



Reframing Il Mostro in *Criminal Minds: Beyond Borders*: American Killers, Italian Monsters, and the Transnational Imagination

Francesca Borrione

Abstract. This essay discusses two American obsessions—xenophobia and serial killers—as displayed in the episode “Il mostro” from the CBS program *Criminal Minds: Beyond Borders* (2017). By placing two murder mysteries—one American, one Italian—in conversation, “Il mostro” appeals to the transnational imagination while reinforcing collective anxieties about the fear of the other.

“I remember this case, it’s just like the Zodiac: unsolved.” This line is pronounced by FBI agent Matt Simmons (Daniel Henney) in the episode “Il mostro” from the CBS crime series *Criminal Minds: Beyond Borders* (2017). “This case” is the one that shocked Italian society and terrorized the population in central Italy between 1968 and 1985: the murder of at least 14 individuals at the hand of a killer dubbed “the monster of Florence” by Florentine journalist Mario Spezi.¹ The American case to which the monster of Florence is connected is “the Zodiac,” the serial killer who killed at least five people between 1969 and 1974 in the San Francisco area. Although Florentine farmer Pietro Pacciani was charged, convicted, and later acquitted for the murders committed by the monster of Florence, neither the monster of Florence nor the Zodiac were ever identified.

This essay argues that the television series *Criminal Minds: Beyond Borders*—which ran on CBS between 2016 and 2017, in the middle of a dramatic presidential campaign between Donald Trump and Hillary Clinton—intersects and amplifies collective fears and anxieties

Francesca Borrione is an assistant professor in the General Faculty of Media Studies at the University of Virginia. She holds a PhD in English from the University of Rhode Island and a doctorate in education from the University of Perugia, Italy. She specializes in Italian American media and true crime, and in postwar Kosovar cinema. Her academic works has appeared in journals such as *Italian American Review* and in the edited collections *The Films of Ettore Scola* and *Contemporary Balkan Cinema*.