murder. In season two the Bennett brothers are depicted as racist, senseless, irresponsible, and violent criminals in sharp contrast to Raylan, who does not frame innocent people for murder, engage in casual racism, or go out of his way to break the law as often as possible no matter how ill-advised the criminal behavior is. Raylan is flawed, but he treats people better than Dickie, Doyle, and Coover, who are selfish, cruel, and always scheming. He finds Boyd's anti-Semitism and racism idiotic. In the pilot episode, a perplexed Raylan asks Boyd if he even knows any Jews after the latter makes anti-Semitic comments about people controlling money. In the season one episode "Blowback," he suggests that Boyd and his white supremacism are full of shit. Raylan will also put himself in danger to save bad people he doesn't like. In season five's "The Kids Aren't All Right," he rescues Loretta's boyfriend Derek from two guys who kidnapped Derek and are trying to rob Loretta and Derek of drug money. The bad men Raylan chases down are consistently dumb, capable of uttering insults and not much else. Raylan is witty, funny, and charming, and the contrast is always readily apparent.

It is not revelatory that Raylan is depicted in a more flattering light than the criminals he goes up against as he is the series protagonist, but it reveals how the series regards varying types of masculinities encountered by Raylan as they are repellant and demand to be scorned. He believes men are toxic, violent, mindless, and prone to criminality, and he crosses paths with men like this in a majority of the 78 episodes. These men engage in all manner of criminal behavior, from drug dealing to bank robbery to murder. There are men with legitimate employment who for one reason or another find themselves collaborating with hardened criminals. There are random drunks and misogynists that Raylan picks fights with, usually in a bar. There are members of law enforcement who are corrupt and partner with criminal elements. Regardless of whether or not it is Boyd, Arlo, or a more minor character, Raylan thinks he is superior to all of them, and the series also subscribes to that notion, though not without reservation. He insults them every chance he gets and makes no attempt to disguise the contempt he feels for them. He is a heroic member of law enforcement on the right side of the law while they are degenerate criminals who deserve no sympathy and belong in prison or dead. Raylan has no qualms with criminals killing one another, saying it is more effective at ridding the world of bad guys than the justice system. He assumes the worst in every man he meets and sees Harlan as one big cesspool of toxic masculinity. It is a place he was eager to leave and had no intention of returning to, with constant reminders of men he doesn't want to be like. The criminals he confronts, captures, or kills always have it coming. They deserve Raylan's justice and his pursuit of them is necessary. His put-downs and quips at their expense are amusing and endearing. The viewer is positioned to like Raylan and see him as better than the men he chases, even though he is not without flaw.

As much as the series tends to position Raylan's masculinity as superior to those of the men in Harlan, there are times when that is complicated. Raylan has been away from Harlan for many years, working and living in a vastly larger and more diverse place, Miami. As a result, Raylan's view of the world veers away from that of the men in Harlan. He is not as afraid of change or cultural shifts and, despite an old-fashioned tendency to see women as in need of his rescue, he is not a misogynist. This more enlightened mindset and the conviction that he is a righteous man in a place full of scoundrels is responsible for Raylan feeling superior to the men of Harlan. However, other men in Harlan are quick to challenge Raylan's ideas of himself. Boyd tells Raylan that he is violent and has a knack for finding trouble, which is something Raylan would say of Boyd, adding that not much separates the two of them. In the season four finale, when Raylan makes it clear to Boyd that he desperately wants to find and kill a bad guy from Detroit, Boyd wonders how Raylan figures he's not a bad guy, to which Raylan has no reply. This tracks with the way that Raylan's coworkers view him. They constantly make comments about how he is always in trouble and prefers shooting first and asking questions later. His boss finds him to be a constant headache and impossible to manage due to insubordination, occasionally suspending him from work. Raylan himself admits that he bends the law when he has to and there are times when he ignores serious crime if doing so benefits him and his agenda for that particular day. Even though he is something of an outsider upon his return, and even though he imagines himself as being superior to the men there and nothing like them, Harlan is part of Raylan whether he likes it or not. His masculinity is not that far removed from the masculinities of Boyd and other men in town. He just has to convince himself that it is because the alternative is unimaginable. Raylan was born and raised in Harlan and there is no denying that it has at least partially influenced the man he's become.

At the outset *Outsiders* establishes itself as engaging with the matter of who the genuine outsider is. It positions various parties as potential interlopers and suggests that designating others as being displaced carries negative consequences. Men are portrayed as being particularly susceptible to labeling and rebuking those they deem an outsider. This behavior is tied to traditional masculinity and has calamitous effects on individuals and communities. The series quickly signifies the presence of several male-dominated groups in Blackburg and Shay Mountain. The Farrell clan living on Shay Mountain is officially led by the elderly Lady Ray (Phyllis Somerville), but the one wielding power and influence is her son, Big Foster (David Morse), who commands a group of men that includes his son, Lil' Foster (Ryan Hurst). Blackburg as a group consists primarily of law enforcement and job seekers, town residents who are predominantly male. A third faction is One Planet. While Haylie is the local face of the organization, a majority of the staff is male. There are subsets of those groups, specifically among the clan and the town. Asa Farrell (Joe Anderson) returns to the clan after spending a decade living far away from Shay Mountain and is initially considered suspicious by many mountain residents. Hasil constantly wrestles with where he truly belongs, on the mountain or in town with Sally-Ann. Wade Houghton is a police officer who becomes sheriff during the first season and finds himself at odds with Blackburg and One Planet over his treatment of the clan. These individuals and groups are regularly in conflict with one another.

The Farrell clan is fully aware of the efforts to remove them from Shay Mountain. As they see it, Blackburg and One Planet are the true outsiders. Members of the clan claim they can trace their history on the mountain back 200 years. As far as they are concerned the mountain is rightfully theirs. They are desperate to keep the outside world away and limit their contact with it. In the series' second episode, "Doomsayer," Asa unfurls a rant against the outside world and

describes civilization as being sinful and greedy, and no one on the mountain disagrees with him. Big and Lil' Foster also view the town and One Planet as the real outsiders, and they strongly believe that no one has a right to their land, a belief that results in them being willing to do anything to stay living right where they are and keep others out. Everyone living off Shay Mountain is their enemy. It is the men in the clan who are the most aggressive in their hostility to outsiders and eagerness to pick a fight with the town and One Planet.

Blackburg and One Planet take a decidedly different view. In their eyes, those on the mountain are the outsiders. They suggest that the clan is primitive and stands in the way of progress. One Planet employees and Blackburg residents routinely disparage the clan and are united in their belief that forcible removal is necessary. While the company has no local ties to the community, their promise to create jobs translates to a more legitimate claim to the land than those who have lived on it for two centuries. The coalition between One Planet and Blackburg and their adherence to seeing the clan as disposable outsiders contributes to the persistent cycle of conflict between the town and the mountain. One Planet wants Shay Mountain vacated by any means necessary and Haylie recruits a group of male Blackburg residents and pays them to serve as a vigilante squad and attack the clan. Men in town assault Hasil and Lil' Foster on sight, suggesting that any time a male clan member steps foot in Blackburg they are going to be victimized. The way that the company and the town are convinced that the clan is the true outsider and vice versa influences the construction of masculinities. Kimmel argues that violence is one response when white men feel a loss of power or a threat from external forces that are preventing them from what they feel entitled to (186). One Planet, Blackburg, and Shay Mountain all feel threatened by outside forces and like they are losing or have lost power to control their circumstances. As Connell notes, in alignment with traditional masculinity, the men

in those groups use force to sustain or regain their dominance (*Masculinities* 83). Seeing one another as an enemy intruder leads to confrontations that result in significant suffering and death, and ultimately no one gets what they want. The clan and the town are both portrayed as foolish. The constant battles benefit neither and nobody gets what they want. The clan is not left alone to live in peace, free of the town and One Planet. Their efforts do not stop attempts to retake the mountain from them. At the same time, the town and One Planet's struggle to forcibly move the clan off the mountain is not successful. The clan remains right where they are. The town and One Planet do not get what they want either. No one comes out looking good in the end.

There are also individual outsiders amongst the three groups, and they are treated as duplicitous or inferior over the perception of disloyalty to the group. Redemption comes in the form of proving their loyalty by reclaiming their masculinity and participating in physically dangerous endeavors. Big Foster does not trust Asa and he finds himself in a tenuous position with the clan. Asa's intentions are in question as he suddenly reappears after leaving the mountain ten years prior. He is never fully welcomed back into the fold. Initially, Asa is a dissenting voice when it comes to starting skirmishes with the town, and Big Foster banishes him from the mountain. Understanding Big Foster's appetite for retaliation against One Planet and Blackburg, Asa purchases an automatic weapon in season one's "It's Good to Be a King" and informs Big Foster that he has access to 100 more. In "Mortar," a few episodes later, Asa manages to procure the weapons, he finds himself in Big Foster's good graces. Showing strength appeals to Big Foster as he believes in ruling with force and taking the fight to his enemies. He subscribes to traditional masculinity and solving problems with violence. Asa reclaims his masculinity and regains Big Foster's trust by showing he is a capable ally in the battle against One Planet and Blackburg.

Wade is a much different type of outsider. Asa might be regarded with apprehension, but he is just as prone to acts of physical aggression as the other men on this series. What Wade represents is far removed from the traditional masculinities that dominate *Outsiders* and he is treated accordingly. He strains to avoid conflict and prevent all-out war between the three groups. He repeatedly goes to great lengths to assist clan members and refuses orders from One Planet to remove everyone from Shay Mountain. In “Doomsayer,” he disposes of moonshine the clan made that got people in town sick. In a later episode, “Weapons,” when the clan tries to rob a gun store in town, Wade ends a standoff between members of the clan and the store owner, letting the clan get away. He does not want any problems between the two factions. This does not win him any friends and creates many foes. The clan still views him as law enforcement and part of Blackburg. They might appreciate the help but continue to keep him at arm’s length. At the same time, One Planet and members of the Blackburg community resent and belittle him. They do not understand why he so diligently avoids confronting the clan and at times goes out of his way to support them. Wade is terrified of conflict and uncertain of himself. His actions (or inaction) cause his family and coworkers to lose respect for him. When told that asserting himself and acting against the clan would restore people’s faith in him, Wade demurs. In “Mortar,” after Breece is killed, Breece’s niece screams at him and suggests that Wade going out of his way to avoid discord got her father killed. In season two’s “Shadowside,” his sister questions his manhood for doubting that Lil’ Foster killed her husband, Wade remains steadfast in his commitment to helping Lil’ Foster. He is the only major male character on the series to avoid bloodshed and prefer peace. No one else seems to know what to make of Wade. His masculinity makes others uncomfortable and uncertain. Wade is an outsider no matter where he

goes and has trouble accepting that even as he rejects opportunities to conform and embrace a more traditional masculinity.

Groups seeing others as the true outsiders who must be stopped partake in cyclical hostilities on these series, which tie traditional masculinities to violence and portray men who endorse those masculinities as being unable to handle challenges in ways that don't involve use of force. Big and Lil' Foster, Asa, and Hasil have different visions when it comes to what is best for themselves and the clan, but none of them can separate themselves from the brutality that has always been a part of their lives, a brutality that has brought them nothing but pain and hardship. They repeatedly fight one another and residents of the town. They attempt and sometimes commit murder. Physical acts of force are central to everything they do. Their masculinities are toxic and remnants of a past that has generated constant conflict and disorder. The series is more ambivalent about Wade and his masculinity. Rejecting the traditional masculinities of Blackburg and Shay Mountain has not brought peace or resolved much of anything. He works diligently to prevent the groups from physically harming one another but is unable to broker an understanding or stop fighting from occurring. His outsider status and inability to successfully bridge the groups brings Wade a significant discomfort. He is an addict and absentee single father who neglects his son. He also has a fractured relationship with his sister and brother-in-law. Damaged relationships and personal turmoil are the consequences of Wade's efforts to avoid traditional masculinities and secure order. He pays a great price for being an outsider in a place that has little use for the type of man he is.

*Rectify's* Daniel is an outsider to an even more extreme degree than Raylan, Asa, or Wade. He might have been born and raised in Paulie, but he is treated like an outcast upon his release from prison. Daniel is on death row for 20 years before he is set free due to new DNA

evidence that fails to support the prosecution's case against him. A teenager upon sentencing, he is something of a blank slate upon his release. His masculinities are informed by the town and the men around him as he adjusts to freedom, but ultimately he rejects the masculinities that surround him and forges his own path. Daniel's masculinity differs from the other male characters on the series and is unique on scripted, twenty-first century television. *Rectify* sides with the outsider.

Daniel is nearly 40 years old when he gets out of prison and moves into the home of his mother, Janet (J. Smith-Cameron), stepfather Ted (Bruce McKinnon), and teenager stepbrother Jared (Jake Austin Walker). He is viewed with wariness by residents of Paulie and members of his own family. In the first episode, "Always There," Ted, local law enforcement and a local politician express doubt about his innocence and make it clear they want him out of Paulie or back in prison. They do not want him around. Ted is not pleased that his stepbrother is sharing a home with Ted, Janet, and Jared. The sheriff, politician, and Ted regularly inform Daniel that he is not welcome in Paulie, and there are efforts to find a way to send him back to prison. Season two's "Daniel the Normal" finds Ted and the sheriff working to hash out a way to put Daniel back inside as they believe he is dangerous and violent.

As he initially pled guilty to the rape and murder of a 16-year-old girl he was close friends with, the skepticism with which Daniel is treated upon his release is not surprising. However, a primary reason for regarding him as an outsider is the manner in which he deviates from traditional masculinity. His disposition stands out in a rural community, and it makes others, particularly men, uncomfortable. Their traditional masculinity positions them to respond poorly to masculinities they fail to understand. Daniel is extraordinarily quiet and emotionless in his interactions with others. He speaks in a monotone, calmly and softly, and is economical with

his words. In “Sexual Peeling” he claims to not feel sorry for himself and says he’s just figuring himself out, and his tone is passive and devoid of feeling. This lack of emotion does not call to mind the stoicism associated with traditional masculinity, or the strong, silent type of westerns. Daniel comes across as aloof and apathetic. In season one’s “Modern Times,” the state senator points out that he has his freedom but never seems happy about anything. He appears to be in a state of perpetual contemplation and spends a significant amount of time alone, lost in thought as he stares off into the distance. In “Sexual Peeling” he stares at a gas station for no particular reason before sitting in a park, alone, and laying down on the grass there. Daniel admits to feeling forlorn and lost as he tries to figure out who he is. His detachment, contemplativeness, and insecurity strike many as strange, distasteful, and even dangerous. Daniel has no sense of himself or masculinity in general. Men amongst the town and his own family don’t know what to make of him or how to interpret his behavior. They have no patience for a man suddenly freed from two decades on death row trying to sift through the masculinities around him and determine what kind of man he is. This results in verbal disputes, violent confrontations, and an effort to reimprison Daniel as the rural men struggle to comprehend the outsider in their midst.

For some men in Paulie, Daniel is a dangerous murderer who deserves to be punished. The state senator and sheriff persist in trying to incriminate him in a way that lands him back on death row, even if that means coercing a new confession out of him, something they attempt in season two’s “Unhinged.” They relentlessly try to get him to say he raped and murdered Hannah, even as he cries and insists he didn’t do it. They are more interested in justice at any cost than whether or not Daniel is innocent. There are those who have no patience for the justice system and wish Daniel more immediate, physical harm. In the season one finale, “Jacob’s Ladder,” the victim’s brother and his friends savagely beat and nearly kill Daniel. In season two’s “Weird as

You,” Trey (Sean Bridgers), a high school friend Daniel was with on the night of the murder, torments him about the night in question, grievously chastising the girl who was murdered and toying with Daniel about what happened that night. The two men vociferously argue about the truth and at one point Daniel pushes Trey against a wall after Trey disparages the murder victim. While these men all torment Daniel to varying degrees, the one he clashes with the most is Ted. Ted is immediately hostile towards Daniel. In “Sexual Peeling” he asks him to stay away from the business and needles him about conjugal visits. A suspicion that Daniel is romantically interested in Tawney exacerbates Ted’s belligerence over Daniel. He blames him for all of his problems, claiming that Daniel has taken everything from him. All of the hostility boils over until it finally turns violent in “Drip, Drip.” After needling him about being sexually assaulted in prison, Daniel employs a maneuver on Ted that puts him to sleep. Later Ted tells Daniel to stay away from Tawney or he will press charges against him over the incident.

As Daniel seeks an identity and strains to construct his masculinity, he is labeled an outsider, one surrounded by examples of traditional masculinity prone to boorishness, resentment, misogyny, and cruelty. The way these men treat Daniel is rooted in problematic male attitudes towards difference and old-fashioned ideas about what constitutes manhood. In season two’s “The Great Destroyer,” when Trey’s young daughter asks where he was upon returning home after a day with Daniel, he replies that she should never ask a man where he was if she wants to get married. In “Weird As You,” he calls the 16-year-old victim a “bitch” and a “slut” while attempting to provoke Daniel. Trey is an angry, hateful misogynist and though it is never explicitly confirmed it is suggested that he could be the real killer. Seeing Daniel forces him to confront feelings he never anticipated worrying about, and like Ted, the state senator, and the sheriff, Trey much prefers Daniel in prison. Ted lacks Trey’s overt misogyny (and he certainly

didn't kill anyone) but his notions of manhood are equally problematic. In addition to believing that the measure of a man is determined by his ability to make money and provide for his family while dismissing his wife's inclinations, he aggressively and frequently reminds people of what a red-blooded, old-fashioned, heterosexual he is. In "Sexual Peeling," Ted teases Jared about being a vegan and relishes informing others of his predilection for red meat. He also tries to get Daniel to watch pornography with the conviction that no heterosexual male would ever decline watching it. He repeatedly pursues sex with Tawney, even when she is uninterested and visibly uncomfortable with his advances. Ted craves reassurance that she desires him. In season two's "Mazel Tov," when Tawney becomes pregnant he is elated and expects her to share his joy, never once asking her how she feels about it. When Ted does not get what he wants or feels like his manhood is under threat, he becomes aggrieved and cruel. Ted does not recognize Daniel's masculinity and it frightens him. This causes him to lash out at Daniel, treat Tawney poorly, and perpetuate a traditional masculinity that only brings him hardship and grief.

*Rectify* endorses the outsider and Daniel's transitional masculinity, rejecting the traditional masculinities displayed by men like Ted and Trey. They are positioned as antagonists, treating Daniel and others poorly. Their behavior is contemptible and generates sympathy for Daniel and his plight. Daniel's search for an identity and a masculinity that fits is poignant and sensitive. He is patient, thoughtful, observant, and considerate as he seeks to discover the kind of man he wants to be. He also rejects the problematic traditional masculinities that surround him. His reserved, contemplative, and hesitant nature stands out in his rural community as much as it does on scripted television. The series preference for Daniel's masculinity over Ted and Trey's embrace of fleeting hegemonic masculinities is reinforced by its depiction of Ted's gradual transformation.

In the third season Ted finds himself in a bad place. His marriage is deteriorating, and the business is in trouble. He refuses to consider therapy, drinks excessively, and is prone to irritability with everyone around him. After finally agreeing to attend therapy with Tawney and hearing her express doubts about their marriage, Ted has something of a breakthrough and shows signs of genuine change for the better. He admits that Tawney might not be right for him, nor him for her, and he begins showing her a kindness we have never seen from him before. He tells her to do whatever is best for her and means it. Ted also displays vulnerability and notes he has always been afraid of women leaving, be it his mother or Tawney. He is gracious and much more at peace, and eventually proposes a divorce because he believes it is what she wants but is afraid to ask for. Tawney notices the changed Ted, calling him loving and understanding (even as she knows she wants out of the marriage). When he becomes despondent over the divorce and losing his identity as a husband, there is newfound sympathy for him as his evolution into a better man is clear. At this point Ted has lost his confidence and shares Daniel's more insecure masculinity. He does not know what the future holds if he is not Tawney's husband or the owner of a small business. However, his masculinity is healthier and more conciliatory. In the series final episode, he apologizes to Daniel for what's happened to him. Ted becomes a better man by being more like Daniel.

### **Conclusion**

Masculinities on these series are informed by individuals and rural communities. Throughout *Justified*, *Outsiders*, and *Rectify*, the influence of Harlan, Blackburg/Shay Mountain, and Paulie on forming and shaping masculinities is discernible as male characters construct manhood in response to their immediate surroundings. Messerschmidt stresses the importance of considering geography when examining the formation of masculinities, writing that any analysis

of masculinities needs to recognize local factors including the role of families, organizations, communities, and interpersonal interactions (52). Examining the development of rural masculinities involves identifying and evaluating the forces that impact these communities. The main forces at play in Harlan, Blackburg/Shay Mountain, and Paulie are neoliberalism, control of land, and fear of outsiders.

I argue that these series represent neoliberal forces as having decimated the economic stability in these rural communities, which in turn is represented as having an expansive impact on the masculine identities of the characters. The men in the rural communities on these series endure the turmoil and disorientation caused by neoliberalism. There is a severe lack of opportunity to secure a job that pays a family-supporting wage. The scarcity of gainful employment results in the necessity to adopt an entrepreneurial mindset and parlay whatever skills they can to make money. The characters look for ways to invest in themselves and find success without support from the state. In some cases, the investments are in sectors that run afoul of law enforcement, but the men on the series who break the law are doing so because they subscribe to a traditional masculinity that says men are responsible for providing for their loved ones. Their actions can be justified by a belief that they have no better options and an attachment to an old-fashioned masculinity prevalent in their communities.

A man's place in the community is also a significant factor in the construction of rural masculinities. These series confront questions of affiliation and who the true outsider is to a particular community. Masculinities are informed by outsider status as well as one's perception of them. Wuthnow suggests that there is a strong sense of "us" and "them" in rural communities and certain people, like newcomers or those viewed as different for some reason, are excluded (37). Kimmel sees this hostile attitude towards outsiders as being widespread in white men. He

states that they are threatened by the increase in racial and gender equality and those they view as outsiders who in their view are trying to take what has always been theirs (248). The fact that some men on these series are understood as outsiders while others are antagonistic towards them speaks to the range and complexities of masculinities on *Justified*, *Outsiders*, and *Rectify*. The hostility is positioned as toxic and frequently results in the use of force along with various other calamities. The men who exhibit those behaviors are aligned with more traditional masculinities. Those who stray from the acrimony also tend to deviate from traditional masculinities. The formation of masculinities in the rural communities on these series is influenced by whether or not men are identified as an outsider and precisely how they feel about those men who are clearly marked by outsider status.

On these series outsider status is often in conversation with issues of land, particularly who has a rightful claim to own and oversee the stewardship of it. Hogan and Pursell perceive rural masculinities as being partially dependent upon the relationship between men and landscapes and the notion that it is important for men to believe that they have dominion over land (73). This correlates with Hochschild's observations that people in rural communities care about their natural environment but firmly believe they should have oversight of the landscape and what is done with it, not the government or big business. They are in the best position to protect it and balance taking care of the land with their desire to be self-reliant and use land in ways that best suit their needs (Hochschild 50). Men in rural communities on these series come into conflict over land and questions of who rightfully owns it and who is in the best position to decide what to do with it. They do not respond well to those they see as outsiders trying to influence what happens to the land in their communities. Depending on the community they belong to and their relationship to the land there, men consider others to be outsiders because

they have no local ties, are interlopers, or lack a rightful claim to the land. This generates a great deal of skepticism, hostility, and aggression as men seek to protect what is theirs or determine who will oversee decisions on what happens to the natural environment.

Scholarship has accepted that masculinities are socially constructed and vary based upon different social and historical spaces. Rural spaces and social practices associated with them influence the formation of masculinities (Campbell, Bell, and Finney 19-20). This is widely seen in *Justified*, *Outsiders*, and *Rectify*. Some men align themselves with traditional masculinities that permeate these rural communities, going to great lengths to anoint themselves as protectors of women or actively rejecting those who, according to them, do not belong. These masculinities invariably lead to physical confrontations and other misfortunes and are portrayed as toxic by all three series. Each one is critical of these masculinities. On *Justified*, in the end, Boyd loses Ava and his freedom. His insistence on providing for her, while also trying to control her life, leads to criminal endeavors that get people killed, alienates Ava, and finds Boyd in prison for life. Plenty of lives are also ruined on *Outsiders*. Hasil pushes Sally-Ann away and winds up shot and clinging to life. The clan and the town are much worse off than they were at the start. Lives are lost and neither faction has achieved its goal of getting rid of the other. Treating Tawney poorly and obsessing over being the provider leads to Ted being in a bad place on *Rectify*. He loses Tawney and is miserable. Only when he begins to understand the error of his ways does Ted show signs of discovering peace of mind and, maybe, better days. The male characters who cling to traditional masculinities only find loss, misery, and misfortune.

Those are consequences for the practitioners of traditional masculinities and those who come into close contact with them. Men who display an aversion to the more traditional forms of masculinity around them are portrayed as more enlightened and laudable. Still, these series avoid

simple notions of right and wrong when it comes to their portrayal of masculinities, showing that masculinities are complex and divergent. Men who subscribe to more traditional and toxic masculinities have redeeming qualities, while men who denounce those masculinities are flawed, not immune to moments of embodying problematic manhood. These series speak to the fact that rural masculinities are multifaceted and men in rural communities should not be reduced to lazy, tired stereotypes that fail to capture the realities of male identity in rural America.

## Chapter 3: Cowboys and Criminals: Authority, Freedom, and Antiheroes

### Introduction

The previous chapter addressed ways in which masculinities in *Justified*, *Rectify*, and *Outsiders* are informed by neoliberalism, land stewardship, and the perception of outsiders. We saw how, in each series, the characters' economic insecurity, fear of losing control over or access to land, and hostility towards individuals who are not considered as belonging to the community results in deplorable actions. Male characters on the series engage in unlawful and uncivil behavior that leads to significant conflict. As a result, legal entanglements and violence factor into the narratives. In addition, law enforcement officers are key figures on *Justified* and *Outsiders*, and whether or not the long-incarcerated protagonist committed a violent crime is at the heart of *Rectify*. This chapter considers how themes of authority, freedom, and legality pervade these series by analyzing male characters on both sides of the law, as well as a male character released after decades of imprisonment.

The fictional communities of Harlan, Paulie, and Blackburg/Shay Mountain are reckoning with who to recognize as legitimate authority figures, how to define freedom, and what types of (often illegal) actions are justifiable in the name of preserving freedom. These struggles position law enforcement and the legal system as central narrative components in *Justified*, *Rectify*, and *Outsiders*. This chapter examines the ways that their male characters on both sides of the law embody different types of masculinities. In doing so, the series complicate notions of good and bad and who is represented as worthy of audience sympathy and affection. It is not a simple case of law enforcement being the good guys and criminals being the bad guys. Nor do the series encourage unambiguous celebrations of law enforcement, or unequivocal condemnation of criminals. The protagonists on the "right" side of the law are not always

sympathetic and tend to exhibit masculinities that are socially undesirable and looked down upon, while the antagonists occasionally demonstrate behavior mainstream culture views more favorably, generating some affection from viewers. The series offer a critical perspective on law enforcement that complicates viewer expectations of who is the good guy and who is the bad guy.

The thrust of this chapter is how men on *Justified*, *Outsiders*, and *Rectify* define and pursue freedom. This relates to the concerns of real-world men during the 2010s. Kimmel writes about men in this time period in *Angry White Men*. He argues that this is an era in which white men believe they are losing power and control. They see others around them gaining privilege and status, and they seek to reclaim what they feel is lost (21). Alternately, they lash out at those they see as being responsible for their woes, particularly women or the government (16-17). Kimmel adds that a legitimate sense of economic anxiety is behind the anger these men feel (219). They see other groups getting benefits and economic privileges they think rightly belong to them, and their downward mobility is due to those others taking what rightfully belongs to them. Kimmel states that men may use violence as a recuperative strategy and become violent when they feel a loss of power (186). It is also a way to reassert their masculinity. R.W. Connell echoes this and notes that men use violence to sustain their dominance (*Masculinities* 83). This connects to the fictional men on these series. They see power and control at risk of being taken from them, or already gone, and their efforts to reclaim it are key to the narratives (and are often represented as violent).

In this chapter, I explore the ways in which the pursuit of freedom in the context of these series means direct encounters with law enforcement, the legal system, and other authorities. The interactions that the men have with such institutions and their representatives are keys ways in

which the series represent masculinity. The series represent the characters as having a variety of responses to these interactions, meaning that various masculinities are represented. Some male characters see violence and force as necessary to achieve their goals, and they do not hesitate to use them. Others prefer to avoid physical confrontations, but they do not hesitate to use violence if they believe the situation calls for it, or they take out their frustrations on those around them in ways that are sometimes, but not always, physical. Still others abhor violence and go out of their way to avoid it, even when under pressure to use it. I show how violence and force are related to notions of freedom, authority, and legality on these series, and how masculinities are informed by differing attitudes about the virtue and sensibility of the use of violence. There are male characters who attempt to maintain their freedom or demonstrate power by committing various acts of violence, from threats to assault and worse. In some cases these men are willing to break the law if they believe the ends justify the means. For some, violence is permissible if it is inflicted to preserve autonomy or benefit the community. They are quick to utilize it and not influenced by perceptions of what they do or the consequences of their actions. Others see physical force as only acceptable in matters of self-defense. Violence is a last resort and not something to treat as an admirable display of manhood regardless of circumstances.

I explore how *Justified* allows for a conservative reading sympathizing with traditional masculinity in its depiction of Raylan. A man with a badge inflicting violence upon others aligns with conservative views on authority and legality. A lawman exerting control and restoring order would be appealing to a conservative mindset during the 2010s, as American conservative ideology tended to sympathize with law enforcement. If such viewers saw the world as increasingly out of their control, a U.S. marshal using violence in the name of law & order would be restorative. I also outline how *Justified* has been categorized as a contemporary western, and

explore how it contains many of the elements considered to be prevalent in the classic series in the genre while also delving into how it resembles some of the most note-worthy scripted shows of the early 21st century.

*Outsiders* and *Rectify* are not as sympathetic with traditional masculinity and allow for different readings of the efficacy of violence. Members of law enforcement are not heroic figures on *Outsiders*. That show's Wade contrasts sharply with *Justified*'s Raylan. His goal is peacemaker, and he tries to reason with the mountain and the town, but he is unsuccessful. Contributing to his failed efforts is the attitude of other members of his profession in Blackburg. They are not interested in brokering peace and do not support Wade. They are hostile towards Shay Mountain and contribute to the unending cycle of violence that permeates the series, where violence only leads to more violence and accomplishes nothing productive. Male characters, especially Foster, who think the use of force makes them strong or preserves freedom only make matters worse.

On *Rectify*, notions and acts of violence cause Daniel significant torment. He is haunted by the fact that he does not know if he committed rape and murder and obsessing about it damages his ability to forge a path forward. He does not allow himself to feel free. Daniel also exhibits an ability to become violent with men who verbally abuse him, which only enhances the distress he feels as it makes him wonder how violent of a person he is and what kind of man he is. Lashing out at men who treat him poorly does not make him feel better and is not presented as righteous revenge or in any way defensible. For law enforcement, already eager to return Daniel to prison, violent actions make him look more guilty. Similar to *Outsiders*, violence does not lead to freedom, nor does it accomplish anything positive.

**Lawman in a Stetson: Showdowns, Shootouts, and a Western in Rural Kentucky**

If the 2010s did not feature many scripted television series focusing on men in rural settings, westerns were even more uncommon. They had mostly disappeared from television by then. Two scripted series from the time period that are sometimes referred to as westerns are AMC's *Hell on Wheels* (2011-2016), a period piece about construction of the First Transcontinental Railroad, and *Longmire* (2012-2017), a contemporary crime drama about a sheriff in Wyoming whose first three seasons aired on A&E, followed by three more on Netflix. This makes *Justified* something of a rarity as the glory years of the television western is decades past. Despite its twenty-first century setting in rural Kentucky, the series has much in common with westerns, starting with the central relationship between a classic cowboy and a blackhat villain. The heart of *Justified* is the antagonistic but occasionally mutually beneficial relationship between U.S. Marshal Raylan Givens and his one-time co-worker Boyd Crowder, a burgeoning criminal kingpin. It is set up as an old-fashioned tale of good guy and bad guy that over the course of six seasons develops into something much more complicated. Originally, Boyd was not meant to survive the pilot episode, and in the first season he is more of a traditional antagonist. He's a very bad man, a white supremacist who blows up an African American church and threatens to kill Raylan. As time goes on, a more nuanced relationship develops between the two men. At times, they hate each other. They engage in verbal and physical struggles. At other times, they help each other out and reminisce about their shared history. Raylan is far from perfect, and Boyd isn't all bad. The show positions each man as more than what they appear to be on the surface, and the same is true of their association. Viewer loyalty to the men isn't entirely fixed, one way or the other.

That is only the beginning of the commonalities between *Justified* and TV westerns from the 1950s and '60s. J. Fred McDonald outlines the familiar characteristics of television westerns

from that era in *Who Shot the Sheriff?: The Rise and Fall of the Television Western*. The characteristics he identifies function as part of the core of the twenty-first century series. Much like his 1950s and '60s counterparts, Raylan is a dedicated lawman who is flawed but heroic (65). Another similarity between *Justified* and westerns from decades past is the way they deal with complex issues and moral quandaries. In addition, the contemporary western and those from the 1950s and '60s feature plenty of action sequences as well as explorations of complex issues including masculinity, violence, justice, and morality (50). McDonald argues that the best television westerns effectively balance those elements (101).

Those elements include depth of character, something McDonald believes is common in television westerns at their peak. He calls them "adult" westerns as they were made for a grownup, rather than children's, audience. The heroes have flaws and are not one-dimensional good guys. These series aim for more depth of character and believability than series that targeted younger viewers and families (47). *Justified* and its protagonist, Raylan, are multifaceted in ways that recall the westerns McDonald finds noteworthy. At the same time, Raylan and the series call to mind the twenty-first century scripted shows that have been singled out for their complex male protagonists, such as *Breaking Bad*, *Mad Men*, and *The Sopranos*. This is also reflected in the characterization of Boyd, who is a three-dimensional antagonist and not a simplistic villain. The series encompasses characteristics associated with the genre and its television heyday while incorporating elements more familiar in modern-day series to make it more palatable for twenty-first century audiences.

Other similarities to classic television westerns position the series as one that allows for a conservative reading. An element of those series aligns with ideologies that are more closely associated with right-wing viewpoints. The lawman is a righteous hero and a force for good.

They exist to protect and serve. As McDonald says, their violence is legitimate, and they are good, legal men who stop criminals (102). A respect for law enforcement aligns with traditional masculinity, and Raylan is represented as a man who committed to a sense of law & order, rendering him appealing to conservative viewers. *Justified* developed right-wing fans, with the *National Review* calling it “a deeply if subtly conservative piece of storytelling,” due not to an ideological agenda but because, as (former UK prime minister Margaret) Thatcher said, the facts of life are conservative (Williamson).

*Justified* differs from classic television westerns in some ways. There are ways in which Raylan represents a type of character different from a lawman in a 1950s western. He calls to mind the male antiheroes of peak television, the protagonists at the center of the scripted series that Lotz, Albrecht, Sepinwall, Martin, and others have focused on. These are characters such as Don Draper (*Mad Men*), Walter White (*Breaking Bad*), and Tommy Gavin (*Rescue Me*). To a certain extent the same is true of Boyd. Initially he is presented as a more traditional villain and foil for Raylan, but over six seasons he evolves into something more akin to the kind of antihero seen in other male-centered serials from the 2010s. Like those antiheroes, the audience is encouraged to see Boyd as flawed but also root for him. He commits crimes and does bad things, but frequently those actions are presented as understandable attempts to make a better life for himself or defend himself from characters who mean him harm or treat him poorly.

The opening moments of *Justified* recall a situation that would be at home in a western. At the outset of “Fire in the Hole,” two men sit across from each other at a table. They are outdoors in broad daylight. The man in the hat, U.S. Marshal Raylan Givens, calmly but firmly reminds the other man, Tommy Bucks (Peter Greene), that he was told to leave town within 24 hours or else Raylan would kill him. Tommy doesn’t believe him, but after a few tense seconds

of silence, he begins to pull his gun. Raylan is faster on the draw, and he shoots and kills Tommy where he sits. When a superior informs him that he can't just shoot and kill people, Raylan responds by saying Tommy pulled first. This happens in the first few minutes of the pilot episode of *Justified* and is the introduction to Raylan Givens, the series protagonist. While it might have been an extrajudicial killing, it is also in self-defense, and it is a thrilling moment. Our hero is first shown gunning down on a bad guy in a showdown. The audience is on the side of law & order and Raylan. A tall, slender law enforcement officer wearing a Stetson and cowboy boots who clearly enjoys giving criminals ultimatums and shooting them if they fail to comply, he personifies *Justified's* western roots and occasional embrace of traditional masculinity from the very first moments.

It is simple enough to label *Justified* a twenty-first century western based on surface appearances. Raylan has a badge, wears a cowboy hat, and is quick to brandish his sidearm. He is tall, slender, white, and confident. His aesthetic gives the immediate impression of a cowboy even if it is 2010 in a place thousands of miles from sagebrush and cacti. The western label, which was how the media positioned the series (a 2010 *Hollywood Reporter* story by James Hibberd called it a “neo-Western” while that same year Alan Sepinwall described it as a western with a contemporary setting), is also a way of making it stand out at a time when the television landscape is getting increasingly crowded. Upon closer examination it becomes apparent that the label is appropriate if one accepts that Kentucky is decidedly not in the American West (though the series was filmed almost entirely in California).

The cowboy is familiar, but the setting is not. After shooting Tommy Bucks in Miami, Raylan is punished with an immediate transfer he does not want. He is forced to work in the region in which he was born and raised, Harlan County, Kentucky. It is as rural as Miami is

sunny. Raylan wants no part of Harlan, but he has no choice. Despite being raised in Harlan County there is something of a fish-out-of-water element to Raylan being back. He has been away for a long time and is treated that way upon his return. Raylan is an outsider surrounded by family and people he grew up with. While the rural Kentucky setting is uncommon for a scripted television series, Raylan himself is far more familiar. A gunslinger with a Stetson, a badge, and a firearm dates back to the early days of the medium. Kentucky might not be the west but *Justified* shares several characteristics with the classic television westerns of the 1950s just as Raylan is similar to the traditional cowboy archetype. In spite of having a southern rather than western setting, the series revises the western, in part, by substituting rural landscapes for the west. There are plenty of wide open, sparsely populated spaces on the series (in addition to California filming locations, which provides landscapes that would not seem out of place on a series set in the American west).

Westerns dominated television throughout the 1950s. McDonald notes that while its roots are in literature, film, and radio, westerns developed into a powerhouse on American television. They were widely popular and received strong ratings. In 1959, they peaked with a total of twenty-eight westerns on television. McDonald devotes his attention to television westerns aimed at a more adult audience. He details the characteristics of these adult westerns and their heroes, describing them as “cowboy action for grownups.” There are times when McDonald’s praise of these westerns, series like CBS’s *Gunsmoke* (1955-1975) and *Have Gun - Will Travel* (1957-1963), ABC’s *Maverick* (1957-1962) and *The Rifleman* (1958-1963), and NBC’s *Bonanza* (1959-1973), contains language analogous to descriptions of the most lauded series of the peak TV era (47-48).

According to McDonald, the best adult television westerns from the 1950s distinguish themselves by emphasizing complexity and character. Granted, these series deliver plenty of what audiences expect from the genre. There is no shortage of action or shootouts, and the time period dictates that narrative formulas and restrictions are adhered to. The heroes frequently use violence to settle conflicts and administer justice, and their righteousness is seldom questioned. There are also historical shortcomings such as imperialism and poor treatment of Native Americans. Women do not get much to do. Still, despite these limitations, the series McDonald highlights contain complex characterizations prioritizing depth and believability. He refers to the protagonists as “in-between guys,” a precursor to the anti-heroes of the contemporary age. These men are not flawlessly moral and one-dimensional. They are flawed and fallible, often struggling with determining what is right and wrong and having their convictions tested. Their inner lives are probed and they aren’t afraid to appear vulnerable or display emotions. Typically, they are brave and tough, but also mature, imperfect, and contemplative (47-48).

In addition to complex characters, these series also feature challenging narratives. The storytelling aims for human insight and explores social, psychological, and moral dilemmas. The world is presented as gray, not black-and-white. In some cases television westerns of the 1950s examined contemporary culture. McDonald says the best ones deftly address social and personal quandaries while avoiding pat moral lessons and heavy-handedness (78). Jeremy Agnew echoes McDonald’s sentiments in his analysis of what he also refers to as “adult westerns.” He says these series contain more adult themes and heroes with flaws who make mistakes. The villains are also more three-dimensional and not simply evil (162).

Agnew also details the mythic western hero in a more general sense and describes the most common attributes of the early television western hero, and there are shades of Raylan in

these heroes. He says the mythic western hero is a man with a gun, horse, and no home who devotes himself to solving problems. He is a lonely and rugged man of action who only retaliates when provoked and defends the weak and innocent. This type of hero is brave, honorable, chivalrous, and full of integrity. He respects the law, women, and children and sacrifices his own relationships and happiness in order to commit himself to doing good deeds. The early television western hero is not far removed from this mythic western hero. He is courageous, smart, just, tough, and tolerant (161). He also does not shoot first (92). Raylan possesses many of the qualities associated with 1950s television western heroes and in certain ways would not feel out of place in a series produced during that era, which speaks to why so many characters on *Justified* treat him as something of an aberration and mention how he comes across as a throwback in certain ways. In season four's "Truth & Consequences," Rachel refers to him as Wyatt Earp, and in the same episode a bad guy references Gary Cooper when insulting Raylan. The characters might not intend to be flattering, but Wyatt Earp and Gary Cooper are (real and fictional) western heroes. This positions him as something of a nostalgic masculine ideal at a time when that would appeal to a more conservative audience.

As McDonald explains, there are seven types of quintessential western stories that are representative of the genre as it existed on television in the 1950s. One of those seven is the marshal story, the tale of a dedicated lawman (61). Raylan is a U.S. Marshal who is transferred from Miami to Kentucky at the beginning of *Justified*. At the outset of the series he demonstrates that he abides by what Agnew states is a code followed by a western hero. This type of hero carries a gun but does not draw first. He also never backs down from an enemy and if he kills it is always in self-defense and justified (Agnew, 92). When Raylan shoots and kills Tommy Bucks, it is Bucks who draws first. Raylan's subsequent transfer is a form of punishment but one

that owes more to the fact that he gave Bucks an ultimatum, threatened to kill him, and then did so in broad daylight. The shooting itself is self-defense and not something that results in any legal consequences. It is clear to the viewer that a cowboy has shot an outlaw and the audience is (or is intended to be) on Raylan's side. This dynamic plays out frequently when Raylan crosses paths with a bad guy. Bucks and others like him are presented as unpleasant, dangerous criminals who have done terrible things and respond to Raylan with insults and resistance. Raylan, on the other hand, is tall and lanky, always wearing a cowboy hat and boots. He stands out wherever he is with the look of a traditional western hero. He retorts to the attitude and defiance he gets from bad guys with witty quips and one-liners. Raylan is charismatic, handsome, funny, and does not back down from a threat. The viewer's sympathy aligns with the affable U.S. Marshal who calls to mind a classic cowboy on the right side of the law. The character's more questionable actions are made palatable by his easygoing charm and willingness to face danger, while his aesthetic positions him as an old-fashioned cowboy. Raylan is affable while being able to withstand a comparison to heroes on westerns circa their golden age, an overall package that holds significant appeal for a conservative viewer.

There are several ways in which Raylan is a standard mythic western hero. He has a gun but instead of a horse he drives a state-issued vehicle. He spends his time traversing rural Kentucky attempting to solve problems, which often means finding and detaining someone. Raylan spends much of the series without a real home, at various points living in a motel room and in a small apartment above a bar. He pines for his ex-wife Winona (Natalie Rea) and they occasionally make amends but primarily Raylan is on his own. The problem is that he is more committed to the job than to personal relationships. In addition to a strained relationship with Winona, he is not close to his family, including his father, Arlo. Raylan prioritizes doing good

over marriage, family, friendship, and settling down. This tendency to live in solitude extends to his professional life. He prefers to work alone and while circumstances sometimes require him to partner with a colleague, Raylan is usually alone when he is on the job. His co-workers seldom object as they are not particularly fond of Raylan and his lone gunman ways. He has alienated just about everyone in his life.

*Justified* explicitly encourages the western hero comparisons in other ways. Early in the first season a character asks Raylan if he likes westerns, and he replies that he used to, insinuating that their heyday is long gone. The frequent shots of a poster for *Tombstone* (a 1993 western about Wyatt Earp) in his apartment suggest that his fondness isn't all in the past and places Raylan alongside one of the most famous lawmen in history. In the third season premiere, "The Gunfighter," a criminal sizes him up in an elevator and remarks that there is "not much call for cowboys these days." Raylan disagrees and notes that the criminal would be surprised. There is also "Truth & Consequences," with its references to Wyatt Earp and Gary Cooper. The sixth season builds up to a showdown between Raylan and Boon (Jonathan Tucker), a hired gun in town causing trouble. Over the course of several episodes they size each other up, talk cowboy hats, threaten each other, and eventually engage in a standoff in the last episode of the series, "The Promise" (Raylan prevails). Regularly reinforcing the fact that Raylan is a twenty-first century western hero is a way for *Justified* to acknowledge its western roots and have a little fun with it. The series is self-aware and clearly has significant affection for classic westerns. Certain characters might poke fun at Raylan's appearance or tendency to behave like a cowboy but *Justified* doesn't see this as a problem. Its hero unapologetically looks and acts like a cowboy, and there are regular reminders of this. The poster and the jokes are just ways to let twenty-first century audiences know it is aware of the western roots. The cowboy hero repeatedly

confronting and shooting it out with bad guys is leaning into the genre that inspired it. The shootings are all justified, and the lawman always comes out on top. The heroic man with the badge allows for reverence of law enforcement, which generally corresponds with a more conservative worldview.

While McDonald argues that the best westerns do not contain simplistic notions of good and bad, Elkin notes that part of the genre's appeal is seeing order restored and bad guys vanquished. Justice is portrayed as worth fighting for and those who seek it are to be respected (73). The way *Justified* depicts fighting for justice, restoring order, and eradicating criminals allows for a conservative reading of the series. Raylan might be flawed, but he is fully dedicated to bringing bad guys to justice and restoring order in town. He never wavers in what he believes is a fight for justice, and never shies away from putting himself in harms way. In this manner, there is a respect for law enforcement that aligns with traditional masculinity and an unwavering belief in law & order, something that tends to be associated with a conservative worldview.

The western roots of the series extend beyond the characterization of Raylan and include the storytelling. While in recent years much has been written about "complex TV" and "quality TV" in relation to twenty-first century scripted series, McDonald argues that the adult television westerns of the 1950s are noteworthy due to challenging narratives and complex characterizations. He says these series portray flawed heroes, incorporate social commentary, and challenge stereotypes (62-63). Those qualities are similar to the ways that scholars like Mittell describe the most notable twenty-first century series. The difference is that there are more limitations on the westerns of the 1950s. McDonald writes that these series could not experiment too much as viewers preferred the predictable and familiar. He adds that when some series got too real, sponsors were unhappy. They were bound by certain formulas common during that time

period (67). *Justified* is a twenty-first century version of those classic adult westerns of the 1950s. Its storytelling contains the qualities McDonald admires about the best series of the earlier era with modern touches for an audience accustomed to complex heroes and narratives. The protagonist is not entirely good, and the main antagonist is not entirely bad. In fact, the audience might even pull for or sympathize with the bad guy. There exists a gray area, and there is character development over time. There are not always easy, clear resolutions. Good people suffer and justice isn't always done, and good people do bad things, or bad people do good things. Helen was murdered for what Arlo did, but her killer isn't tried for it. Loretta gets mixed up with unsavory characters. Boyd helps Raylan when the latter is in danger. It's complicated.

Raylan is the kind of "in-between guy" McDonald says is common in the 1950s adult western (52). The twenty-first century counterpart is the antihero. Mittell identifies the characteristics of an antihero and says that they are all over television. An antihero is a primary character on a scripted series who can be unsympathetic, morally questionable, or villainous. Their behavior or beliefs provoke conflicting feelings in the viewer. Often morality is relative as other characters are presented as even worse ("Lengthy Interactions"). Antiheroes are a frequent fixture of the twenty-first century series Mittell writes about. Raylan has the characteristics of an in-between guy and an antihero (as does his chief antagonist Boyd) and his characterization plays a key role in establishing *Justified* as being among the caliber of series McDonald and Mittell write about.

One of the western heroes McDonald spotlights is *Gunsmoke* protagonist Matt Dillon (James Arness). He describes Dillon, a marshal in Dodge City, Kansas in the 1890s, as a complex hero with plenty of shortcomings. He is capable of making mistakes and does not have all the answers. Dillon gets angry, needs help completing tasks, and misjudges people (65).

Raylan is a flawed and fallible hero akin to Dillon. While he is frequently positioned as a hero, a lawman who always neutralizes the criminal he is pursuing with either a witty insult, an arrest, or a bullet, Raylan is not always an easy person to like (something other characters on the series are quick to point out) and he makes numerous questionable decisions. FX is upfront about the prickly nature of Raylan and addresses his volatility in promotional trailers that aired before the first-season premiere. In them, Raylan says he has never considered himself an angry man, while Winona replies “you’re the angriest man I know.” She is not surprised he killed Tommy Bucks in Miami and attributes his actions to unchecked anger issues.

That anger is a defining trait and regularly on display. It does Raylan no favors. He is quick to initiate verbal disputes with people, usually men, who irritate him in some fashion. These verbal disputes often lead to physical ones, and Raylan typically throws the first punch. There is a cynical side to him that only sees the worst in people, and these people easily get under his skin whether they are trying to or not. Raylan’s hostility manifests in different ways. He doesn’t always end up fighting with the cause of his hostility. Sometimes he insults people as he’s interviewing or detaining them. Other times he loses his temper and raises his voice when letting someone know how he really feels about them. This happens with his father, Arlo, whom Raylan despises. Whenever they encounter one another Raylan relishes reminding Arlo how much he hates him, usually with a raised voice. From verbal sparring to fistfights, Raylan’s anger is quick to surface and frequently on display. In many cases, like when he instigates a bar fight, these incidents result in Raylan coming across as puerile and ill-tempered.

Fellow marshals routinely express their displeasure with Raylan and he creates numerous workplace headaches for his co-workers. It is fair to say that many simply do not like him and do not mind that he prefers to work alone. Raylan’s supervisor Art Mullen (Nick Searcy) is in a

perpetual state of exasperation with him. Raylan is insubordinate and often in trouble (with criminals, suspects, co-workers, or other law enforcement agencies). He bends the rules and does not follow direct orders. A marshal named Tim Gutterson (Jacob Pitts) is asked to, in essence, babysit Raylan on occasion and strenuously resents him for it. Rachel also resents Raylan, but for different reasons. She believes Art favors him and cuts him too much slack. As an African-American woman, Rachel asserts that she would never get away with the rebellious behavior Raylan gets away with. David Vasquez (Rick Gomez), a U.S. Attorney the marshal's office works closely with, dislikes Raylan for the same reasons Art does. He makes all of their lives more difficult and their distaste for Raylan is understandable and warranted. He is prone to being unprofessional, ungrateful, and selfish.

Raylan's anger issues are reflected in his appetite for violence, and as McDonald and Agnew articulate, western heroes and violence share a close relationship. McDonald notes that 1950s television westerns feature plenty of violence and gun play. He adds that the series draw a line between legitimate and illegitimate violence and that the heroes use violence to stop criminals (102). Agnew says that consistent violence is an integral component of early television westerns. The heroes are quick on the draw and an expert shot, but they only resort to violence when provoked and faced with no other choice (12). The adult western series McDonald highlights might contain three-dimensional characters and complex storylines, but the depictions of violence are rather one-dimensional. The hero never shoots first and every time he does shoot it is in self-defense and justified. The violence is necessary in order to stop bad people. The hero does not have time for and should not have to worry about civil liberties or the notion of innocent-until-proven-guilty (103). Whatever else his shortcomings, the classic western hero is only ever on the right side of a shooting. He is a worthy ally of law & order.

Raylan is a violent man, which *Justified* establishes in its very first moments with the Tommy Bucks shooting. He is rather bemused when a superior tells him that he can't just go around shooting people on sight, responding "he pulled first, I shot him." It sets the template for Raylan's relationship with violence. He will provoke someone until they react, and he sees no problem with shooting someone he perceives as deserving it. If you hit or shoot at him first, he will not hesitate to hit or shoot back. Sometimes he wants nothing more than for an adversary to hit or shoot first. Raylan instigates confrontations and knowingly enters situations he expects to end in violence, starting with Tommy Bucks. That showdown is the first of many violent incidents Raylan is at the center of.

That a series about a lawman contains violence is not unexpected. It is the nature and volume of the violence that is notable and helps define Raylan. He shoots a lot of people on the series and the shootings are always justified. As McDonald and Agnew make clear, this is an integral component of classic Westerns. *Justified* is several decades removed from those series, yet it fully and completely exonerates every shooting Raylan is involved in over the course of 78 episodes. He shoots (but doesn't kill) Boyd at the end of season one and has the showdown with Boone near the end of season six, and there is plenty of shooting in between. A writer for *Uproxx* noted that Raylan shoots and kills more than twenty people during the duration of the series (Kurp). Raylan also facilitates shootings, like when he has other people shoot and kill a crime boss in season four. That is also depicted as defensible because the crime boss has threatened Raylan and his family. There is the initial transfer to Kentucky and suspensions for insubordination, but Raylan never faces any real consequences for the shootings he engages in. There are also the random bar fights and several physical confrontations with Boyd, Arlo, and other antagonists including season two's Coover Bennett (Brad William Henke). Despite his

status as a law enforcement officer Raylan instigates these fights simply because he dislikes these men and wants to physically punish them over it. He is not defending himself or in any imminent physical danger.

Raylan is angry and violent, and he feels the need to establish and demonstrate his manhood repeatedly in ways that call to mind traditional masculinity. His response to conflict, real or imagined, is to reassert his dominance and correct whatever he deems offensive. If someone directly challenges his authority or manhood or exhibits behavior he finds distasteful (regardless of whether or not it is directed towards him), Raylan quickly resorts to violence. This behavior often casts him in an unflattering light. At times he comes across as petulant, resentful, and aggressive. Much of the violence could easily be avoided.

McDonald suggests that the hero's violent ways are never questioned on a classic western. He is a decisive moral force who does not need to explain himself (105). Even though Raylan's actions and manhood are somewhat endorsed, in a difference from the classic western, the series makes an effort to acknowledge twenty-first century ideas about masculinity and violence. Raylan's propensity for violence does not go unnoticed. Winona points out how angry he is and worries about being close to him because of all the violence. His father notes that whatever his own faults are he has not shot anyone. Art worries about Raylan crossing paths with criminal elements and the likelihood of violence if he does. At one point he jokingly tells Raylan to eat before he chases a fugitive in case he shoots someone. Boyd also takes to reminding Raylan of how violent he is and how often he finds himself in violent situations. Raylan himself makes light of it when he tracks down a wanted sex offender in season two's "The Moonshine War." He says that he would like to shoot someone like him but is working hard on shooting less people. There is an element of downplaying all the violence by having characters make light of it

and always finding ways to excuse it. It gives the viewer permission to enjoy the violence or dismiss it without giving it serious thought. The self-awareness and the jokes keep the series from getting too dark and makes it easier to not reflect upon how many people Raylan is actually seriously harming or killing. There is humor in every episode and the tone is far from dour. It is easy to lose sight of how much violence and killing there is. This is similar to the classic western, which consistently presented the violence and killing in a manner that would not cause the viewer to question it. Even if there is a lot of brutality and death, it can be deflected with humor or righteousness, rendering them easy to accept or overlook.

It is easy to see how Raylan appeals to those who advocate for law & order and feel no sympathy for those who break the law. The series has sympathy for traditional masculinity. Raylan's righteous, tireless pursuit of fugitives and the justified nature of his shootings renders a rather positive representation of law enforcement. He might bend the rules but he is not corrupt. He is all about law & order and despises those who break the law. Raylan loathes criminals, including his own father, and spends no time considering their motive or circumstances. He has no sympathy whatsoever for those he pursues on the job. Raylan makes clear more than once that he does not care if criminal elements hurt or kill each other. He refers to it as "shitkicker-on-shitkicker crime." Their lives have no value or meaning. When Boyd captures a woman working for the cartel, Raylan says he has no moral objection to Boyd killing her. When he interacts with those he detains, regardless of what they are accused of, Raylan mocks them and makes it clear he views them as worthless. It is a conservative outlook privileging the man with a badge. The lawman is an upstanding citizen only trying to protect and serve, while the criminal is worthless, beneath contempt, a plague on society. The viewer is given permission to feel that way about

them. The heralding of law enforcement and the demonization of the criminal tend to find sympathy in conservative circles.

McDonald notes that the classic television westerns of the 1950s are known for their machismo and for being stereotypically masculine. There is not much place for women on these series and they do not get to do much. There are seldom any female heroics and generally speaking the men fought and killed other men (76-77). *Justified* does feature female characters, but they are not given much to do and mostly remain on the sidelines of the action. Moreover, Raylan embodies a traditional masculinity when it comes to his treatment of women and those he sees as unable to take care of themselves, something Agnew notes is a characteristic of the western hero, who believes he is responsible for the weak and the innocent (13). Raylan has a soft spot for children and develops a paternal affinity for Loretta (Kaitlyn Dever), a girl he meets in the second season and spends the rest of the series looking out for after she is orphaned. He also spends a portion of season five trying to mentor teenage Kendal (Jacob Lofland), who is a young member of a family of criminals. Raylan's efforts to protect these young people and steer them away from trouble assures his contact with nefarious figures who mean him harm. Those who make Loretta their responsibility after her parents are out of the picture and Kendal's family both want Raylan dead. This does not deter him as he does not back down from certain danger. He does not flinch when a gun is pointed at him. Raylan is resolute no matter the consequences if he believes his actions are aiding a righteous cause. His protective qualities and eagerness to watch over young people in precarious situations make him appealing and sympathetic, but they also uphold traditional ideals of masculinity and position Raylan as a patriarchal protector of those he views as weaker, and his protection is often coupled with violence.

His paternalism applies to a majority of the women he interacts with. He frequently prevents physical harm from coming to them, meaning his actions and treatment of them are vindicated. However, women are often only in danger because of him, and he does not view them as being able to take care of themselves without his intervention. Outside of Boyd, recurring antagonists on the series are the Detroit mafia, who are involved with drugs and other illegal activities in the area. In season four, upset with Raylan interfering in their business, the Detroit mafia threaten Winona in her home in “Peace of Mind.” In the next episode, “Ghosts,” she is being held hostage by Nicky Augustine (Mike O’Malley), a high-ranking member of the Detroit mafia, and his men. A furious Raylan tells Nicky that he won’t hesitate to kill him if he has to and makes a deal to free Winona. Later, Raylan apologizes (not for the first time) to Winona for endangering her, but once again he saves her, and threatening a bad guy like Nicky engenders sympathy for his actions. In season six’s “The Trash and the Snake,” he tells Loretta he is worried about her involvement with criminals and says he is concerned for her safety. She has not asked for his opinion or expressed any interest in having him look out for her. Raylan just takes it upon himself to do so.

While in many ways Raylan represents a traditional, problematic masculinity more suited to a 1950s western, there are other ways in which he embraces more twenty-first century masculinity. He is more than just a trigger happy, paternalistic lawman and has shades of the complexity McDonald finds in many of the classic western heroes. In certain ways Raylan also functions as a counterpoint to Boyd and his own masculinity. Raylan occasionally demonstrates enlightened thinking that hints at an open mind. He has no patience for or sympathy with Boyd’s extremist views. This is especially true in early seasons of the series. Boyd is introduced as a white supremacist who blows up an African-American church. He also makes derogatory

comments about Jews. Raylan finds Boyd's views nonsensical and misguided. He asks Boyd how many Jewish people he knows, which is none, as a way to demonstrate the absurdity of the anti-Semitism. Raylan is equally dismissive of Boyd's racism, declaring that it is just a way for Boyd to blame others for his mistakes and problems, which in Raylan's view are entirely self-inflicted. Raylan also responds angrily whenever he overhears someone make misogynist or homophobic comments. He has little tolerance for hateful speech, which aligns with his dim view of humanity and general annoyance with most people he encounters. However, Raylan is hardly an advocate for marginalized groups and their interests, and he isn't calling for their just treatment. It is more that he does not like people he perceives as bullies or crooks mistreating or denigrating others because he strongly dislikes bullies and crooks. It calls to mind a "live and let live" attitude. If people aren't harming anyone else, just leave them be.

This vexation with bigoted behavior showcases Raylan's tendency to reject nostalgia, something that is explored further in the following chapter. He does not pine for the good old days or believe the world was a better place two or three decades prior. He is not afraid of or overtly resisting a changing world. When Rachel tells him that navigating law enforcement as a woman of color in Kentucky has been challenging, Raylan immediately acknowledges her struggle and says he believes that it has not been easy for her. He also states that she is good at her job and has no qualms about working with a woman (aside from his preference for working alone as frequently as possible). This acceptance of social and cultural shifts also reveals itself in Raylan's attitude towards men. His job means that he crosses paths with (primarily white) men who find themselves on the wrong side of the law. These experiences are at least partly responsible for his dim view of manhood. Raylan sees them as obtuse, dangerous, and small-minded and wants no association with them beyond what is required by his profession.

Another component in the humanization of Raylan are repeated efforts to demonstrate that he is not superhuman. He is capable of being hurt and is injured several times. He also needs others to rescue or remove him from perilous situations. In the first season Raylan picks a bar fight and two men pummel him. It takes an armed bartender to stop the beating. In season two he gets into a fight with Coover Bennett and is beaten badly. Coover's mother Mags (Margo Martindale) breaks up the fight. The season two finale finds him in serious trouble twice. Dickie Bennett (Jeremy Davies) knocks him unconscious, strings him upside down from a tree, and beats him with a baseball bat. Boyd shows up and stops Dickie from killing Raylan. Later in the same episode Raylan is shot and season three begins with him in the hospital. These incidents reveal the limits to Raylan's toughness and notify viewers that he can be hurt. He cannot always outfight or outsmart everyone and will need help from others from time to time. They also serve as a contrast to the shooting and killing that Raylan does. Seeing him injured, bloody, vulnerable, and defeated generates viewer sympathy and prevents formation of the idea that he is an indestructible and untouchable hero. For as cocky as he sometimes is, there are times when he is helpless and in real danger. This works to humanize him and makes it easier to excuse or pardon his more problematic behavior. It prevents Raylan from being viewed as some kind of unstoppable killing machine, which might make him harder to root for. In those moments, there is concern for his well-being above all else, and no (or at least less) fixation on the violence he inflicts upon others.

*Justified* covers a lot of ground over six seasons and seventy-eight episodes but its beating heart is the relationship between Raylan and Boyd. Boyd is established as Raylan's main nemesis in the pilot episode, and by episode's end Raylan shoots and nearly kills him, but over the course of the series Boyd becomes as integral to the narrative as Raylan. In certain aspects he

fits with Mittell's understanding of a television antihero (or McDonald's in-between guy). He does bad things, but the viewer likes him. Over time the white supremacy and anti-Semitism fade into the background and it would be easy to forget that Boyd ever held those views. He has a way with words and is extremely witty. One character says he loves how Boyd talks, using 400 words when 40 will do. His intelligence and wordplay are highlighted frequently and generate viewer affinity. Boyd is also contrasted with other criminals who are far more vicious and barbaric than he is, which paints him in a more flattering light despite his many nefarious acts.

His charm, wit, and ability to outsmart guys even worse than him (characters the viewer is meant to dislike) tend to obscure Boyd's problematic masculinity. He exhibits a decidedly traditional masculinity that functions in opposition to Raylan's and marks one as a villain and the other as a more conventional hero. Boyd has a point when he calls Raylan out for shooting so many people and making questionable choices. This should not be mistaken as overlooking or excusing Boyd's flaws. Unlike Raylan he yearns for the past and wants to restore Harlan to the way it was (Make Harlan Great Again). He shares some of Raylan's paternalism and belief that women need men's protection, but Boyd would prefer that women not work at all. When he and Ava discuss starting a life together Boyd talks of taking care of her and that includes Ava not having to work (he doesn't ask her what she wants). There is also the fact that Boyd is introduced as a white supremacist and expresses hate speech. He does eventually make a clean break from that world and the series downplays his bigotry over the course of six seasons, but that should not cloud the fact that Boyd begins *Justified* as an unrepentant racist and anti-Semite. His white masculinity is highly problematic.

Ultimately, the classic western hero gets the better of the villain. *Justified* concludes with Raylan and Boyd having a conversation in prison. Boyd is serving a life sentence. Raylan has

retired and moved back to Florida. As they talk about the past while sitting across from one another in prison, the series endorses the law enforcement officer and his more enlightened masculinity. Raylan has moved on and appears ready to put the past behind him once and for all after his conversation with Boyd. His daughter is in Florida and he has comfortably settled into life there. Boyd, who refused to put the past behind him or give up on his criminal endeavors, is spending the rest of his life behind bars. He made the wrong choices and is paying for it. Thus, the series concludes in a rather predictable manner. The conclusion fits with the classic westerns of the 1950s. McDonald says these series punished characters for their disreputable behavior including ignorance, intolerance, and greed. It is harmful to be uncivilized and the good guy always gets his man (87). Raylan ends the first episode by shooting Boyd and ends the series by putting him in prison. He gets his man, something *Justified* spends its six seasons building to. It was always about Raylan and Boyd, the lawman and the criminal. In the end, the lawman and his more conflicted masculinity wins out.

### **Standoff over Shay Mountain: The Farrell Clan vs. Blackburg and Law Enforcement**

On *Outsiders*, different factions take sides and find themselves doing battle with one another. Legality and authority are closely connected to conflicts between specific communities as the town of Blackburg and the residents of Shay Mountain battle one another for control of land in ways both legal and extralegal. The clan has experienced complete autonomy while living on the mountain, far off the grid, for more than 200 years. Energy company One Planet seeks to mine the mountaintop the clan calls home. The depiction of their confrontation allows the series to delve into matters of rightful land ownership. One Planet believes they have a legal right to mine on Shay Mountain. The clan believes the place they have lived for centuries is rightfully theirs, not to mention they do not recognize the legitimacy of society's rules and

regulations. The increasingly hostile struggle involves legal efforts to move the clan as well as means that go outside the law. In return the clan is willing to do whatever it takes to prevent One Planet and the authorities from forcing them to move. For One Planet, Blackburg, and Shay Mountain, it is not only about who is legally entitled to the land but who is most suited to constructive oversight of it.

The battle over rightful ownership and stewardship of the land along with a local sheriff's attempt to serve as a mediator between One Planet, Blackburg, and Shay Mountain lays the groundwork for *Outsider's* depiction of masculinities. The dispute over the land results in varying reactions from men involved in the confrontation in terms of how to assert authority and how to respond to challenges to authority. There are also differing ideas when it comes to the concept of freedom, and freedom is closely tied to the formation of masculinities. Freedom to live where you please, freedom from outside authorities or forces, and freedom to provide for your family take on different meanings for men on the series. Those disparate meanings influence the ways in which the construction of masculinity for the male characters of *Outsiders*.

Two male characters central to the representation of masculinities on the series are Foster and Wade. They are at the heart of the conflict between the different communities, and have vastly different outlooks on freedom, authority, and manhood. Foster craves control above all else and believes nothing is off limits in the pursuit of power. Power is achieved through fear and fear is attained through violence. Foster does terrible things to get what he wants, bringing pain to the mountain. His is a violent and dangerous masculinity. Wade is far different from both Foster and his fellow lawman, Raylan. He does not have the latter's swagger, charisma, or ability to take decisive action. Wade detests conflict and goes to great lengths to avoid violence. He wants peace more than anything. This does not mean he is heroic or entirely appealing. His

masculinity is not as problematic as Foster's, but there are shortcomings to Wade's dedication to avoiding conflict at all costs. It does not get results.

*Outsiders* does not have as much in common with Westerns as *Justified* does, but it does contain a standoff of sorts. The central conflict in the series revolves around rightful ownership of Shay Mountain. Energy company One Planet asserts that they are the legal owner of the mountain and have every right to have the clan removed and launch mining operations. With one exception, deputy-turned-sheriff Wade Houghton (Thomas Wright), law enforcement sides with One Planet and is committed to forcing the clan off the mountain. For their part, the clan does not recognize the authority of law enforcement or the legal rights of One Planet. The law does not concern them. They have lived on the mountain for two centuries and have no intention to relocate. The only authority they recognize is internal. This struggle over Shay Mountain drives the action over the course of the series' two seasons. The battle over rightful ownership and stewardship of the land as well as Wade's efforts to serve as a mediator between Shay Mountain and Blackburg lay the groundwork for the depiction of masculinities on the series.

Violence is a central component of the series, and *Outsiders* portrays it as cyclical, poisonous, and never-ending. Violence leads to retaliation and more violence. It never ends, or at least it wouldn't end until there was no one left to fight. If you speak with actions and not words, actions will be the only real form of communication. This tends to poison everyone and everything. It brings out the worst in men and has a ripple effect. A man harming or killing another man impacts their loved ones and their community. It also toxifies an already volatile situation as it leads men to seek vengeance and commit more actions of violence. In the end, no one wins, and people and places are left decimated. As on *Justified*, this series portrays men

who use violence to spread fear, control others, and gain power as largely harming themselves and damaging their communities.

Whereas Raylan and Boyd remain the central figures during the entirety of the six seasons of *Justified*, with a long series of antagonists entering and exiting at various points, *Outsiders* remains more of an ensemble piece. Key figures in the clan include Foster Farrell (David Morse), who resents his mother's leadership and believes himself to be the person most suited to the job; Lil' Foster (Ryan Hurst), who bears his father's name and is cognizant of living in his shadow; Hasil Farrell (Kyle Gallner), who strikes up a relationship with a woman in Blackburg and begins to spend more time there; and Asa Farrell (Joe Anderson), who returns to Shay Mountain at the outset of the series after spending a decade living elsewhere. The men in Blackburg have secondary roles in the series, with Breece Dobbs (Jeb Kreager) being one of the most prominent townspeople. Breece is unemployed and married to Wade's sister Ledda (Rebecca Harris). Other men who live in town or work for One Planet are important to the narrative as they figure into the struggle between Shay Mountain and Blackburg, but they have smaller roles to play. Wade is caught in the middle as he tries desperately to prevent all-out war from commencing.

The pilot episode, "Farrell Wine," establishes the sides and the status of their relationship. Wade's position on the clan is partially informed by a violent incident that occurred 25 years prior. That was the last time there was an attempt to forcibly remove the clan from the mountain. People died and ever since no one goes to the mountain and the clan doesn't venture into town. He believes it is best to not interfere with the clan and wants no part of trying to evict them. Wade finds that peaceful coexistence is preferable and possible as long as everyone sticks to where they live. Conflict is imminent, however, as One Planet and Foster Farrell are

determined to initiate a confrontation. One Planet owns the land and does not care how long the clan has lived there or how dangerous they might be. They want them gone as soon as possible and expect law enforcement to do what they want. Foster resents the fact that his mother leads the clan. He does not respect or agree with her vision and has his own ideas on what is the best way forward for them. He also has no intention of leaving the mountain and is not afraid of One Planet or law enforcement. Lil' Foster, Hasil, and Asa try to navigate a path in the wake of Foster's decisions.

Foster is a destructive force who represents a harmful traditional masculinity rooted in misogyny and notions of men being more suited to leadership roles. He also believes in using violence as a way to intimidate others and maintain power over enemies and allies alike. This is established in the pilot episode. Foster aggressively moves to consolidate his power among the clan while drawing the attention and ire of Blackburg. He takes these actions in direct defiance of his mother, Lady Ray (Phyllis Somerville), the clan's leader. Foster is provoking Lady Ray as much as he's provoking the town. He has the clan steal from a store in Blackburg after years of them not venturing off the mountain. He also takes a group of men into town and steals guns, stating that "times change" when it's pointed out that this isn't standard operating procedure for the clan. Foster insults his son's manhood and berates him because he doesn't approve of the way a woman talks to Lil' Foster. Foster does not think women should challenge or question men under any circumstances. When he discovers that Hasil has been selling moonshine to someone from Blackburg, Foster cuts off some of his fingers.

The violence, theft, insults, and provocation are all tied to authority and Foster's desire to rule the clan. He is not interested in anyone else's input and prefers to rule by fear. In season one's "Weapons," Lady Ray makes it clear that she is not going to pass power to Foster. She

does not trust his decision-making in light of the effort to remove them from the mountain. Foster does not let that deter him. The clan has never shown much interest in guns but Foster knows the power that comes with possessing firearms. He wants them so he can overthrow Lady Ray and defend the clan from those trying to move them. Foster has already cultivated a loyal group of male followers who will do whatever he tells them to. When Lady Ray makes it clear that he will not be the leader, Foster attempts to kill her and take power for himself. His masculinity does not respect women, believes a man should be in charge, and maintains that power and authority are achieved and displayed through violence, intimidation, and fear. The series wants the viewer to see him as a villain, a man so desperate for power he would commit matricide, as he drowns Lady Ray in a bathtub in the season one episode “Decomp of a Stuck Pig.”

Foster tells the rest of the clan that it is his duty to protect everyone. He does this to convince them that he belongs in charge and that the guns he has accumulated are necessary for their safety. His plan to take charge suffers a setback when Lady Ray survives his attack in the first episode. She continues to insist that Foster will not be the clan’s leader and instead selects a woman, G’win (Gillian Alexy), as her successor. Foster does not respond well to this decision. He declares that women are weak, indecisive, and prone to mistakes. This makes them ill-prepared to protect the clan from external threats. He does not accept Lady Ray’s decision and drowns her. Foster then anoints himself the leader and demands that everyone kneel before their king. Immediately he disbands a council that worked alongside Lady Ray to make decisions and instead resolves that he will unilaterally act on behalf of the clan. He will be the one and only authority figure. While the clan’s future is certainly at risk, Foster’s actions, regardless of how he frames them, do not generate sympathy. He is a man consumed with a desire for power and

control, and he thinks violence is the best way to achieve it. The ends justify the means. In Foster's mind, he deserves to be in charge, and whatever he does to secure that is warranted, but his acts are often monstrous, causing the viewer to recoil at his deeds. He represents the danger of becoming obsessed with power and control above all else. It leads to deplorable actions.

Similar to characters on *Justified* fearing those without roots in Harlan, there is consensus that the clan's freedom is threatened by outsiders. No one disputes that Blackburn and One Planet want them off the mountain. Foster has no intention of leaving Shay Mountain or trying to negotiate with them. There is nothing to consider and they are staying right where they are. His plan is to intimidate One Planet, law enforcement, and town residents with shows of force and a refusal to relocate. This involves illegal activities like stealing from the store, stealing guns, and committing acts of violence against law enforcement and town residents. Wade becomes sheriff after his predecessor is killed by the clan. When a Blackburn resident the clan steals guns from fights back and kills another of Foster's sons in the first episode, "Farrell Wine," Lil' Foster later kills the man in season one's "Messengers" to appease his father (who ordered the theft in the first place). Foster makes it clear that they do not respect modern society's laws or outside authority figures and will not move without a fight. They will take what they want and do whatever Foster deems necessary to remain where they are. Unlike Raylan, Foster believes in preemptive strikes and taking violence to others. It is not self-defense or to stop a criminal from hurting someone else. Raylan and Foster are both capable of violence and find themselves in confrontations regularly, but Foster initiates conflict and attacks others, even if they have done nothing to him or his people. He doesn't see anyone as innocent. They are his subjects on the mountain, or they are his enemy, and they deserve whatever they have coming to them if they do not defer to him. It is a masculinity that the series views as destructive and counterproductive.

Foster's leadership philosophy leads to retaliation and a cycle of violence. Hasil is tased by a police officer while he is in town waiting for Sally-Ann (Christina Jackson), a woman he is dating. Asa is attacked by men from Blackburg while he is in town. The vigilante group forms and begins roughing clan members up while plotting to attack the mountain. Lil' Foster fights with a group of men after he ventures into Blackburg. Foster also continues to commit and inspire violent and criminal acts. In season one's "Trust," he shoots a male clan member for not supporting him properly, and in the following episode, "Day Most Blessed," he chokes a different man for making a joke at his expense. Asa breaks into the home of a One Planet employee and threatens to kill his family if the company doesn't end their efforts to remove the clan. He also buys an automatic weapon and tells Foster he can get a hundred more as they prepare for battle. Hasil severely beats a police officer who confronts him and Sally-Ann for squatting. The violence is not limited to confrontations between clan members and the town. It infects the clan itself. In addition to Foster's violence against Hasil and other mountain denizens, Lil' Foster and Asa conspire to kill Foster and Asa shoots him. There is an incredible amount of violence that flows from the top down. Foster secures and maintains his authority with violence while making it clear that he expects violence from others whether or not he explicitly asks for it. His plan to keep the clan in their home means stockpiling weapons in anticipation of war. Enveloping himself in violence and aggression results in a plot to kill him and Foster being shot not by outsiders but clan members. Masculinity rooted in violence only ends in more violence, leaving a trail of death and destruction in its wake. This is one of the main takeaways of the series. Men who engage in violent behavior in an effort to gain control or freedom will not ever get either. They will only get more violence. It is a cycle of retaliation that doesn't end.

The men who seek another path, whether it is preferring a different authority figure, spending time off the mountain, or rejecting his demands, are punished by Foster. He does not tolerate any dissension. Lil' Foster is repeatedly ridiculed and shamed by his father. Foster questions his manhood and insinuates that he is weak. He demands that Lil' Foster prove himself by committing violent acts such as fighting and defeating Asa. Foster does not trust or like Asa. He believes that Asa is plotting against him and aims to end his tenure as clan leader by forming an opposition group. Foster banishes Asa from the mountain and later intends to kill him. Hasil has fingers removed by Foster and is punished for spending time in town and dating a Blackburg resident. These things are not up for discussion. Lil' Foster, Asa, and Hasil are not supposed to think for themselves or engage in any behavior that would in any way challenge or question Foster's authority. Foster is an infallible leader and they will do what they are told. That means obeying Foster while acting like men, and in Foster's world, men are violent creatures who protect women but do not take orders from them. This leadership style is depicted as harmful. It does not bring harmony or happiness to the mountain. There is dissent in the ranks as many do not support Foster as their leader and either live in fear of him or work to overthrow him. It splits the clan into factions, a small group loyal to him and everyone else. Foster's use of violence and fear to establish and keep his power causes only problems for Shay Mountain.

Lil' Foster, Asa, and Hasil represent more nuanced masculinities than Foster's. They have no issue with accepting Lady Ray as their leader and recognize that Foster is not fit to lead the clan. Asa tries to talk Foster out of committing violent acts against outsiders and says that intimidation, violence, and aggression are all Foster knows. Asa also establishes a small group of followers who object to Foster's leadership and works with Wade to try and prevent violence and the clan's removal. He resorts to violence if it aids his plan to overthrow Foster but also knows

that Foster's direction risks the well-being and preservation of the clan. Lil' Foster has long been the victim of his father's traditional masculinity and also sees Foster's leadership as harmful. He loves G'win and does not fear an equal partnership with a woman. He experiences significant self-hatred over being violent only to appease Foster and eagerly collaborates with Asa to end Foster's reign. Hasil falls in love with Sally-Ann and wants to make a life with her. The mountain is all he has ever known and he struggles to adapt to life in Blackburg, but Hasil is eager to forge his own path away from Foster and the clan. He does not know much about being a man in modern society and occasionally exhibits traditional masculinity as he ventures into domestic life with Sally-Ann, but Hasil is open-minded and fully cognizant of Foster's shortcomings. He desires a peaceful life with Sally-Ann and wants no part of a war with anyone. That Lil' Foster, Asa, and Hasil reject Foster as a leader and see the potential catastrophe of war with Blackburg while also inflicting violence upon others reveals how much Foster's authority and traditional masculinity have permeated their mindset. They have been steeped in Foster's ways on the mountain and struggle to leave it behind.

Wade represents an entirely different type of masculinity. He is a kind of authority figure that is unusual and not frequently seen on scripted television. Wade, who is nothing like Raylan, is not your typical member of law enforcement and he stands out among all of the other male characters on *Outsiders*. He is fully dedicated to his self-anointed role of mediator and strains to avoid confrontation and violence as he tries to keep Blackburg and Shay Mountain from engaging in all-out war. As such he has few allies and alienates many of the men around him. There are questions about where his loyalty lies and why he cares about the clan and their fate. Blackburg residents and his colleagues on the force fail to understand his reticence to confront and remove the clan, even if it results in violence. One Planet grows increasingly angry with him

over his hesitation to evacuate Shay Mountain. The clan doesn't fully trust him because he lives in Blackburg and represents an organization that seeks their removal. Wade is something of an island. There is a sense that life is extremely difficult for Wade, and it is easy for the audience to sympathize with his plight. He is surrounded by conflict, violence, and communities that hate or mistrust one another, and being a man seeking a peaceful resolution in those conditions is an all but impossible and thankless task. His efforts are admirable, and as all of the violence and confrontation aren't leading to anything productive, not listening to Wade seems shortsighted and foolish. Trying to remain neutral and avoid violence brings much hardship to his life, and his devotion to finding another way forward is a just cause considering the state of affairs between the communities. He's not perfect, but Wade seems like a reasonable man.

While the man with a badge who stands alone isn't new to scripted television, Wade's fear of confrontation and extreme reluctance to enter a situation that could result in violence are somewhat unique. He stands alone because he is petrified of danger and not particularly brave. Wade does not draw much less fire his gun. He does not start or participate in fistfights. He is not looking to protect the weak and vulnerable from the powerful and threatening. It is entirely about self-preservation and conflict avoidance at all costs. This behavior does not go unnoticed by those around him. When law enforcement finally does initiate an effort against Shay Mountain, Wade runs away from the conflict and hits his head. There is no heroism on display. He is knocked unconscious and professes to not remember anything. Members of his staff put up fliers on his office door mocking him and his lack of courage. Wade is a sheriff and his deputies do not respect him or look to him as a leader. This allows for a somewhat complicated viewing of him and his masculinity. It is admirable to be less prone to violence and not want people to get hurt or killed, but by completely avoiding physical confrontation, Wade is ineffectual, which is not a

desirable masculinity. This speaks to how the series does not conform to *Justified*'s more conventional support for law enforcement. There is no heroic lawman on *Outsiders*, no mythic western hero fearless when facing danger and eager to take down the bad guys. There is Wade, and then there is the rest of the department (comprised of minor characters on the series), which does not care about the well-being of those on the mountain and is firmly on the side of One Planet.

Alienating One Planet employees, his staff in the sheriff's department, and the residents of Blackburg only captures part of Wade's problems. His personal life is a mess. Wade is a widower who has developed an addiction to painkillers. He is also an absent father who neglects his son. At one point his son goes missing and his sister threatens to take custody of him. She can see the poor condition Wade is in. He has also severely damaged his relationship with Hedda. Her husband was murdered by the clan and everyone is aware of this, including Breece and Hedda's children. They want to know why Wade isn't doing something about it, be it arresting those responsible or distributing a different kind of justice. Everyone around him finds Wade ineffectual and confounding. His personal shortcomings aren't compensated for on the job. He doesn't redeem himself by being an exemplary law enforcement officer committed to justice. There are no personal or professional heroics to speak of here. He might represent qualities twenty-first century society claims to value in a man, but the series suggests those values are ineffectual as he is unable to successfully broker peace between the communities. All that said, Wade remains a sympathetic character, partly because he deviates from the trigger-happy lawman and represents a nonviolent masculinity. There is something to be said for avoiding a rush to conflict or violence. Wade doesn't try to solve problems with guns or fists. He is complicated and aware of his shortcomings. He sees the humanity in residents of Shay Mountain

and Blackburn and would prefer they don't all kill each other. He does not assume the worst in people. Wade is about as far removed from Raylan as possible.

### **Freedom Doesn't Mean Free: Incarceration and Reorientation in *Paulie***

Whereas the other two series are more focused on violence and the law, *Rectify* is different because it is concerned with freedom and what it means for Daniel. The series is still engaged with similar questions about masculinity and its relationship to law and violence, but it is more subdued than *Justified* and *Outsiders* as it carefully examines the inner life of Daniel and his extremely personal struggle to find himself after a long period of incarceration. The conflicts are internalized much more than they are on those other series. This emphasis on the protagonist's inner turmoil adds to the ways in which *Rectify* differentiates itself, both from *Justified* and *Outsiders* and from other twenty-first century scripted series. Daniel is a unique character representing a masculinity that is rarely seen on television during the 2010s. Like other male characters on the two other series in question here, he is navigating freedom and its meaning, but Daniel's pursuit of it demonstrates how disparate he is. Quiet, reserved, contemplative, thoughtful, and uncertain, he is a different kind of man with different methods when it comes to making sense of freedom.

On *Rectify*, there is no U.S. marshal repeatedly squaring off with criminals. There is no clan in a violent struggle with corporations and law enforcement. Legality and freedom are tied to different concerns. Daniel has just been released from prison at the outset of the series. He has been incarcerated in a maximum-security prison for twenty years prior to receiving his freedom. Daniel is suddenly confronted with life outside of a prison cell and has to reckon with what freedom means to him and what he wants to do with it after spending so many years thinking he would never get it back. His freedom has a ripple effect in *Paulie*. Legal issues persist for Daniel

after his release and questions about his guilt swirl in town and among his family. Many residents of Paulie and even members of his family outright resist or struggle with accepting his freedom and welcoming him back. Some want his freedom to come to an abrupt end.

Legality and freedom are significant factors in the construction of masculinities on the series. The adjustment to freedom directly informs Daniel's search for an identity, which includes the matter of what type of man he wants to be. He has no idea what manhood means upon his release and sudden freedom forces a man in his late thirties to sincerely consider what it means for the first time in his life. At times Daniel seems almost ambivalent about freedom and the notion that having it after so long would only be a positive development is complicated here. His freedom informs the masculinities of others in the community as well. Those who believe the legal system has failed are not pleased to see Daniel set free. There are some who want him back in prison, and the conviction that justice is not served by him being free plays a role in the series' construction of masculinities. These characters are consumed with hostility towards Daniel and become blind to the possibility of innocence or forgiveness. They allow anger, punishment, and revenge to cloud their judgment, resulting in unappealing behavior.

The opening moments of *Rectify* see Daniel just as he's been released. New DNA testing reveals that he was either not responsible or not entirely responsible for the crimes he was convicted of. Daniel appears forlorn upon his release. He looks lost and confused, and when he gives a brief statement outside the prison, seems tentative and uncertain. He speaks in a slow whisper and to an outside observer does not seem thrilled to be released from death row. By the end of the first episode, it is clear that Daniel is entirely unsure of his place in the world. He has no idea what he wants to do next. He lacks an identity and has trouble adjusting after he returns to Paulie. Freedom has not brought Daniel much joy and he does not know how to navigate it.

Daniel's freedom immediately faces significant impediments. He is surrounded by men determined to prevent him from enjoying his newfound freedom or bring it to an end. His stepbrother Ted torments him from the moment they cross paths. Ted has his doubts about Daniel's innocence and is uncomfortable about him living with his father, stepmother, stepbrother, and stepsister. He would prefer Daniel move elsewhere or return to prison. In season one's "Sexual Peeling," Ted asks him to stay away from the family business and provokes him with comments about conjugal visits. Ted is also upset about his wife Tawney (Adelaide Clemens) spending time with Daniel at their church. He is jealous and, in season one's "Drip, Drip," worries that Daniel's presence at church will hurt the family's business. In a confrontation at the family tire store in the same episode, Ted again provokes Daniel by asking about sexual assault in prison before demanding that he stays away from him. Ted assumes Daniel is guilty and treats him accordingly. He isn't interested in getting to know his stepbrother or giving him a chance to adjust to freedom. He is hostile and vindictive. This behavior emerges from a mindset that doesn't believe the justice system would make a mistake. As far as Ted is concerned, Daniel doesn't deserve freedom.

Ted is only one of many men out to antagonize Daniel and impede his freedom. Sheriff Carl Daggett (J.D. Evermore) and State Senator Roland Foulkes (Michael O'Neill) are committed to putting Daniel back behind bars. Both are convinced of his guilt. Roland was District Attorney at the time of Daniel's arrest and prosecuted him. Carl was the sheriff. They are heavily invested in proving Daniel's guilt and, for professional reasons along with public perception, remain convinced he did it or played enough of a part in it to warrant his incarceration and execution. They persist in investigating Daniel and treat his release as a miscarriage of justice. In season two's "Unhinged," they again aggressively question him about

the night of the murder, after Roland makes it clear how desperately he wants to get Daniel to confess on tape. Carl and Roland treat Daniel much as Ted does. They are not open to the possibility that he could be innocent and have no interest in giving Daniel a chance. They also do not believe he deserves freedom and are desperate to take it away. Unlike Ted they have the power to do so. Like Ted, these men have closed minds and see justice not as positively identifying Hanna's killer but sending Daniel back to prison. It is not a flattering depiction of law enforcement and has a different perspective than *Justified*. There is no desire to find the truth and apprehend the guilty party. On *Rectify* law & order means deciding Daniel is guilty and then trying to find evidence to support that. Carl and Roland are not dedicated to finding the person responsible for Hanna's death. They are dedicated to somehow proving Daniel did it, with little concern for whether or not he actually did, demonstrating the corruptibility of law enforcement.

Trey (Sean Bridgers), George (Michael Traynor), and Bobby Dean (Linds Edwards) are three Paulie men with ties to Daniel who are also invested in him being guilty and returned to prison (or harmed in other ways). Bobby Dean is Hanna's brother and he possesses an intense hatred of Daniel. He fully believes that Daniel is responsible for his sister's death and wants to punish him for it now that he is out of prison. In season one's "Jacob's Ladder" Bobby Dean and some of his friends attack and severely beat Daniel, putting him in a coma. Trey and George were friends with Daniel in high school. They were with him on the night of Hanna's murder. The two men are extremely concerned about the release of their old friend. There is an insinuation that they know more about what happened that night and have kept it to themselves. George is so worried he ends up taking his own life near the end of the pilot episode. Trey hopes for Daniel's reincarceration. Daniel sees Trey as being able to fill in some gaps and shed more light on what happened the night of Hanna's death, and in season two's "Weird As You" Daniel

visits Trey's home in the hope that he can learn more about the night of the murder. Trey is not eager to spend time or share information with Daniel. The two have a tumultuous relationship.

Ted, Trey, and Bobby Dean's open hostility towards Daniel along with Carl and Roland's effort to put him back in prison combine to generate an air of suspicion around him. Trey might have the answers about what really happened to Hanna, but he is not willingly sharing any information about it. The DNA testing helped free Daniel, but it does not definitively exonerate him. His innocence remains the elephant in the room that hangs over the entire series. It cannot be said that he is innocent of rape and murder without a shadow of a doubt. There remains a chance that Daniel is a violent killer, which remains pervasive for much of the series. That he seems so different from other men on the series makes the audience wonder if they fully know what violence looks like. Other than his sister Amantha (Abigail Spencer), there are not many people who unequivocally believe Daniel is innocent. The lingering uncertainty about his guilt leaves the issue open to interpretation and leads to conjecture about whether or not Daniel is deserving of freedom.

Daniel feels that uncertainty deeply. He is acutely aware of the doubts and suspicions. He would like to know once and for all if he is guilty of the crimes or not. The questions without conclusive answers paralyze Daniel with guilt. It is part of the reason he experiences such a difficult transition and is unable to celebrate his freedom. He admits to Amantha that he can't remember what happened the night Hanna died and is reminded that he was under the influence of mushrooms. In "Jacob's Ladder," Daniel also tells his lawyer, Jon (Luke Kirby), that his reintegration to society is not going well. He says he doesn't believe in anything, doesn't know what to do, and is unsure of whether or not he can make it on the outside. He argues with his mother and sister, confessing that he isn't sure if he's even alive. There are moments when

Daniel appears not just lost and uncertain, but miserable and in great pain. He is suffering even though he professes to not feel sorry for himself. There is a part of him that wants to find his place in the world, but at the same time Daniel isn't allowing himself to be free. He cannot move past what happened to Hanna and not knowing what if anything he is guilty of. He is stuck in a holding pattern.

This is not to say that Daniel never experiences joy or makes no effort to discover who he is or wants to be. He does occasionally attempt to take advantage of his freedom. He spends a significant amount of time alone, venturing places without much of a plan or purpose. He takes pleasure in simple things like sitting on a park bench or admiring a thunderstorm. In "Sexual Peeling," Daniel stares at a gas station before going to a park and laying on the grass. On a different night, in "Drip, Drip," he wanders around and ends up in someone's barn, interacting with goats. Daniel also visits his high school and has a look around. He seems to crave these excursions and partakes in several of them, as if he never knows which one might lead to an epiphany of some kind. After so many years in prison, he elects to get out of the house and explore whenever the inclination strikes him. They never seem to have the intended effect, or the guilt is so heavy he just can't bring himself to fully savor these little adventures. There are times when he appears lost in thought, but mostly Daniel looks distressed, tentative, and perplexed, as if nothing makes sense. He is struggling to process freedom. At the same time, he is also struggling to determine if he is capable of violence. That he doesn't know with 100% certainty that he didn't commit rape and murder, as well as incidents like the sudden outburst of violence against Ted, cause him great distress as he considers whether or not he is a violent man and if he deserves to be free.

Daniel's desire to explore extends to other efforts to learn more about himself and the man he wants to be. There is something of a performative nature to this, as if he is trying on different masculinities and personas in the hope that something fits. He has a natural curiosity to learn more about life and himself after spending two decades locked up. In season one's "Modern Times," he listens to music from his youth and plays video games with his teenage stepbrother. He takes a car out for a joy ride, speeding at times as he drives around with no specific destination. In the season one episode "Sexual Peeling," Daniel also tries out pornography, and in the next episode, "Plato's Cave," has sexual relations with a woman in town who feels sorry for him. In season two's "Donald the Normal," he leaves Paulie and takes a day trip to Atlanta and wanders around a museum. Later that season, in "Weird as You," he even looks up Trey and spends some time with him, as his old friend was an important figure in his life at one time. Daniel gets into some scrapes as well, like in season one's "Drip, Drip," where he tussles a little with a stranger he meets the night he breaks into a barn and fights with Ted after his stepbrother makes another crack about Daniel's life in prison. He is not fully committed to any of these activities and none of them seems to bring him any pleasure, even the sex. His uncertainty, insecurity, and bewilderment are fully present throughout these experiences. He is trying new things but they aren't giving him any answers or shedding any light on the kind of man he is. He remains frustrated about his adjustment to freedom.

There is one thing that makes Daniel happy soon after his release, but it only complicates his return to Paulie and his attempt to craft an identity. He is not particularly religious but on his journey of self-discovery he decides to visit Tawney at her church. They converse about belief and death, and Daniel feels a real connection with her. He hugs her and is overcome with emotion after living so many years without touch. In "Drip, Drip" he is baptized and suddenly

appears alive, crying but also speaking with more certainty and emotion. Later in the episode he asks Tawney if he can kiss her, his feelings for her intensifying after his baptism even as he knows it is wrong to pursue a relationship with his stepbrother's wife. His feelings stem from how she treats him. Tawney does not judge him and is not afraid of him. She does not suspect he is guilty and treat him as such. She is patient and kind, and when he speaks she pays close attention and listens. Daniel comes to believe he can tell her anything. He feels safe and comfortable with her. It is vastly different from how he feels around everyone else, even his mother and Amantha, who support and love him. The only time Daniel is truly free is when he is around Tawney. However, theirs is a relationship with no future, so the one potential good thing in his life is doomed from the start.

In the third season of *Rectify*, Daniel is close to despondent. His transition to freedom hasn't improved and he is incredibly sad. He appears completely lost and directionless, with nothing and no one to care about. He says that going back to prison wouldn't be so bad. At least prison is familiar and makes sense to him. The outside world does not. Daniel begins to take his probation requirements less seriously and is scolded for doing so. He is lackadaisical and loses his temper with people. Jon recognizes his suffering and implores him to get professional help. His mother sees it, too. She describes him as sick and damaged, but not bad. After much introspection and soul-searching, it dawns on Daniel that life in Paulie is not working for him and never will. He is never going to feel truly free or be happy there. He can't stop thinking about Hanna and what happened that night. He struggles to form and maintain meaningful relationships with family members and others in town. Life doesn't make any sense there. The only way he has a chance is by leaving Paulie, so he does.

Ironically, in order to improve his adjustment to life on the outside, Daniel gives up some of his freedom. He moves to a nonprofit facility in Nashville and begins working at a warehouse at the start of season four. He lives in a group home and has to attend therapy sessions. He has a roommate and must abide by certain rules to continue living there. This new phase of his life is not easy. Daniel is not good around people. This includes his coworkers, those at the group home, and an artist named Chloe (Caitlin FitzGerald) he meets when he wanders into her artist's cooperative. Daniel remains quiet, reserved, and awkward. He declines an invitation to lunch from his coworkers. In therapy he stares at the floor and is forlorn, speaking slowly and with great difficulty. At the co-op he is overcome with emotion and begins crying before leaving in a hurry. Other group home members ask him why he doesn't make friends, and Daniel replies that he doesn't feel comfortable around people. He has moved from Paulie and changed his surroundings, but he continues to struggle to figure out how to live and who he is. Real freedom is elusive.

Finally, Daniel experiences something of a breakthrough. He has a raw, emotionally honest conversation with his counselor in season four's "A House Divided." He tells them the truth about Hanna and that night, expressing uncertainty as to whether or not he was capable of violence. This is what is haunting Daniel and preventing him from making progress. He is stuck and overwhelmed with guilt because the truth surrounding Hanna's death remains in the dark. The meaning and reality of freedom is severely diminished for him because of this. His counselor asks if Daniel has ever tried to accept the not knowing. He admits that he has not. It marks a major turning point for him. For the first time he is able to consider living life without knowing what happened that night. Progress is slow, but it's real. Daniel makes more effort with Chloe and the other men at the group home. He enjoys Chloe's company and spends more and

more time with her. After an especially good day with her he tells her that their time together “felt like living.” He is at ease around her in a way that recalls Tawney. In season four’s “Physics,” she convinces him to begin therapy for the PTSD he is experiencing from being in prison for so long. They are baby steps, and there are setbacks from time to time, but by the end of season four Daniel accepts the possibility of living without knowing and seems ready to start embracing freedom. He hasn’t crafted an identity and determined exactly who he is yet, but now he will be able to do so. He can look to the future and imagine living free of the all-consuming guilt. For the first time, Daniel has a little hope.

As he experiences life outside of prison and the difficult adjustment to freedom, Daniel represents a masculinity that stands out on twenty-first century scripted television. It also is different from the types of masculinities seen on *Justified* and *Outsiders*. While *Rectify* does not suggest forgetting or ignoring what happened to Hanna, it highlights how to move past violence, whether that is the violence Daniel commits or might have committed, or the violence he suffered in decades of prison. In the end, the series mostly resolves the question of whether or not Daniel committed the crimes he was convicted of. That there will never be complete and absolute certainty isn’t the primary concern. The main takeaway is not answering whether he did it. Daniel must learn to forgive himself and live his life. He is capable of being a good man and leading a meaningful life. He is sensitive, fragile, scared, and unformed. He is quiet and unpolished. He struggles to communicate and speaks slowly and deliberately. He does not make friends easily or particularly enjoy the company of others. He is contemplative and thoughtful, content to just sit and stare off into space. Daniel also cries frequently and is profoundly sad. He is a melancholic, sedate, lost, and confused man struggling to find purpose and meaning. There are not many protagonists like Daniel Holden, and that is what the series chooses to emphasize.

He is far removed from the types of masculinities frequently seen on twenty-first century rural reality and scripted series.

Each of the series offers a juxtaposition between different types of masculinities: Raylan and Boyd, Wade and Foster, Ted and Daniel. This demonstrates the different ways the male characters are constructed in opposition to one another as a storytelling strategy in order to make points about masculinity. These differences reveal themselves when they are confronted with challenges to their authority or threats to their freedom. It also depicts the consequences of using violence or attacking people, physically and otherwise, when confronted with challenging circumstances. The male characters on these series respond in different ways, and some of those ways are healthier than others. Raylan is violent, and there are consequences for that, but Boyd pays the ultimate price for his behavior in the permanent loss of his freedom. Using violence for criminal endeavors is not the same as using it with a badge. Foster's violence only leads to more of it, along with the loss of human life and much suffering. Wade might not achieve the results he is looking for, but he represents the possibility of a better path forward, if others would only give it a chance. Daniel shows Ted how letting go of anger and hatred and resentment can be liberating, as him lashing out at everyone and wallowing in negativity poisoned his life. When it comes to violence and how one responds to the potential loss of freedom and control, different models of masculinity are presented on these series, with some positioned as more beneficial to society and more appropriate in a 21<sup>st</sup> century context.

## Chapter Four: Traditional Masculinities, Fathers and Sons, and Nostalgia

### Introduction

The good old days. Things aren't what they used to be. Back in my day. When I was your age. It is easy to think up different ways of expressing a fondness and longing for the past. This nostalgia is present in many of the male characters on these series. There are two useful definitions of nostalgia that contain some overlap but work to shed light on how I am applying the term to my analysis of *Justified*, *Outsiders*, and *Rectify*. Maureen Hogan and Timothy Pursell, in their examination of rural masculinities in Alaska, describe nostalgia as an emotional yearning for times and places that cannot be attained (69). Linda Hutcheon defines nostalgia as something imagined and romanticized through memory and desire due to dissatisfaction with the present. This reflective nostalgia fixates on historical points in time and involves individual memory (193-94).

As Kimmel and Ferber explain, the past represents a better time for many rural, white men. The present means a way of life that is fading or has disappeared entirely (123). Most of the fictional residents of Harlan, Blackburg (and Shay Mountain), and Paulie would argue that these communities have seen better days. The present is hazy and daunting. Nostalgia pervades the mindset of many of the male characters in these communities.

Many of the male characters of these series yearn for the past and old ways of life. This results in the extensive representation of traditional masculinities, or what is typically considered more traditional masculinities. Still, not every male character embraces nostalgia. The past and traditional masculinities have different meanings for the men on these series. There are times when the past binds them together even if their lives have taken divergent paths and they have spent many years apart. This is the case with *Justified* and Raylan and Boyd. Their families have

history together and the two men also worked side-by-side. The past carries certain meaning for them but does not have equal influence in their lives.

On *Outsiders*, there is significant reverence for the past in Blackburg and on Shay Mountain. There are scant employment opportunities for the men in town. The present is precarious and frightening as many of them are unemployed and desperate for work. On the mountain, there are varying degrees of affection for the past. Some men revere and long for it. They have different definitions of what the words mean, but for men in Blackburg and on Shay Mountain, there was a time when security and prosperity were more easily achieved and maintained. In other respects, nostalgia is more complicated. There are men who respect the past, but do not believe all aspects of it must be preserved at all costs. The degree to which men revere the past and old ways of life helps shape masculinities for men in town and the clan.

*Rectify* features contrasting outlooks on nostalgia. Ted and Daniel have different approaches to interpreting the past. This plays a role in informing their different masculinities. Ted is influenced by his professional standing and possesses an idyllic view of old-fashioned ways of life that suggests an appreciation for the past. Daniel's long incarceration means that he understands the past and old ways of life differently than Ted does. He has a 20-year gap in time because of prison and hasn't been free since he was a teenager. His life is split in two. Ted and Daniel's masculinities are shaped by the past. Nostalgia along with the desire and ability to let go of the past are central to determining the kind of men they are and the possibility of change.

Reverence for the good old days and an inability to let go of the past are portrayed as debilitating for the men on these series. It is a hindrance that ties them to traditional masculinity. In this chapter, I reveal how the men on *Justified*, *Outsiders*, and *Rectify* who wallow in nostalgia and life in the past find adversity and misfortune as a result. Committing themselves to old ways

of life and traditional masculinity is detrimental to their well-being. They find trouble with the law, trouble with their families, threats to their physical safety and mental health, and struggle to forge a satisfying life. These fictional characters yearn for the past and in doing so neglect their present and future. The series suggest that it is much healthier and more productive to reject nostalgia and look forward. The characters who do so don't lead perfect lives without problems, but they are able to envision a better future and avoid many of the calamities that befall the men who long for the past. This connects to ideas explored in previous chapters. In many cases, the male characters fully committed to the past are the same ones who, due to their hostility to change of any kind, are fearful and skeptical of outsiders. They are the ones who see violence and criminal endeavors as justified if it is in the name of restoring the past or protecting what they view as rightfully theirs. Hard times tend to befall the male characters who cling to the past, attack outsiders, and partake in crime and acts of physical aggression.

Another major component of this chapter is fathers and sons and generational masculinities. Nostalgia and the construction of masculinities are influenced by father-son relationships. Perspectives on traditional masculinities often (though not always) vary depending on the generation. Younger men are more likely to reject or be skeptical of traditional masculinity or are more able to demonstrate growth and a capacity for change than are older generations. This is partly the case with *Justified*. Raylan and Boyd have complicated relationships with their fathers, who represent a more traditional masculinity and reflective nostalgia.

The relationship between a father and son carries great weight on *Outsiders*. Foster is a prominent figure on Shay Mountain. He is of crucial importance to his son, Foster, Jr. However, his influence extends beyond his son to other male members of the clan. Foster's relationship

with his son as well as his paternal influence over the clan prominently factor into the struggle over traditional notions of masculinity and their appropriate role in everyday life on the mountain. Factions and divided loyalties develop within the male members of the clan. There is direct opposition to Foster and his leadership. Others are unsure of who to follow and wrestle with where their loyalties lie. Finally, there are men who would rather not get involved in leadership conflicts. These factions see the past and future differently, which shapes the formation of masculinities on Shay Mountain.

For *Rectify's* Daniel, there is a lack of a paternal figure. He spent the last 20 years living a solitary life behind bars. His father is long dead. After his release he encounters different models of masculinity as he endeavors to craft his identity. His stepfather Ted is the closest thing Daniel has to a father-figure, but they do not know each other and are somewhat hesitant and probing when together. There are several other men in Daniel's life who, even though they are not paternal figures, play a role in his sense of masculinity. Daniel's relationship with these men varies in importance but they allow for an examination of the formation of masculinities as he searches for an identity.

Just as those who embrace nostalgia are more connected to traditional masculinity and more likely to find themselves in precarious circumstances, the male characters on these series who look to emulate the ways of their father or an older generation are worse off for it. The ways of the father, whether embodied by an older father like Arlo or someone younger like Boyd, have mainly negative consequences. The men on these series who are able to sever ties with the ways of their father or seek out a masculinity that is not fully connected to older generations are able to discover a healthier lifestyle and path forward. Fathers like Arlo and Foster, and other men who seek to emulate or please them, are much more likely to find the same kinds of trouble as male

characters who long for the past. Similarly, rejecting that outlook positions male characters for a better, healthier way of life and future. The remainder of the chapter is divided in two. The first half focuses more on nostalgia and how male characters feel about restoring the past, and how that influences the formation of masculinity. The second half examines generational masculinities and how masculinities of fathers shape the masculinities of their sons.

### **We Dug Coal Together: Yearning for the Past and Learning to Live with the Present**

The gravity of the past on the relationship between Raylan and Boyd as well as the significance of their relationship in the series are established in the pilot episode of *Justified*. The first episode quickly delves into their backstory when Raylan returns to Harlan after the shooting in Miami. Raylan is informed that Boyd is the target of a federal investigation. It is noted that the two men share a history and dug coal together at 19. They cross paths soon after and speak to one another like people who know each other well despite the many years it has been since they have had a conversation. There is a degree of affection and fond remembrance present, but it does not take long for them to begin sparring. The way they so comfortably exchange insults and threats does not indicate that it has been more than a decade since they laid eyes on each other. Raylan tells Boyd that he lacks conviction and has no real ideology other than getting paid. Boyd responds by suggesting that Raylan is a violent man who likes shooting people before making the same offer Raylan made to Tommy Bucks in Florida (the criminal he shoots and kills at the beginning of the pilot over the man's refusal to leave town). They part ways, but later in the same episode resume their macho dance, and Raylan shoots and nearly kills Boyd. Raylan visits him in the hospital and apologizes for what he did. When asked why, Raylan replies that he and Boyd dug coal together. That means something to him. Shooting Boyd is not the same as shooting Tommy Bucks. He did not lose a second of sleep over shooting Bucks. Raylan and

Boyd have history. It is clear by the end of the first episode that the past carries weight on this series.

Another meaningful aspect of the past that is signaled early in the series is Raylan's relationship with Harlan. Raylan likes working in Florida. When a reprimand becomes necessary due to the Tommy Bucks shooting, it is considered punishment to transfer Raylan to Kentucky. He does not want to go back there and lacks fondness for the place he grew up. There are people he doesn't want to see and memories he'd rather forget. In the season one episode "Riverbrook," he runs into a criminal, Dewey Crowe (Damon Herriman), whose entire extended family consists of people on the wrong side of the law. Raylan strongly dislikes them all. "You understand how I see your people?" he says to Dewey when they cross paths. Raylan would prefer to never see them. Also, his relationship with his father is incredibly strained. In the third episode of the series, "Fixer," Raylan makes it known that he hates his criminal father. Another fixture of his past, ex-wife Winona, has moved on and remarried. He was close with his mother but she died long ago. Harlan represents a past Raylan has worked hard to put behind him and he wants nothing to do with the place. It is small and it doesn't take long for him to encounter Boyd, Arlo, Winona, and other figures from his past. The people and memories come flooding back whether he likes it or not. Now that he is back and stuck there, Raylan takes a particular interest in Boyd. Shooting him is only the beginning of a series-long relationship. The first season lays the groundwork for how the series sees nostalgia and venerating the past. A clear line of distinction is drawn. Raylan and his more twenty-first century masculinity resist nostalgia and a longing for the past. He wants his future to be somewhere that isn't Harlan, knowing his life is better when it isn't there. Conversely, Boyd clings to the past and welcomes nostalgia. This brings him nothing but problems and, in the end, is responsible for his downfall.

The complicated relationship between Raylan and Boyd is further developed throughout the first season and continues through the rest of the series, and their past informs how they treat one another. Raylan nearly kills Boyd after being threatened by him and there is plenty of animosity between them. Boyd claims to have found God after nearly dying and starts a small church. Raylan is enormously skeptical of Boyd's conversion because he knows him so well and believes everything Boyd does is just a ploy to make money. Raylan keeps close tabs on his old coworker and is fully dedicated to putting him in prison. He is zealous about this mission. As Raylan aims to put Boyd behind bars, the two men frequently engage in verbal and even physical sparring, and at times their hatred for each other seems to run deep. However, a common enemy at the end of the first season reveals a different dynamic to their relationship. In season one's "Bulletville," they join forces to rescue Ava and find themselves in a shootout with members of a drug cartel. They work together to get out of trouble, and when they are safe again, and at the end of the episode, Boyd calls Raylan his friend. The lawman does not object and gives the impression that if pressed he would say the same. Their past is not all bad and underneath the hostility there is something resembling genuine warmth between them. As much as Raylan takes issue with much of what Boyd says and does, something akin to fondness lurks inside him, which does not cloud his judgment so much that he strays from wanting to put Boyd behind bars. The past can't be completely ignored, but there is a limit to how much influence Raylan gives it.

The love/hate relationship between Raylan and Boyd fluctuates in such a manner throughout the series. The past is one of the reasons there is constant friction between them. The men have different ideas about the past and traditional masculinity. Nostalgia weighs heavily on Boyd while Raylan tends not to dwell as much on his time in Kentucky unless he is forced to. Raylan had no intention of returning to Harlan and is not there by choice. Boyd served overseas

in the military but chose to stay in Harlan when he returned from war. His criminal activities result in the accumulation of plenty of adversaries, but Boyd has genuine admiration and affection for his community and its residents. In season four's "Where's Waldo," when Boyd says "people in Harlan party all weekend and get saved on Sunday," he does so with affection. In season six's "Sounding," Boyd says he believes that legal marijuana could save Harlan, something he wants to do because he likes it. Raylan does not think as highly of his hometown or most of the people there, as evidenced by his comment to Dewey Crowe and his frequent grumbling about Arlo. Boyd knows how Raylan feels about Harlan, and Raylan thinks Boyd is part of Harlan's problem. This influences their perception of one another while highlighting their outlook on Harlan and its past. Raylan sees the past as trouble and something to avoid. Boyd seeks to return Harlan to what he perceives as its glory days.

Raylan's past has other ways of tarnishing his present, including in the workplace. He does not appreciate a habit among his colleagues to regard him as their guide to the locals, which only serves to further remind him of the past. When someone from the marshal's office needs assistance in Harlan, they immediately call on Raylan. In season two's "Cottonmouth," Art calls him a "hillbilly whisperer" after receiving a request from another law enforcement agency for help in Harlan. Art reminds Raylan that these are his people. A similar incident occurs with Rachel in season two's "The Moonshine War." She is going after a fugitive in Harlan but admits to Raylan that she is uncomfortable going there. She wants him to join her pursuit. He is amused and annoyed by her request, responding by asking her if she wants help with his people. "Maybe throw them some pork rinds and ding dongs," he quips. Raylan does help her, but the incidents with Rachel and Art are reminders of why he does not want to be in Kentucky. His obsession with Boyd is going to make visits to Harlan impossible to avoid altogether, but he is not eager to

cross paths with other residents from his past and the more often work keeps him in Harlan the more likely he is to run into those folks. Raylan also does not care for others who are not from the area associating him with the people of Harlan. He would insist that he got out for a reason and has little to no connection with them or their habits and pastimes. In season three's "The Man Behind the Curtain," Raylan gets upset when it is assumed that Boyd pays him off. He does not like it when someone suggests he is a criminal similar to some of the other men in town. Frequent work in Harlan and requests to deal with "his people" only make it harder to regard the place as his past. If he is stuck there, he can't fully leave it behind, and there is only trouble in Harlan. In several seasons Raylan talks of wanting out. In the season two finale, "Bloody Harlan," he asks his boss for a transfer to Glynco, a place in Georgia where law enforcement officers are trained. In the season five finale, "Restitution," he tells Winona he is coming to Florida, where she has relocated with their daughter, a promise he has made to her before. Raylan knows getting out of Harlan is better for him and his future. The past refuses to let him go, and he stays to pursue Boyd, which only endangers him and puts a future with his daughter in Florida at risk.

The middle seasons of *Justified* feature Raylan and Boyd's relationship settling into a routine that ensures the past remains just beneath the surface (at least when it isn't on the surface). Boyd repeatedly insists that he is done with crime. The first time this happens is after Raylan shoots him. Boyd rediscovers his faith and becomes a man of God. It happens again in when Boyd ingratiates himself in the lives of a wealthy community. He sees an opportunity to leverage them into legitimacy and a secure future. In season four's "Outlaw," he plans to use money from rich locals to open a Dairy Queen franchise. Then, after unpleasant encounters with a criminal family, Boyd insists that all he wants is to be left alone. In season five's "Starvation,"

he insinuates that once again he is swearing off his outlaw past for good. At no point does Raylan buy any of this. He believes being a criminal is in Boyd's nature and that is not something that will ever change. In season two's "The Life Inside," he says that the more Boyd professes to be a changed man, the less he believes it. Raylan takes great pleasure in reminding Boyd of his criminal activities while casting doubt upon proclamations of reform. He sees Boyd as being unable to leave his past behind, much to Boyd's detriment. Raylan would argue it is why Boyd keeps getting into trouble and, if he has anything to say about it, will end up behind bars.

These discussions of Boyd's sincerity are part of routine conversations between him and Raylan, with Raylan never believing Boyd because he knows him too well and uses the past to inform his opinion of his old coworker. They frequently find themselves in each other's company, and not only because Raylan is determined to put Boyd in prison. The end game might be arresting Boyd, but along the way they work together to vanquish common enemies. In addition to joining forces to escape the wrath of a drug cartel, they are at odds with a man named Quarles (Neal McDonough) who comes to Harlan from Detroit and attempts to take over the local drug trade. Raylan and Boyd have different reasons for disliking Quarles but they both want him gone and help each other out to make it happen. Later the adversaries are imprisoned together by a family living far away from the community and must unite to escape. Boyd helps Raylan with another criminal who makes his way to Harlan, this time former Florida resident Daryl Crowe (Michael Rappaport), as again they both dislike the individual. These frequent encounters result in banter about Boyd's criminal ways or their time working in a mine together. It never takes long for the past to come up whenever Raylan and Boyd have a conversation. This is another reason Raylan has difficulty shedding his past, even though he knows it is no good for

him (and bad for Boyd). Only getting out of Harlan once and for all will allow Raylan to completely shed his past.

The sixth and final season finds Boyd squarely in Raylan's crosshairs, and this is when Boyd's inability to let go of the past finally catches up with him. *Justified* is bookended by seasons that are primarily concerned with the conflict between Raylan and Boyd. Their relationship is always a meaningful component of the series, but the middle seasons feature different antagonists for Raylan to do battle with: Mags Bennett (season two), Robert Quarles (season three), season four's Drew Thompson (Jim Beaver), and Daryl Crowe (season five). The final season combines elements of the first and middle seasons. The heart of it is Raylan versus Boyd, but it also includes Avery Markham (Sam Elliott), who moves to the area in anticipation of Kentucky legalizing marijuana. Avery's plan to control the legal marijuana business in Harlan, which occasionally involves illegal activities, leads to interactions with Raylan and Boyd. Still, the driving concern throughout season six is Raylan's effort to finally slap handcuffs on Boyd. When the area's U.S. Attorney's Office informs Raylan that going after Boyd is their number one priority, he immediately forgoes moving to Florida and wants to be part of it. For Raylan the past is Boyd and helping secure his incarceration can close the Harlan chapter of his life once and for all. It would mean he could leave in peace and never have to return, focusing all his energy on a better future somewhere far away.

Old threads and elements return as the final season of the series proceeds. Boyd is back to attempting a play at legitimacy (which involves breaking the law) while trying to save Harlan. Raylan has one foot out the door while remaining steadfast about arresting Boyd. They continue to discuss meaningful topics while antagonizing one another. All this time, the past is always lurking around every corner. This time there is no pretense about their agendas. In season six's

“Alive Day,” Boyd wonders why Raylan is still in Harlan and Raylan does not mince words about this. In a later episode that season, “Dark as a Dungeon,” he tells Boyd that the only reason he remains in Harlan is to take him down. This news is not exactly unexpected. Boyd is aware that Raylan and law enforcement expect him to rob Avery and he is done pretending that his outlaw days are behind him. They know that a final showdown is in their future and, in “Dark as a Dungeon,” have a debate about the ending of the story and whether or not it will be a happy one.

Boyd’s version of a happy ending is robbing Avery and launching a successful legal marijuana business. He is convinced that he can get rich, help the locals, and save Harlan. This is having it all and the very idea that it is possible makes Boyd deliriously happy. In season six’s “Burned,” when seeking community support for his business plans he alleges that Harlan will not see the benefits if Avery’s plans come to fruition and expresses a desire to “keep Harlan for Harlan.” It is nostalgia that drives Boyd and his belief that Harlan can and should reclaim its glory days. He longs for the past and sees it as representing better days while the present is precarious and undesirable. Harlan is the only place he has ever called home. Other than his time in the military, it is the only place he has ever lived. Boyd’s perception that Harlan is a town that thrived once upon a time and could do so again informs his feelings about the past and his masculinity. He does not want to live somewhere else. He does not want to make some money and then live out his days in quiet solitude far from civilization. Boyd wants to be a respectable family man and vital part of the community. His two main attempts at legitimacy involve owning and operating a small business. His idea of the good life is Ava watching their kids in their comfortable home while he works. The old-fashioned masculinity he subscribes to means that the past is worth emulating and restoring. It adheres to a definition of the American dream as a

man being his own boss and providing for his family while his wife takes care of their house and kids. Boyd's commitment to the past and its conception of masculinity keeps him contained to a narrow mindset that prevents him from attaining what he most desires. It brings about his downfall.

The past has a different kind of hold on Raylan. He does not share in Boyd's nostalgia or have any desire to resurrect Harlan. He desperately wants out of a place he never wanted to be to start with. As much as he wants to leave Harlan in the past for good, he is compelled to stay until his business with Boyd is complete. Raylan aims to expedite the process and wants out sooner rather than later. In season six's "The Hunt," he tells Winona he wants to be part of their daughter's life in Florida. He is impatient with and agitated about the pace of the investigation. This leads him to try and find ways to increase the momentum of the case. Ava is Raylan's informant and in season six's "Trust" he compels her to get good intel, something he has done before as he wonders about her loyalty to Boyd. In season six's "Burned," he also attempts to form a partnership with Avery in order to take Boyd down, telling him he is sick of Harlan and wants out sooner rather than later. Raylan even finds a way to give Boyd a look inside Avery's safe in the hope that doing so will enhance Boyd's desire to commence with the robbery.

This yearning to arrest Boyd as soon as possible and get to Florida reflects Raylan's different conception of the past and traditional masculinity. He does not pine for the good old days. He does not view that time in his life as particularly good or worth remembering. There is no indication that he ever visited after leaving the state to attend college, so he had been away for many years. When Avery tells him that he does not understand him or his motives in "Burned," Raylan simply replies that all he wants is Boyd. That is the beginning and the end of his interests. When the job is done he will be long gone, unlikely to ever set foot in Harlan again. Harlan is

where he is from but it is not a place Raylan wants to call home. He does not believe it was ever great nor does he think it can be. His masculinity is not governed by a longing for the past and old ways of life. Getting out of Harlan was the best thing that could have happened to him. In season two's "Reckoning," he credits his stepmother with saving him by encouraging him to leave and attend college. In the final season he admits to Ava that he could easily have become like Boyd if he never left. That is not the kind of man he wants to be, stuck in Harlan while aiming to restore the past. Raylan is not afraid of a changing world or places outside of Harlan, Kentucky. He would like nothing more than to bury the past and move on with his life.

Raylan finally does move on with his life and (mostly) leave the past behind in the series finale, "The Promise." After arresting Boyd, *Justified* jumps ahead four years. Raylan is working and living in Miami, and while he and Winona are no longer together, he is an active presence in his daughter's life. He looks as happy as he has ever been, getting ice cream with his daughter and enjoying the treat on a park bench. Raylan looks relaxed and content, happy to be in Florida with his daughter, far away from Harlan. Getting out of there gave him a better life and future, which he now relishes. His resistance to nostalgia allows Raylan to offer a more progressive version of masculinity, one that avoids getting bogged down in a longing for the past. He always knew that a happier, healthier life was waiting for him if he got out of Harlan and fully severed ties with his past. Now he has it. On the other hand, Boyd's refusal to reject nostalgia brought him nothing but trouble. In the end, his adherence to the past tied him to traditional masculinity, and ultimately, prison. The man who could not let the past go and wanted to restore it is serving a life sentence. The man who was eager to put the past behind him is happy and far from Kentucky. Raylan, much more enlightened and skeptical of traditional masculinity, is free.

This is not to say that Raylan is entirely impervious to the past. His relationship with Boyd illustrates that his past means at least a little something to him after leaving Harlan for Florida at the end of the series. The final scene of “The Promise” is with Boyd in a federal penitentiary. The longtime adversaries seem genuinely happy to see each other. Boyd asks Raylan why he came to see him. Raylan says that if he allows himself to be sentimental, it is because they dug coal together. There is a sense that this might not be the last time Raylan stops by to see Boyd. However, it is because he is out of Harlan and in a better place that he is able to fondly reminisce with Boyd. As far as Raylan is concerned, Boyd is where he belongs, and so is he. He is at peace with that. He has no nostalgia for Harlan. He does not yearn for the past. Raylan, a man happy with his life, a man who feels good about his future, is simply sitting down with an old acquaintance, and he is able to do that as a happy man only because he left the past behind.

Reverence for the past and traditional masculinity is prevalent in *Outsiders*' Blackburg and on Shay Mountain, though there is variance in the degree of the commitment to nostalgia and traditional masculinities among the male characters in both communities. While there are women who are principal figures in Blackburg and among the clan, these are male-dominated arenas. Conditions in town and on the mountain generate a longing for the past in many male characters. In Blackburg, these feelings are informed by an employment crisis. On Shay Mountain, leadership struggles and questions about the best path forward for the clan's long-term survival play an integral role in igniting and revealing nostalgia and traditional masculinities. There is even deference for traditions and old customs among the more enlightened men of the clan. The conviction that the past is defined partly by security and prosperity is widespread in each community. The adherence to old ways of life leads to problems for both communities and

keeps them stuck in a cycle of violence, retribution, and conflict (a cycle that has existed for many years). Longing for the past is detrimental to the town, the mountain, and the male inhabitants of each. Unlike on *Justified*, there is no one looking to leave. No one imagines a better life, a more promising future, outside of Blackburg or Shay Mountain. However, similarly to *Justified*, there are male characters who are not entirely deferent to the ways of the past. Not everyone shares the same commitment to nostalgia, though in the end, too many male characters are unwilling to part with the ways of the past and traditional masculinity, which only means the cycle of violence will never end.

Other than Sheriff Wade Houghton, the major male characters on *Outsiders* are residents of Shay Mountain. However, the men in Blackburg are an important part of the narrative as they figure prominently into the struggle between the town and the clan. Wade's brother-in-law Breece functions as something of an unofficial spokesperson for the men in Blackburg. He communicates what they are feeling and spotlights how the past influences the masculinities of these men. He is convinced that One Planet should be supported and should commence with their plans to mine in the area. In season one's "Messengers," Breece tells Wade that it is what is best for the community. He forcefully reminds him that there are no jobs at present and Blackburg has been deteriorating for a decade. His sentiments are reflected in town. There is widespread support for One Planet at a public meeting about their planned operations that occurs in "Messengers." In season one's "Rubberneck," men from Blackburg sit around a company trailer, desperately hoping they get picked for day work, or any work. People praise the job creation that has been promised them. This passion and hope for more employment opportunities is sometimes taken to extremes. In season two's "We Are Kinnah," a local man calls Ledda a "bitch" for hurting the town's economic growth after she expresses public opposition to One

Planet. In season one's "All Hell," some local men agree to form a vigilante squad and help One Planet with extralegal attempts to speed up mining operations. Many male characters resort to ugly behavior including verbal abuse and violence as they cling to the belief that the past meant better days and needs to be restored.

This fervor for jobs among the men in town stems from their dismay over a lack of family-supporting jobs in town. They are increasingly despondent and desperate about their situation. Breece is miserable about his unemployment and becomes elated when One Planet offers him a position as a community liaison officer in "Rubberneck." The potential that he is being used to generate goodwill with the locals does not concern him. It is a management-level position complete with benefits and a new truck. His self-worth is determined by his ability to have a job that provides for his family. He needs to be the breadwinner. This extends to the rest of the men in town based on their willingness to break the law and risk arrest on behalf of One Planet. They long for a time when men in town could find jobs that supported a family, so much so that they curse at and assault any individuals they perceive as an obstacle to gainful employment. Breece's comment to Wade in "Messengers" about Blackburg dying over the last 10 years suggests that there was a time in the past when economic conditions in the community were much healthier. There is significant nostalgia for that time and men in town want it back, and they are willing to do just about anything to return to that time.

The men in Blackburg view the past as a time of prosperity, and Wade is the only male resident who is not fixated on the past and doing whatever it takes to restore prosperity to the town (then again he has a good job that comes with a steady paycheck). Views of the past are more varied among men in the clan even as they also reflect an adherence to old ways of life. Foster represents ardent devotion to the past and is willing to go to extreme lengths to restore it.

In the first episode of the series, “Farrell Wine,” he makes it clear that he strenuously objects to a woman leading the clan and doing so in a way that accepts the counsel of others when making decisions. In “Rubberneck,” Foster states that women are weak, indecisive, and prone to wandering and making mistakes, which he believes puts them at risk from external forces who aim to remove them from their home. He sees a crisis at the top that is going to get them killed or forcibly moved. The present is an unacceptable way of life and too much has changed or is in the process of doing so. Foster believes a male should lead the clan because they are strong, fearless, and aggressive and not feeble, emotional, or hesitant. A man rules with displays of strength and does not seek outside input before making difficult decisions. He uses preemptive force when he has to. In season one’s “Decomp of a Stuck Pig,” Foster says that the male leader is the protector, and the only one who can keep the clan safe. From his perspective women are not cut out for leadership. They are docile and lovingly take care of their men, the children, and the home. This is what they are suited for. Foster is nostalgic for a time when a man ruled the clan, women were subservient, and the outside world left them alone. His desire to restore the past leads him to engage in violent, destructive behavior that creates internal divisions and destabilizes the clan. His attachment to traditional masculinity is severely damaging and brings great harm to the clan and those closest to him. It also perpetuates a cycle of violence that has long existed between the clan and the town.

Asa, Lil’ Foster, and Hasil do not share Foster’s commitment to restoring the past. They do not long for strong male leadership and a clan that strictly adheres to notions of patriarchal masculinity. These men, a generation younger than Foster, are not as susceptible to nostalgia informing their masculinities. Hasil feels a connection to the place he was born and raised but is open to other life experiences and ways of living. He struggles to adapt to life in Blackburg with

Sally-Ann but desires the chance to develop a meaningful relationship with her. In season one's "Day Most Blessed," Hasil finds himself able to enjoy life with Sally-Ann and does not crave a return to old ways of life. Asa and Lil' Foster remain devoted to life on Shay Mountain but are steadfast about preventing Foster from ruling the clan. They reject Foster's intention to lead unilaterally and with fear. The two men reject Foster's belief that women are not suited to lead in any capacity. They vigorously oppose his contention that the clan must violently defend itself against the town and repudiate any and all efforts to forge a peaceful resolution. Asa and Lil' Foster do not yearn for restoring the past or reinstating a patriarchal culture reliant upon a male who rules as an authoritarian. They view Foster's traditional masculinity and fondness for the past as harmful for Shay Mountain and work against him while seeking a different way forward. In season one's "Long Live the Bren'in," they carry out a plot to remove Foster from the mountain.

This is not to say that the past holds no sway over men like Asa, Lil' Foster, and Hasil. Customs play a meaningful role in everyday life on Shay Mountain. Asa, Lil' Foster, and Hasil might reject Foster's leadership and absolute reverence for a patriarchal past, but they (and other men in the clan) show deference to those customs. Fighting and other violent competitions are a regular part of life on the mountain. In "Farrell Wine," fighting is shown as something the clan does for fun. They also settle disputes and rank individuals this way. In season one's "Doomsayer" Foster forces his son to fight Asa because the father hates Asa and wants his son to prove himself by winning a fight. All of the men among the clan participate in these customs. There is no effort to repudiate or eliminate them. In this way the past informs Asa, Lil' Foster, and Hasil's masculinities. They were raised around violence and each man exhibits violent behavior throughout the series. They are quick to engage in a fight to resolve a conflict or

respond to a perceived slight. In season one, Asa threatens to kill a One Planet executive, Asa and Lil' Foster plot to kill Foster, Asa and Lil' Foster each get into a fight with men in town and fight one another, and Hasil fights with a police officer and eagerly participates in an underground fight club to make money. As much as these men see Foster as a dangerous marker of the past and a man to be avoided or overthrown, they are unable to shed the violent proclivities they possess as a result of the conditions in which they were raised. They see fault in Foster's violence but fail to reflect on their own. Their inability to cease the violence and leave the customs of the past behind perpetuates the cycle of violence and keeps the clan locked in conflict with Blackburg and one another, and unable to start a new life.

In Paulie the past has different meanings for Daniel and Ted, though they are both confined by it. Nostalgia and the ability to let go of the past are central to determining the kind of men they are or want to be. For much of the series, like some of the male characters on *Justified* and *Outsiders*, Ted represents reverence for old ways of life. His worldview aligns with an old-fashioned masculinity rooted in paternalism. The good life means a man works while his wife stays at home. She cooks, cleans, and otherwise takes care of both the home and her husband. Their future is entirely mapped out. As the man continues to be the breadwinner, his wife will have their children as she transitions into a stay-at-home mother. What she wants is not important. This has serious consequences for him. Ted's masculinity is responsible for creating a crisis in his life that eventually forces him to reconsider his ideas about manhood. For Daniel, there is a 20-year gap in his life that covers his entire adulthood. He went to prison when he was 18 and in high school. His life is split in two. The past consumes him as he thinks about the night of Hanna's murder and tries to piece together what really happened. Daniel is haunted by what happened twenty years prior but he has no nostalgia for it. Like Raylan, he does not want to

restore old ways of life. He does not yearn for his childhood and a time before he was imprisoned. Daniel wants to figure out the truth as he struggles to determine what his future holds. Prison maintains a tight grip on Daniel as he navigates freedom and risks being overwhelmed by the past. An inability to let go of the past or old ways of life trap Ted and Daniel. It prevents them from happiness or moving on with their life.

This devotion to traditional masculinity has severe consequences for Ted. His home life rapidly deteriorates as Tawney becomes increasingly unhappy. By season two's "Running with the Bull," she has developed feelings for Daniel and is unsure of what to do with them. She has doubts about her desire to be a mother. In season two's "Sleeping Giants," she expresses doubt about being a homemaker and indicates attraction to the idea of working or going back to school. Ted does not respond well to this. He is unable to understand why Tawney would be anything less than thrilled about motherhood and does not ask her how she feels about it. In season two's "Until You're Blue," after she has a miscarriage, Ted angrily accuses Tawney of not wanting a baby in the first place. In "Sleeping Giants," when it becomes clear that the tire store is in financial trouble, Tawney eagerly offers to get a job. Ted rejects her offer and curtly tells her that he does not want her to work and does not need her help. He grows increasingly angry and mean. His fidelity to traditional masculinity and refusal to recognize her as having any agency ultimately cost Ted his marriage. Tawney leaves him at the end of season three, and in "The Source" informs Ted that she will be living in their house while he finds another place to live, leaving him uncertain and miserable. In season four's "Pineapples in Paris," Ted proposes a divorce as he can tell that is what she wants, and Tawney agrees to it.

It is only after Tawney leaves him that Ted begins to loosen the grip on his allegiance to traditional masculinity. He is traumatized by the miscarriage and Tawney separating from him.

The combination leads Ted to a dark place. In season three's "Hoorah," he is withdrawn, forlorn, and grieving, and not in healthy ways. He stops taking care of himself and drinks too much. In season three's "Sown with Salt," he rejects Tawney's suggestion that they see a marriage counselor. Ted also lashes out at everyone around him, including Daniel and a friend of Tawney's. He is on his way to hitting bottom and admits to Tawney that he is not doing well. A turning point occurs when Ted begins speaking to a therapist in season three's "Girl Jesus." In the next episode, "The Future," he admits to the therapist that he is fearful of losing Tawney, but also acknowledges that they might not be right for each other. He exhibits signs of coming to terms with the end of the marriage. In the season three finale "The Source," Ted begins treating Tawney with more kindness and understanding, sincerely telling her to do whatever she needs to do as she ponders her future. He adds that he only wants what is best for her. This transition period is not without its setbacks. Ted remains devastated about the end of his marriage and there are moments when anger gets the best of him. He suddenly has no path and is frightened by how uncertain the future is. However, Ted demonstrates personal growth by the end of the series. In season four's "Happy Unburdening," he has a frank, emotional conversation with his father about the divorce. In the series finale, "All I'm Sayin'," he also makes peace with Daniel, apologizing for what his stepbrother has had to endure. Ted also confesses to the sheriff that he has serious doubts about Daniel's guilt. Ted is able to achieve this growth and get to a healthier place by severing ties with traditional masculinity. Tawney notices the change, noting in season four's "Bob & Carol & Ted, Jr., and Alice" that he is more caring and understanding following her decision to move out of their house. He is a better man after he accepts that his masculinity damaged his wife and marriage. It is not easy, but when he lets go of the past and old ways of life, Ted's life and sense of himself improve.

Daniel also struggles with letting go of the past. It is not a matter of wanting to restore the past. He is not nostalgic for his life before prison. The past does consume him, though. Daniel is fixated on what happened the night of Hanna's death. The fact that he cannot remember torments him and prevents him from moving on with his life. As long as he is unable to remember that night, there is the possibility that he did murder her and therefore should not be out of prison. The uncertainty causes Daniel to feel guilty. That feeling is an anchor preventing him from planning for the future. In the season one finale "Jacob's Ladder," he says he is not doing OK and doesn't believe in anything. He punishes himself and makes poor decisions because of unanswered questions from a night 20 years prior. In the season two finale "Unhinged," there comes a point when Daniel is prepared to accept a deal from the prosecutor and plead guilty to Hanna's murder. He just wants it to be over. He says going back to prison would not be so bad and even pays the place a visit, proclaiming that there are times when he has thought about asking to be let back in. Daniel is losing the ability to care about himself or what happens to him. His despair is obvious to everyone around him. In "Hurrah," Jon pleads with him to get professional help.

The first phase in Daniel letting go of the past and developing a healthier mindset is getting out of Paulie. The town is his past and he has no future there. Living where Hanna was murdered has brought him pain and enhanced his feelings of guilt and uncertainty. At the end of the third season Daniel moves to Nashville, which marks the beginning of an arduous but productive healing journey. He begins to take steps to leave the past behind in the fourth and final season. Daniel gets his first job after being released and experiences some independence. In season four's "A House Divided," he meets a woman he comes to care deeply about who returns the sentiment. Most importantly, in "Happy Unburdening" he begins therapy for PTSD and talks

openly about the night of Hanna's murder and his life in prison. This is a grueling, emotional process for Daniel. In "A House Divided," he cries and is nakedly heartfelt as he reveals how he has no sense of self. He feels misunderstood and truly has no idea what he did or did not do on the night in question. Daniel admits that he has never tried to accept not knowing, and even recognizing that as a possibility is progress. Later in the fourth season, in "Happy Unburdening," he describes trauma he experienced during his imprisonment, including attacks in the showers, for the first time. Daniel takes therapy seriously and gradually becomes less skeptical of it. Change is incremental, and the series ends with unanswered questions about Daniel's future. Still, by the last episode of the series, "All I'm Sayin'," he is able to imagine a future for himself, one that involves happiness with other people. The last images of the episode find Daniel imagining Chloe, who is pregnant (though not by Daniel), and the baby. It is only by letting go of the past that Daniel is able to ease up on punishing himself and accept that a different, better life is possible. His masculinity was harmed by the guilt he refused to let go of and his inability to even consider forgiving himself. Relinquishing the stranglehold of the past means a healthier masculinity and mindset for Daniel.

How male characters on these series view restoring old ways of life and whether or not the past controls their present directly influences their quality of life. Wallowing in nostalgia and actively embracing the past brings with it varying degrees of hardship. It is debilitating to their mental and physical welfare. Letting go of the past and now allowing nostalgia an undue amount of authority in their life results in male characters who are more stable and secure. They have a healthier present and future.

### **Generational Masculinities: Manhood and the Influence of Fathers and Father Figures**

For the male characters on *Justified*, *Outsiders*, and *Rectify*, old ways of life and the construction of masculinities are related to generational masculinities, including father and son relationships. The series portrays it as harmful to wallow in the past and subscribe to traditional masculinity. It is healthier for the men on these series to look forward and reject the ways of the older generation. Complicated, antagonistic, and occasionally violent relationships between fathers and sons play a meaningful role on *Justified*. Raylan and Boyd are not particularly fond of their fathers, Arlo (Raymond J. Berry) and Bo (M.C. Gainey). Arlo is a reminder of a past Raylan would rather forget and one of the primary reasons the lawman did not want a transfer to Kentucky. There is no indication that Raylan and his father have seen each other much, if at all, since the younger man left Harlan for college. After his return the two men cross paths frequently, much to Raylan's consternation. Arlo is a man Raylan does not want to be like or have anything to do with. He is ashamed of his father and embarrassed to be his son. In season one's "Veterans," he calls him a lowlife. Their relationship is a prominent component of the first four seasons of the series. Boyd and Bo find themselves in a similar place. Their relationship is strained and hostile. It also has a shorter shelf life as Bo does not make it out of the first season, dying in the season one finale "Bulletville." At this point Arlo becomes a father figure to Boyd and the two criminals become close, further complicating Raylan's relationship with his father. Generational masculinities and thorny relationships between fathers and sons shape Raylan's and Boyd's masculinities. The older men cast a shadow and the younger men have different ways of responding to the influence of their fathers (or father figures).

The confrontational nature of Raylan and Arlo's relationship is established the first time they encounter one another, in season one's "Lord of War & Thunder." Raylan would have been happy to continue avoiding him, but Arlo is arrested for breaking into a home. By now the

younger Givens is accustomed to his father being in trouble with the law. He expects nothing less from Arlo. Raylan informs his father that he is only helping him because of Helen (Linda Gehringer), Arlo's wife and Raylan's stepmother. Their interaction demonstrates that a simmering combativeness exists between them, and it does not take much for it to boil over. When Raylan and Arlo share company, verbal sparring is where the conversation starts, as in season one's "Fathers & Sons," where they bicker over Arlo's runs-ins with the law. They argue, trade insults, and do their best to get under the other's skin. Arlo accuses Raylan of being soft and makes excuses whenever he finds himself on the wrong side of the law. Raylan responds by telling Arlo that he is solely responsible for whatever trouble he gets into and threatens to put him in jail. This rancor defines their relationship and surfaces every time they cross paths.

This animosity dates back to Raylan's childhood. He loathes Arlo because of the latter's traditional masculinity and the type of father he was. Raylan's dim view of men stems from his feelings about Arlo. The fact that his father is a criminal and he became a law enforcement officer is not a coincidence. At a foundational level, he believes that Arlo represents manhood at its worst. Raylan's mother died when he was young and it is implied that Arlo did not treat her well. In season one's "Blind Spot," Boyd notes that Arlo beat Raylan's mother. It is also suggested that Arlo was physically abusive towards Raylan during that time. In season three's "When the Guns Come Out," in another verbal altercation with his son, Arlo calls Raylan weak and adds that raising his hand caused Raylan to "yell like a girl," and the impression is that he has raised his hand to him before. This is not the only time Arlo alleges that his son is weak. This appears to be an issue that has carried over from before Raylan left for college. If he objects to Arlo's behavior in any way, or calls into question his life choices, Raylan is labeled weak or a whiner. Arlo also sees himself as a victim, something Raylan finds absurd and aggressively

objects to. As far as he is concerned, Arlo has always been a bad man who is the direct cause of any pain inflicted upon himself or those closest to him. In season four's "Money Trap," not long before his father's death in prison, Raylan tells Arlo that he really hasn't ever taught him anything. This is not entirely true. For Raylan, Arlo is a cautionary tale and a reminder of the kind of man he does not want to be.

Raylan's anger towards Arlo is informed by the professional as well as the personal. The consequences of Arlo's behavior extend to the workplace. In season one's "Fixer," Art acknowledges his awareness of how much Raylan despises Arlo, but he also wonders how much they are alike given Raylan's angry and violent tendencies. Even worse, other members of law enforcement entertain the idea that he is dirty strictly because of who his father is. In season three's "Watching the Detectives," when a criminal falsely accuses Raylan of being on the take, a U.S. Attorney does not immediately dismiss the possibility of the accusation being truthful. In season three's "Foot Chase," a man running for local sheriff assumes Raylan is untrustworthy and dirty because he is Arlo's son. The only thing that irritates him as much as Arlo is someone else comparing him to Arlo. He does not respond well to it and is severely distressed by any insinuation that he is similar to his father, a man he wants to distance himself from as much as possible.

People are not entirely wrong when they detect similarities between Raylan and Arlo. Raylan is bothered by the comparisons partly because there is an element of truth to them. Arlo has an explosive temper, and Winona calls Raylan the angriest man she knows in the pilot episode. Arlo displays violent tendencies and is a known abuser. As law enforcement and criminals alike are fond of reminding Raylan, he shoots a lot of people. Boyd mentions that in the pilot, and in season one's "The Collection" the U.S. Attorney informs Raylan he's looking

into his shootings. He also gets into bar fights and tussles with Boyd. There are even times when Raylan is overcome with anger and assaults Arlo. The most egregious incident occurs after Helen is killed. Arlo was not at home and Helen is murdered because of his criminal endeavors. Raylan is livid about his stepmother's death and his father's role in it. Raylan refuses to reminisce with Arlo or share his grief with him. Instead, in season two's "Reckoning," he loses his temper and beats Arlo as he channels his feelings about Helen's death. As much as Raylan wants nothing to do with Arlo, and as much as he yearns to reject Arlo's masculinity, he is aware that they have more in common than a surname. He does not want anyone else to notice or draw attention to it, and he is not pleased when they do. As hard as he tries, Raylan cannot escape Arlo's shadow. It explains why he professes to not care about his father's death, which occurs in season four's "Outlaw." Arlo's passing might alleviate some of that anger or allow him to move a little closer to living outside the shadow. He was Raylan's father, but he was also a man who brought Raylan nothing but grief, a man he did not want to be associated with. Arlo was a part of Raylan's past, someone Raylan wanted to forget.

Arlo's old-fashioned masculinity and its influence on Raylan is felt throughout the series. Arlo is an angry, violent man who does not treat women or children well. Raylan has his own issues with anger and violence. He also exhibits patriarchal tendencies that stem from being raised by a man who displayed no concern for the well-being of women or children. Raylan overcompensates and is overprotective of women and children, robbing them of agency, perhaps unwillingly or unknowingly. He makes it his business to take care of Winona and Ava even though neither woman asks for it. In season two's "I of the Storm," he tells Ava to throw Boyd out because he's dangerous, and she responds by saying she doesn't want his advice or assistance. He does the same with Loretta and Kendal, inserting himself into their lives and

offering unsolicited advice about who they should spend time with and what they should do with their lives. In season six's "Burned," he isn't pleased about Loretta working with Boyd, but she isn't interested in his opinion. Raylan thinks he means well and has the best interest of these women and children at heart, but there are times when he attempts to make decisions for them or meddle in their lives when it is not his place. He anoints himself a knight in shining armor and sees it as his duty to protect women and children, not noticing or ignoring any issues with it. Raylan aims to reject Arlo's masculinity and in doing so demonstrates another old form of masculinity. He would say he is vastly different from and superior to his father, a better man on all accounts, but traditional masculinity persists in Raylan whether he wants to admit it or not. His enlightenment only goes so far, through which the series suggests that it is not always easy to completely rid oneself of one's father's influence.

Boyd has an equally contentious relationship with his father despite the fact that the men have taken similar career paths. That detail does not bring them any closer. Bo is a significant presence on the series and in Boyd's life after Raylan shoots and nearly kills Boyd at the end of the pilot episode. The near-death experience leads to Boyd's first but not last effort to leave his life of crime in the past. These proclamations of going straight never last for very long and are something Raylan regularly belittles Boyd about. However, for as much as Raylan finds them amusing, this initial claim of reformation generates serious conflict between Boyd and his father. Bo is running meth and other drugs in Harlan and has designs on growing his operations. In "Fathers & Sons," he begins to develop a partnership with a cartel. Following his hospitalization Boyd turns to preaching and tries to start a small church. In "Veterans," his denunciations of drugs, greed, and selfishness in front of Bo are not well-received. They antagonize one another to the point where blood is shed and lives are lost, including Bo's.

Before his death, Bo provides Boyd with the opportunity to work together running meth and other drugs in Harlan. His father tries to give him money, but Boyd rejects it. The nature of their relationship prior to the beginning of the series is unclear. Boyd's inclination to dismiss Bo and draw his ire is rooted in his opportunism rather than any misgivings over his father's actions. Boyd follows in his path and attempts to take over the local drug trade in later seasons. It is all a matter of timing. After surviving being shot in the chest by Raylan, Boyd briefly leaves a life of crime behind him and becomes a preacher. This coincides with Bo's offer to join forces. At a different time the two men could have worked together. Bo lacks Boyd's charisma and way with words, but the younger man follows in the older man's footsteps and chooses a similar life. Under different circumstances they would have been partners or competitors. Boyd dabbling in religion makes them enemies and leads to Bo's death at the hands of a powerful cartel. When he resumes a life of crime, Boyd picks up where his father left off. He and Bo have a lot in common, and Boyd is not out to reject the past.

While Boyd does not grieve much over the loss of his father and was not particularly close to him, he does develop a close relationship with Arlo, something that is not lost on Raylan. In season two's "The Spoil," Boyd and Arlo team up and plot criminal endeavors together after Arlo discovers that Boyd is on Black Pike's payroll. Arlo sees an opportunity and Boyd is happy to have him. He has resumed a life of crime and his own father is dead. He also knows that Arlo has a weakness for easy money and is not concerned with legal matters. Above all else, working with Arlo is a way for Boyd to provoke Raylan. He knows the two are not close and having Arlo by his side is likely to get under Raylan's skin. That Arlo shows genuine affection for him is just icing on the cake for Boyd. He functions as a father-figure in Bo's absence and unlike Bo poses no real threat to him as Arlo is far from a criminal mastermind. In

season three's "Slaughterhouse," Boyd even calls Arlo family and says he is closer to him than he ever was to his own father, and Arlo compliments Boyd's criminal schemes while going out of his way to protect him. In season three's "Coalition," Arlo tells Boyd he is proud of him. These are courtesies he would never extend to Raylan. It is easy for Boyd to get close to a man who shares his interests, is not a threat, and despises Raylan. He sees Arlo as a man who is loyal to him and willing to do whatever it takes to provide for his family. Both men see working in a mine as their only other viable employment option, and neither wants to set foot in one again. A life of crime and violence is a necessary evil that Boyd and Arlo prefer to the alternative. They revere the past and traditional masculinity, and that factors into why one dies and one gets sentenced to life in prison. Trying to restore the past only brings them trouble.

A problematic father and father-figure is also at the center of *Outsiders*, as Foster is similar to Arlo. He is even more violent and dangerous than Arlo, and his adherence to traditional masculinity has a negative influence on other male characters and brings the clan nothing but problems. Foster serves as the only father-figure in the life of several men, including his son, Lil' Foster, as well as Asa and Hasil. The latter two have no father in their life and Foster's influence over the clan renders him a paternal figure for Asa and Hasil. Other men in the clan remain on the sidelines or function as foot soldiers for Foster. There are no other prominent male figures of his generation on the mountain. Challenges to his leadership come from a younger generation with different worldviews. Foster envisions himself as a father-figure for the residents of Shay Mountain. He elevates himself to that role without concern for what anyone else thinks. He rules as an autocrat, demanding complete obedience from others while insisting, as he does in season one's "Decomp of a Stuck Pig," that his only interest is keeping everyone safe. Foster's old-fashioned masculinity dictates that a strong male rules over his family. In

season one's "It's Good to Be a King," he makes it clear that he will not seek the counsel of others or solicit input on his leadership style or choices. He uses violence whenever he deems it necessary in order to instill fear in his family, like when he shoots a man in season one's "Trust" for not watching over him properly. He believes women should be subservient to men. He does not care if people like him, but he insists they respect him. Foster wants absolute power and will do anything to get it.

Foster exhibits his old-fashioned masculinity and leadership style in his interactions with Lil' Foster, Asa, and Hasil. He is a domineering parent who encourages Foster, Jr. to be just like him. He does not tolerate what he sees as weakness, like a hesitancy to fight or a failure to admonish a woman for questioning his authority, as he does in the first episode. Foster expects his son to do whatever he says and berates him whenever he determines that Lil' Foster is veering away from his directives. In season one's "Doomsayer," he belittles his son, suggests he is weak, and demands he fight as a way to restore his honor and manhood. Foster's treatment of his son extends to Asa and Hasil. He never pauses to consider that it is not his place to discipline, reprimand, or command them. As far as he is concerned, Foster is their overseer. He treats Asa and Hasil like they are his rebellious children showing a little too much independence. In season one's "Demolition," he says that he does not trust Asa after the younger man spent a decade living away from the clan. Foster sees him as a direct threat to his leadership. In "It's Good to Be King" he attempts to banish Asa from the mountain. The mere suspicion that Asa is working against him infuriates Foster. His fondness for ruling with fear and violence emerges when he discovers that Hasil sold moonshine to teenagers in town. In the first episode, Foster cuts off his fingers as punishment and a warning. Nothing happens without Foster approving or ordering it and there are severe consequences for scheming behind his back. The younger generation sees

this violence and autocracy, and they choose another way forward. They do not admire or respect him. However, just because they do not want Foster as their leader does not mean they reject violence or the ways of the past.

The trio of younger men does recognize how harmful Foster's leadership is. They detest him and how he rules and find their own ways to repudiate it. Lil' Foster, Asa, and Hasil are determined to carve their own path and not live under Foster's dominion. In doing so, the men resort to violence, showcasing the struggle to completely eliminate Foster's influence. Both generations deploy similar methods to solve their problems even as Lil' Foster, Asa, and Hasil are aware of serious issues with Foster's violent and duplicitous tendencies. Foster prefers to try and kill those he deems a threat, including Asa and his mother, Lady Ray. Lil' Foster and Asa use the same approach when they decide that Foster's leadership must end. In season one's "Day Most Blessed," they launch a plot to kill him by having Lil' Foster convince his father that he has killed Asa. In the season one finale "Long Live the Bren'in," it is revealed that the death was faked and Asa shoots Foster. This is far from Lil' Foster and Asa's only brush with violence. Both men get into fistfights with Blackburg residents as well as each other. They do not shy away from using violence to solve their problems even as they try to kill Foster because of his predilection for using fear and violence to rule the clan. Violence begets more violence and the influence of the paternal figure and his masculinity permeates the younger men. They are unable to make a complete separation from Foster. This is problematic because the cycle of conflict and violence continue, with no end in sight. Lives are lost, people are hurt, property is destroyed, but none of it leads to the search for other ways of resolving problems. It is always more conflict and violence.

Hasil does not actively plot Foster's death. He does not have many interactions with Lil' Foster or Asa. He does, however, encounter Foster's wraith in the pilot episode as several of his fingers are removed because he sold moonshine in town without Foster's approval or knowledge. Hasil is fearful of Foster and prefers to avoid him as much as he possibly can. Soon he has his own plan to remove himself from being under Foster's control. In the first episode, Hasil meets and begins a relationship with a woman in Blackburg, Sally-Ann. They become serious quickly and before long are planning their life together. It is a life away from Shay Mountain and Foster. Hasil is aware of Foster's violent tendencies and the danger his leadership puts the clan in. Like Lil' Foster and Ava, he is unable to forge ahead without violence. In season one's "Messengers," Hasil assaults an acquaintance in town over an unpaid debt as well as a police officer who questions him about squatting with Sally-Ann. In season two "We Are Kinnah," he decides to fight in an underground fight club as other employment is hard to come by and fighting is something he knows how to do well. As much as Hasil desires domestic bliss with Sally-Ann and a life away from the clan, there is a side of him that is quick to resort to violence and misses Shay Mountain. He was raised in a violent environment and is a violent man. Hasil has been influenced by Foster and life with the clan, and it infects his own masculinity. He tries but is unable to fully see a life away from the clan as the past has its hooks in him. This uncertainty of where his true place causes anxiety and jeopardizes his chance at happiness with Sally-Ann.

Lil' Foster, Asa, and Hasil are all influenced by Foster and their life on Shay Mountain. Their masculinities have been informed by Foster and the violence that has surrounded them amongst the clan. However, the younger generation craves a different future. Foster wants to dwell in the past and live as they always have. To continue old ways of life he uses fear and violence to control others and consolidate power. He exhibits traditional masculinity and

encourages others to do the same. The younger men do not subscribe to Foster's leadership style and find harm in his model of manhood (even as they model it themselves and are unable or unwilling to remove themselves from it). Lil' Foster and Asa are not eager to fight each other in an effort to label one the bigger man. They do not want to oppress women to prove their manhood. They do not want to shoot a man or chop his fingers off for falling short of expectations. They do not want one man to rule the clan as a dictator. Part of Hasil desperately wants to start a family with Sally-Ann in town and wants no part of a clan led by Foster. Lil' Foster, Asa, and Hasil are not stuck in the past and view Foster's leadership and masculinity as bringing nothing but trouble to them and Shay Mountain. They reject the paternal figure and hope for a future that is different and better. However, at the same time they fail to craft a better future for the clan. They resort to violence in an effort to solve their problems and contribute to the cycle of conflict and violence that shows no signs of stopping. Determining that Foster is a problem is not enough. They do not want him as a leader but use his methods on the clan and in town. This half-measure will not accomplish anything productive.

Generational masculinities and father/son relationships are less violent on *Rectify*. The series is more interested in how Daniel tries to form his masculinity, which involves relationships he develops with several male characters, including his stepfather, stepbrothers, and an old friend. These relationships directly influence how he determines the type of man he wants to be. The series explores how a man, at the age of nearly 40, tries to figure out who he is, almost from scratch, and the different kinds of masculinity he is exposed to on that journey. Choosing whose influence to accept or reject is part of how Daniel forms his masculinity.

Daniel is introduced to viewers just after he has been released from prison. During his 20 years of incarceration on death row there was no paternal figure in his life. His only human

contact is limited to brief, inhospitable interactions with prison guards. The one person he communicates and develops a relationship with is a fellow inmate, Kerwin (Johnny Ray Gill). Their conversations consist of talking to one another as they sit on opposite sides of the wall that separates them. Initially Daniel has little interest in making a friend on death row. There are flashbacks to this time in the first episode. As one would expect he is not in a good place, mentally or otherwise. He has lost his freedom, awaits execution, and has no memory of what he did or did not do to Hanna. Daniel is forlorn and gloomy, and it takes him a while to warm up to Kerwin, who persists in his efforts to make conversation. Daniel softens a little and allows himself to befriend Kerwin. By the season one finale, "Jacob's Ladder," they have become close friends. Then, Kerwin is taken away from him and executed for the crimes he committed. He is devastated by this loss and slips back into morose loneliness. Kerwin brought some light into his life, but only temporarily. This dark, despondent place is where Daniel's headspace is upon his release. Freedom does not begin a transition to affable optimism. In "Jacob's Ladder," he wonders if he can ever make it on the outside and can't get used to freedom. Daniel's identity is shaped by feeling lost, disoriented, and morose. His demeanor does not change much now that he is out of prison and off of death row. Suddenly he has to determine the type of man he wants to be after 20 years without a paternal figure in his life and barely any human contact.

Daniel has several men in his life after he returns to his hometown of Paulie following his release. His father died not long after Daniel went to prison and is not a character on the series. There is a traditional paternal figure in the character of Ted, Sr. (Bruce McKinnon), a man Daniel's mother Janet (J. Smith-Cameron) marries early in his imprisonment. Ted has two sons of his own. Ted, Jr. is from a previous marriage and is an adult close to Daniel's age. He and Janet also have a teenage son, Jared (Jake Austin Walker). Other men who play a meaningful

role in Daniel's life are his attorney, Jon (Luke Kirby), and his high school friend Trey (Sean Bridgers). These men expose him to different types of masculinity. The relationships Daniel develops with them influence him as he endeavors to define the kind of man he wants to be. The long absence of a father or other paternal figure in his life and need to establish his masculinity as he navigates freedom renders these men as significant and influential for Daniel. The group dynamic means that different generations help shape the development of his masculinity. Ted, Sr. is old enough to be Daniel's father while Ted, Jon, and Trey are all around his age. Given that he has spent the past two decades in a small cell awaiting execution and only knows these men a little if at all, there is no real hierarchy in terms of their influence on him as he settles into his new life.

A journey of self-discovery is at the center of the narrative. Daniel was a broken, anguished man while in prison. Now free and nearly 40, he must forge a path forward and that involves reconfiguring his masculine identity. He remains broken and anguished, but Daniel is also trying to figure out who he is and wants to be as he grapples with the despair, anger, and confusion he feels. The most influential men in his life represent a wide array of masculinities and complicate Daniel's effort to reconfigure his masculine identity as much as they illuminate. First and foremost, there are his family members, Ted, Sr. and Ted. He lives with Ted, Janet, Jared, and his sister Amantha (Abigail Spencer) following his release. Daniel comes to greatly admire Ted, Sr. His stepfather is patient, kind, thoughtful, and mild-mannered. He is a thoroughly decent man who treats Daniel, Janet, and everyone around him well. In season two's "The Great Destroyer," in a quiet moment inside Ted, Sr. and Janet's home, Daniel tells Ted, Sr. that he is a good man. In season two's "Mazel Tov," Daniel praises Jared for being sensitive and curious, later noting that Ted and Janet are raising him right. He is also aware of how Ted, Sr.

has welcomed him into his home and is trying to support Daniel's transition to freedom. Daniel's quiet, thoughtful nature is something he has in common with his stepfather. It is not that Ted, Sr. is stoic and a man of few words. Rather, he is calm and attentive. Ted, Sr. models a healthy masculinity and is a positive influence for Daniel, something Daniel realizes.

It is not clear how Ted was raised, but he is nothing like his father. He does not possess any of Ted, Sr.'s thoughtfulness, patience, kindness, calmness, or decency. Ted is crude, abrasive, confrontational, and selfish. He treats Tawney poorly and does not recognize or appreciate his father's attributes. Unlike Ted, Sr., he does not extend a warm welcome to Daniel and instead attempts to disrupt his stepbrother's transition to freedom and make it as unpleasant as possible. Ted needles and antagonizes Daniel from the moment he shares space with him, in the first episode. In season one's "Sexual Peeling," he makes vulgar, insensitive comments to Daniel about sexual assault in prison. He is hostile and unfriendly, treating Daniel as a guilty man who does not deserve to be free. Ted does not want Tawney around Daniel and is unhappy about him sharing a home with his father, stepmother, stepbrother, and stepsister. This extreme antagonism brings out the worst in Daniel and leads to a physical encounter between the men. In season one's "Drip, Drip," there is a scene with them that takes place at night at the tire store. They argue about Tawney as Ted does not want her to spend any time with Daniel. Ted makes another tasteless remark about prison sexual assault and demands that Daniel stay away from him. Daniel loses his temper and assaults his stepbrother, using a maneuver to put him to sleep. For as much as Ted, Sr. is a positive influence on Daniel, Ted is the polar opposite. His masculinity is aggrieved, aggressive, self-absorbed, and brutish. Daniel is ill-served by being in his company.

Two other men who play a consequential role in Daniel's post-incarceration life are his lawyer, Jon, and his high school friend, Trey. They provide opposing models of masculinity and highlight the struggles with freedom and transition Daniel experiences. Jon has been steadfast in his commitment to Daniel and his family. He genuinely cares about them and continues to work with Daniel after his release. Jon wants to do his part to ensure that his client has a bright future. He counsels him as the sheriff and former DA continue to pester Daniel about his culpability in Hanna's death. In season three's "Hurrah," when Daniel's PTSD and difficulties become glaringly obvious, Jon pleads with him to seek professional help. Daniel and his family are more than just clients. He recognizes his lawyer's loyalty and concern for his family and overall well-being. As with Ted, Daniel knows Jon is a good man. The same cannot be said of Trey. Daniel looks him up because Trey was with him the night of Hanna's death. He thinks his old friend can shed some light on what happened. There is the possibility that Trey had more to do with Hanna's death than he lets on. He is not happy to see Daniel and divulges little information about the night in question. Trey is also spiteful, pitiless, and misogynistic. In season two's "Weird As You," when Daniel presses him for details about that night, Trey becomes combative and provokes him. He calls Hanna a "bitch" and a "slut" and won't directly answer when Daniel asks him if he killed her. Trey taunts him about Hanna and her death until Daniel explodes with rage and throws him into a wall. Trey is a downright evil human being who almost gleefully brings out Daniel's dark side, much like Ted did. They exploit the anger, sadness, and doubt Daniel has for their own amusement. Trey also exhibits an entrenched hatred of women and severe cruelty indicative of toxic masculinity. He is a negative influence on Daniel.

Men on the other series have prominent paternal figures informing their masculinities, men who have long been a part of their lives. This does not apply to Daniel. Following his

release from death row and return to Paulie he has a small community of men in his life, each serving a crucial role as he attempts to reconfigure his identity and find his place in the world. Daniel is surrounded by a wide array of masculinities. Ted, Sr. and Jon possess many admirable qualities and represent healthy models of masculinity that Daniel recognizes as worthy of emulation. Ted and Trey are noxious men who drag him down and are devoted to revealing an ugly side of Daniel. He is cognizant of their toxic masculinities and the detrimental consequences of being around them. This tension between different models of masculinity reflects the profound struggle within Daniel as he works to define the kind of man he is and wants to be. He is thoughtful, contemplative, serene, and generous but overcome with worry about the darkness within him and the uncertainty about his actions the night of Hanna's death. Daniel must determine how he is going to channel his feelings as his internal struggle and reconfiguration persist. A kind man representing a healthy, enlightened masculinity is fighting to get out, if only he can overcome the pain.

These series posit that a healthy, enlightened masculinity is possible if the masculinity of the older generation, men of Arlo's and Foster's ages, is rejected. Fathers and traditional masculinity often represent what is best to avoid. On *Justified*, *Outsiders*, and *Rectify*, it is detrimental to embrace nostalgia and become enamored with restoring old ways of life. Male characters who do so are consistently in problematic situations that bring harm to themselves or their community. They get in trouble with the law and end up incarcerated or dead. They contribute to a cycle of conflict and violence that causes their community to suffer. Or they end up in a dark place and cause the dissolution of their marriages. Wallowing in the past is a warning sign, something that mainly brings unhappiness. It confines many of the male characters. Rather, these series suggest that it is much better to look forward. The male

characters who avoid the trap of nostalgia, who discard the ways of their fathers and of traditional masculinity, are positioned to achieve a superior sense of self and a more promising future. It is possible for them to be content, secure, and relaxed. They just have to avoid modeling their behavior on the kind of men who long for the good old days.

## Chapter 5: Conclusion

Throughout the 2010s, it was easy to find familiar stereotypes of rural, Southern masculinity on television. Much of the representation occurred in reality television series. As the authors of the introduction to *Small-Screen Souths: Region, Identity, and the Cultural Politics of Television* note, many of these series “depict Southern rural identity using the old tropes of redneck, hillbilly, or hick” (Hinrichsen, Caison, and Rountree 14). Examples include MTV’s *Buckwild* (2013), A&E’s *Duck Dynasty* (2012-2017), and A&E’s *Big Smo* (2014-2015). The “hillbilly fool” and “redneck everyman” stereotypes on display in these reality TV programs portray these men as racist and homophobic when they are not busy fighting, swearing, shooting, womanizing, or blowing stuff up (Smith 168). These unflattering images of problematic masculinity reinforce long-held beliefs about white men in the rural South and ensure that recognizable stereotypes are prominently disseminated in media. The networks air them, millions of viewers watch them, and industrial and entertainment media discuss them.

During this time period, there was not a lot of television, scripted or otherwise, that served to counteract the representations in these rural reality TV series. The three series that are the subject of this dissertation, *Justified*, *Outsiders*, and *Rectify*, challenge the more frequent depictions of rural, white men in reality television. They showcase three-dimensional characters and a wider array of masculine identities than is typical of the unscripted series. They also denounce traditional masculine identity. The three scripted series examined here are also in conversation with twenty-first century television programs that have received much more attention from scholars and the popular press. Scholars and journalists writing about complex male characters on scripted television in the early 21<sup>st</sup> century predominantly focused on series set in urban environments, few of which were set in the South. This dissertation adds to those

discourses while demonstrating that there were complex male characters worthy of attention on scripted series set in rural, Southern locations in the 2010s.

The analyses of *Justified*, *Outsiders*, and *Rectify* offer insights into rural masculinities during a specific time period. They consider the ways in which male characters and the construction of their identities are represented in relation to consequential social and cultural shifts happening in the 2010s. Another significant factor the dissertation reflects upon is the impact of setting on the formation of masculine identity, in this case of rural settings (Campbell, Bell, and Finney 9). These series engage with the ways that a neoliberal context can increase income inequality and economic insecurity. The fictional towns at the center of these series, Harlan, Blackburg, and Paulie, are depicted as feeling the impact of neoliberalism in ways that resemble real-world impacts. The economic hardship and precariousness experienced by the male characters reveal masculine identities that are considered undesirable by many in twenty-first century society. Such identities are rooted in a traditional masculinity where men are expected to be providers solely responsible for the care of their loved ones. Many of the male characters in these series subscribe to traditional masculinity and believe it is their duty to provide for their families, no matter what it takes or what it costs them.

The tendency of some male characters in *Justified*, *Outsiders*, and *Rectify* to immerse themselves in traditional masculinity, and the consequences of their decision to do so, gets to the heart of a key argument in this dissertation. Men on these series who remain rooted in the past experience severe distress on a regular basis, more so than men who do not cling to the past and traditional notions of masculinity. Whether it is adhering to the belief that a man must be the sole financial provider for his family or being fearful of and antagonistic toward those who are deemed as not belonging to a specific community, hardship almost always accompanies

traditional masculinity. The male characters most devoted to it endanger their physical well-being (along with those close to them), jeopardize their mental health, alienate themselves from loved ones, and risk lengthy incarceration. They struggle to, and rarely find, satisfaction.

This claim is cemented throughout the dissertation. Male characters who are committed to nostalgia and restoring the ways of the past run consistently into obstacles and find their efforts thwarted. The same is true of the men in these series who allow themselves to be influenced by fathers or father figures who represent traditional masculinity. It is a hindrance to model masculinity after an older generation still stuck in the past. Regardless of age, the problems are the same. Deference to nostalgia and traditional masculinity is a misguided attempt to bring back ways of life that are gone and not coming back.

Another key point in this dissertation is that these series suggest that the use of violence to maintain or regain freedom (or at least the perception of it) only results in more violence and unrest. It does not actually lead to freedom or accomplish anything constructive. The male characters who resist authority figures and engage in physical conflicts with others (be it law enforcement, those defined as an enemy, or members of their own communities) only contribute to a never-ending cycle of violence and confrontation that harms themselves, their loved ones, or their communities. Attempts to demonstrate power or gain control with force, or to seek revenge for perceived slights, only generate additional strife. This is another way in which these series condemn traditional masculinity. Male characters who subscribe to the idea that a real man solves problems with violence or needs to prove their manhood with it end up incarcerated, ostracized, dead, or miserable. These fictional worlds tell us that freedom and harmony are not attained via violence.

While none of the male characters in *Justified*, *Outsiders*, and *Rectify* lead a life free of stress or difficulties, those who reject traditional masculinity, or at the very least are cognizant of its problems and make an effort to avoid mimicking it, are in a better place physically and emotionally than those who believe in the efficacy of traditional masculinity. That also applies to those who steer clear of the influence of nostalgia. Men on these series who accept that traditional masculinity is problematic and that restoring the past is not the path to freedom and happiness have a more stable present and more promising future. They have a better sense of themselves and an easier time leading a life that isn't full of constant (often dangerous) conflict. The outside world isn't as threatening a place. There will still be struggles large and small, but stability and contentment are far more attainable for characters that reject traditional masculinity and nostalgia.

There is more to the representation of men in twenty-first century television than what has been the subject of the most interest from scholars. It is not just hillbillies on reality TV and urban men such as Walter White, Don Draper, and Tony Soprano on scripted series. Considering *Justified*, *Outsiders*, and *Rectify* confers an additional set of insights. These series offer characterizations and avenues for study that are as rich as the scripted twenty-first century series that have been the object of much more scholarship. One of the reasons these three series are so compelling is because of the wide array of male characters in each.

Many of the fictional men are multifaceted and challenging. There are villains with attributes and heroes with flaws. There are seemingly conservative lawmen who don't buy into bigotry or the past being glory days worth restoring. There are male characters caught between communities, searching for themselves and trying to find what's right. There are men struggling and fighting to be better, and severely flawed men who demonstrate the capability to show

improvement and that progressive change is possible. Finally, there are men who are not commonly seen on twenty-first century scripted television, such as a lawman who is not a bad man but is anything but heroic, terrified of violence and conflict. There's also a sensitive, quiet, pensive, and tentative man with no idea who he is or wants to be. The totality of the men across these series makes for texts worthy of examination. They deserve to be part of the conversation with existing scholarship on masculinity and twenty-first century television.

This dissertation has limitations and possibilities for further study, leaving other aspects of these series to analyze as well as broader areas of inquiry such as additional scripted series from the 2010s that explore whiteness and masculinity. While region and race are part of my analysis, the South and whiteness could use additional attention as factors in the development of masculinity on these series. Existing scholarship on men in the South could potentially shed light on masculinities represented on these series. The region itself could play a bigger factor than is given consideration in this dissertation. The South has its own characteristics that are unique to that part of the country, characteristics that influence how its residents are raised and learn to conduct themselves, and such matters could be further brought to bear on the analysis of these series.

Another area for further analysis around these series is race. The protagonists and antagonists of these series are all white men. More emphasis could be given to how their whiteness influences the development of their masculinity and the different ways audiences might interpret white masculinity as it is depicted on these series. There's more to explore than white male backlash to a changing society and culture. White male privilege, racism, and minority characters and how they help determine white masculine identity on these series could be expanded upon.

These are not the only scripted series from the 2010s offering insights into masculinity. There is potential for further exploration of rural, white masculinity on twenty-first century television and issues raised here with other, more recent series, as well as a current one. Neal McDonough, who plays an outsider and villain on season three of *Justified*, also portrays an outsider (and criminal) on season two of *Yellowstone*, which began airing on the Paramount Network in 2018 and whose fifth season will be released later this year. It is a male-dominated series set in rural Montana with plenty of issues revolving around violence, authority figures, land, and financial stability. *Longmire*, which aired six seasons on A&E and Netflix from 2012-17, also concerns a law enforcement officer in a rural part of the country, a county sheriff in Wyoming. AMC's *Hell on Wheels*, which aired from 2011-16, is set after the Civil War and involves construction of the first transcontinental railroad. It also concerns a man in uniform as the protagonist is a former Confederate soldier. As these series are all set in the West or are explicitly Westerns, an examination of them could more overtly engage with that genre. Economic issues are at the forefront of *Yellowstone* as its central character, John Dutton (Kevin Costner), works diligently to keep his ranch despite financial challenges. Also, on *Hell on Wheels*, as the protagonist takes a job for the railroad hunting Union soldiers after the war, economic matters play a role in the series. Authority figures and matters of law & order factor into *Longmire*. These series are rich with possibility for examining rural, white masculinity.

Also potentially rich with possibility is the upcoming return of a familiar face. Raylan Givens is coming back to television. FX is currently in production on *Justified: City Primeval*, which is set to premiere in 2023. The setting is shifting from rural to urban, with Detroit replacing Kentucky, and it would be interesting to examine if/how an older Raylan in an

unfamiliar, urban environment differs from the earlier depiction of the character in his rural hometown.

When reflecting upon these series, it is easy to consider the ways that Donald Trump and his presidency might speak to and about these fictional narratives. Trump's years in the White House did not directly influence these series. He declared his candidacy in 2015 and was elected in 2016. *Justified* and *Rectify* were on the air before 2015 and *Outsiders* went into production in May 2015, about a month before Trump announced he was running for president. Still, all three series were on the air in 2015 or 2016, a time when men in rural America, particularly white men, were the subject of consistent media attention due to Trump, his rhetoric, and his appeal to white men in rural parts of the country. There was a lot of media discourse about these allegedly forgotten men, men who were struggling to make it in a changing, globalized America, men falling behind and wondering what their place was in an increasingly diverse landscape, men who flocked to Trump because he claimed that he saw them and cared about them.

After the June 2015 announcement of Trump's candidacy, the news media began paying attention to Trump's popularity with white men, including rural, working-class white men. In August 2015 *Reuters* identified white working-class voters without a college degree as a key Trump constituency on the rise. They added that he was performing especially well with male members of that group (Gest). Soon after, *The Atlantic* noticed the trend and stated that Trump was polling extremely well with white men without a college degree, blue-collar and working-class men (Brownstein). These stories continued into 2016 and beyond. A month before the 2016 election, the *Associated Press* wrote about Trump's appeal to white men, focusing on a Dallas radio host and some of his listeners from more rural parts of that area (Sedensky). Soon after the election, stories examining how Trump won discussed his strong performance in rural America,

where voters are far more likely to be white and which have more residents without a college degree than do urban or suburban communities (Kurtzleben).

Considering Trump's appeal to men in rural America, it is worth considering how the male characters on these series might view him. Would Boyd proudly wear a Make America Great Again hat and be first in line at a Trump rally? Can the series reveal anything meaningful about men in rural America during the Trump presidency? Do the male characters share characteristics with the men who loudly and proudly supported Trump? What can men on scripted television tell us about society and culture at a specific point in time? Even though the three series were not a reaction to Trump, it is fair to say that they captured something about a time and place right before a wealthy reality TV star exploited the fears of rural men to get elected president.

There are answers to some of those questions in this dissertation. While some of the characters in *Justified*, *Outsiders*, and *Rectify* seem to align with Trumpism, on the whole I argue that these series challenge such ideologies. One way they do so is by representing a world in which such perspectives dominate while validating those characters who seek another way. The three series depict and champion male characters in rural America who reject victimhood and are unafraid of a diversifying world. They are not steeped in nostalgia and committed to championing a return to earlier days. Unlike the stereotypical rural male Trump voter, characters such as Raylan, Wade, Hasil, Daniel and Ted, Sr. are not afraid of people different from them, do not feel as if they are ignored, and do not subscribe to the notion that the best way forward is bringing back the past. They are the antitheses to male characters like Boyd, Arlo, Foster, and Ted. In fact, the series portray the dangers of being too enamored with traditional masculinity and depict the potential downfall of trying to restore the past. There are male characters who are

not angry about people of color existing in their communities. These three series offer some pushback against the idea that rural America widely consists of white men who proudly embody Trumpism while also providing the opportunity to further consider Trump's presidency, men in rural America, and scripted men on twenty-first century television. Each series contains fictional representations of people and places associated with Trumpism. Some of the male characters symbolize real-life grievances that men in rural America have. These familiar grievances are taken seriously and given a voice on these three series. However, each series is much more thoughtful, nuanced, and open-minded than is Trumpism. The series are not hostile or reactionary, and they urge conversation and reflection. Their desire to consider different viewpoints and depict masculine identities not often seen on twenty-first century scripted television gives *Justified*, *Outsiders*, *Rectify* qualities more opposed to than aligned with Trumpism.

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