"All I saw was evil": Supernatural's Reactionary Road Trip.

Supernatural is a highly-rated television series, which debuted in 2005 on the Warner Brothers network in the US. Creator Eric Kripke envisaged the story as a mythic road trip across America, with two brothers travelling through small-town America, fighting evil and righting wrongs. Although the brothers' iconic car (a 1967 Chevy Impala) and the road genre template — Sam and Dean are named after Sal and Dean, from Jack Kerouac's 1957 novel On the Road — establish Supernatural as a distinctly American production, the thematic fight between good and evil has attracted a wide international audience. This article explores these themes and places them in the context of post-9/11 America.

In the aftermath of 9/11, Americans struggled to make sense of the mass murder of almost 3000 citizens. Why had America been attacked? How would events affect the country? And what should be the proper response? While there was no single, collective national mood — the destruction, shown live on television, was too traumatic and the issues too complicated to allow that — the attacks did, however, generate understandable concerns about the vulnerability of the 'homeland', paranoia about foreigners (particularly those of Middle-Eastern origin) and the desire for revenge. For some, the attacks seemed to be an affirmation of their belief in the existence of evil, not just the physical presence of dark-skinned foreign jihadists, but also an evil ideology that was manifestly anti-capitalist, undemocratic, unchristian and un-American. While the good versus evil battle could be fought physically through military crusades against Islamic terrorists, the enemy's value system also had to be defeated, and, for some, that meant identifying and confronting adversaries at home. For instance, on The 700 Club, two days after 9/11, Christian evangelists Jerry Falwell and Pat Robertson blamed the attacks on pagans, abortionists, feminists, gays, lesbians and the American Civil Liberties Union, stating "All of them who try to secularize America, I point the finger in their faces and say you helped his happen." In a similar vein, Dinesh D'Souza's The Enemy At Home: The Cultural Left and Its Responsibility for 9/11 (2007) was perhaps the most prominent of many publications by social and political commentators blaming 9/11 on America's liberal values, most notably those inspired by the supposed immorality of the 1960s. In a tirade against the children of the counterculture, D'Souza called prominent liberals "domestic insurgents" (291) who aimed, apparently, to transform America into a "shining beacon of global depravity, a kind of Gomorrah on a Hill" (284).

While these views garnered some support, many Americans found them objectionable, and the cantankerous national debate continued about the meaning of 9/11, its causes, and who was to blame. During these deliberations, the left and right of American politics sought to define right and wrong, moral and immoral, and good and evil by claiming ownership of traditional American values. While it was tempting to believe that after 9/11 the world had changed forever, in reality these arguments were nothing new: they were in fact just another rendition of the culture wars between liberalism and conservatism that began, arguably, with the First Amendment of the U.S. Constitution and have continued ever since, rising occasionally to national prominence in times of cultural or social conflict such as the 1960s, 1990s, and after 9/11. If 9/11 was different it was in the scale of the trauma. With thousands dead, scars on the landscape, and the country brought to a standstill, 9/11 had the characteristics of both a physical and psychological national wound, and like post traumatic stress disorder, its effects would be felt in multiple spheres, including that of the televisial drama. While most television genres are suitable for discussions of sin and virtue, horror stories are particularly apposite for the task. With, for example, typical storylines about redemption and sacrifice, horror stories tend to "play out narratives of good versus evil" (Braun 88). In addition, horror stories tend to be reactionary, preserving the status quo and punishing the deviant: Stephen King argues, for example, that "the horror story, beneath its fangs and fright wig, is really ... conservative as ... its main purpose is to reaffirm the virtues of the norm by showing us what awful things happen to people who venture into taboo lands" (442-3). This conservatism made the horror genre a vehicle for stories which, directly or by allegory, represented and conversed with the events of 9/11 and the War on Terror. In fact, just a few weeks after the attacks, the New York Times predicted the slew of 9/11-related films and television series that was to follow: "The horror movie is just sitting there waiting to deal with this. It is one of the most versatile genres out there, a universal solvent of virtually any news..."
Science Fiction Analogies

Furthermore, as Kurt Vonnegut demonstrated in Slaughterhouse-Five (1969), traditional dramatic narratives may be insufficient to discuss events outside humanity’s normal frame of reference. Like Vonnegut, who used the science fiction format to explore the horrors of the Dresden bombing, television programme makers turned to the genres of science fiction and horror to depict, through metaphor and allusion, the terror of 9/11 and the moral issues raised by the War on Terror. For instance, Battlestar Galactica (2005-9) begins with a “sneak” attack, and has scenes of collapsing buildings, innocent civilians in the front line, and the unpreparedness of the military. Falling Skies (2010-) features an inexplicable alien enemy whose apparent goal is to invade and occupy the United States. These dramas have a cathartic effect, providing simulacra of reality and suggesting that Americans could not only recover some control over the monumental events of the early years of the twenty-first century, but that the fracturing of normality that occurred on 9/11 could be repaired through elision and collective self-delusion. However, the very best of these dramas also asked questions about the nature of evil. For example, while Battlestar Galactica initially seemed to offer little more than an opportunity for viewers to extract vicarious revenge on an evil enemy, it shifted tone noticeably in season three (2006-7) by incorporating plot themes analogous to the Iraq occupation and insurgency. By making allusions to real-life horrors such as Abu Ghraib, Battlestar Galactica blurred the line between good and evil, and asked audiences to look inwards as well as outwards for examples of true horror. Battlestar Galactica is therefore typical of many modern fantasy serials like Charmed (1998-2006), Buffy the Vampire Slayer (1997-2003) and Angel (1999-2004) in depicting morally inconsistent characters, with good and evil being “eternally shifting qualities” (Braun 89).

Supernatural as Road Trip

Supernatural (2005-) — the subject of this essay — provides an opportunity to discuss America’s post 9/11 mood, particularly connections between its more reactionary aspects and portrayals of morality and evil in the post 9/11 era. Series creator Eric Kripke envisaged it as a mythic road trip across America, with two formerly estranged brothers, Sam (Jared Padalecki) and Dean Winchester (Jensen Ackles) (named after Sal and Dean, from Jack Kerouac’s 1957 novel On the Road), travelling Route 66 and fighting evil (18). Supernatural establishes its credentials as a “road story” by utilising a number of recurring genre themes, images, and plot devices. These are, typically, an all-male cast of characters, rebirth or regeneration, tension between urban and rural life, the enduring mythology of the American frontier experience, and most importantly the picaresque nature of travelling which offers the opportunity to critique American society. Lloyd Smith posits that genre studies is about repetition, “the patterns that constitute a tradition and the way that writers imitate, learn from and modify the work of their predecessors” (1). These recurrences create expectations based on previous knowledge of road tales, the primary one being emphasis on “social rebellion” (Corrigan 148); how the producers of road stories utilise recurring genre conventions and manage expectations is therefore crucial to critical understanding of their work. In Supernatural, the conformity that is a feature of the horror genre grate uncomfortably against the rebellious tendencies of the series’ road narrative format. As will be demonstrated, in its depiction of women, its attitude to race and its portrayal of religion, Supernatural is unreflectively conservative, often making hegemonic assertions about conservative cultural norms that are similar in tone and ideology to the views expressed by Falwell, Robertson and D’Souza. Throughout, the main characters grapple with an important tenet of Christianity, the Biblical claim of free will, as they are asked to choose between the Dionysian possibilities presented to them by the freedoms of the road, in conflict with their Apollonian duty to restore order and normality by defeating the forces of evil.

Road stories are diverse in scope and theme, and are articulated in a variety of mediums. The genre encompasses, for example, comedy, romance, action-adventure stories, dramas, melodramas, and tales of terror and suspense. Further, in tone and style, they vary a great deal: for example, Martin Scorsese’s Taxi Driver (1976) has film noir sensibilities, exploring the corruption, duplicity and weaknesses of its protagonists; Wim Wenders’ Paris Texas (1984) explores the psychological effects of plots and landscape; while Monte Hellman’s Two-Lane Blacktop (1971) is an existentialist exploration of the purpose of life in a godless and harsh world. At times, therefore, the genre seems inadequate: as it offers multiple interfaces with other genres, it may well be more useful to think of the road as both a genre and a style. This flexibility allows consideration of Supernatural as a traditional road tale, relying on geographic movement to reacquaint viewers with familiar American values (family, friends, music, culture) but its dark gothic style simultaneously allows a critique of the country’s seedier horrors and evil, and asks audiences to look inwards as well as outwards for examples of true horror. Supernatural offers a window into the “unmaking” caused by 9/11.

The direction travelled in road narratives is significant: normally, protagonists journey westwards towards California, following the nation’s supposed ‘Manifest Destiny’. For example, in John Steinbeck’s The Grapes of Wrath (1939) California’s reputation as a land of milk and honey is the catalyst for the Joads’ epic trip; whereas in Dominic Sena’s California (1993), the state is described as “a place of hopes and dreams, a chance to start over.” To modern conservative diehards, California, represents everything wrong with America. As the epicentre of the counterculture in the 1960s, California was the birthplace of the everything society, and while Republican Governor Ronald Reagan was horrified by hippies, Hell’s Angels, acid rock, free love, and free speech, contemporary conservatives rally against supposed high taxes, social welfare spending, and excess immigration. In Supernatural the direction of travel defines the series’ politics. It begins, for example, with Dean collecting Sam from university in California, so in a sense all of their travels are eastwards, away from the state. This is not, though, rebellion in the mode of, for example, Easy Rider’s (1969) Billy (Dennis Hopper) and Wyatt (Peter Fonda); Sam and Dean are not counterculture heroes who reject American values. Instead, the direction of their journey implies a rejection of contemporary California, with its liberal politics, multiculturalism, and tolerant attitude to same-sex relationships, denoting a return to supposed middle-American values of religion, family and community. Not wanting to alienate a section of the show’s potential audience, which is, according to Boggis, “18 to 34-year-old women” (1) and a group more likely to identify as Democrats than Republicans, Kripke palliates the potentially deterrent nature of such conservative values by portraying the brothers as tolerant and open-
minded individuals with a "live and let live" attitude towards life. For instance, despite having some of the attributes of Southern "good old boys", neither Sam nor Dean exhibits any racist attitudes or tendencies. Indeed, in the handful of episodes featuring black characters, Kripke is careful to portray his two main characters as non-racist. Nevertheless, the resolution of the plots of these episodes betrays their conservative leanings.

The Gothic Tradition and race

For most of the first season, the composition of Sam's college friends — middle class, multi-ethnic, monogamous and happy — accentuate his dissimilarity to Dean. However, in "Route 666" (1:13) Dean reveals that he was estranged from his father, who gave up on him after he had a relationship with a black woman that was deeper and more involved than his usual one-night stands. In this episode the brothers investigate a series of racist murders of black men, apparently carried out by a long-dead racist infuriated by an act of miscegenation. It is significant that this event happened at least two decades ago, and possibly as early as the 1960s. While road tales often reflect contemporary concerns, the genre's hybrid nature allows facets of other genres to come into effect, in this case the genre's interface with gothic conventions. For example, Lloyd Smith points out that the gothic "is about the return to the past, the repressed and denied, the buried secret that subverts and corrodes the present, whatever the culture does not want to know or admit, will not or dare tell itself" (1). In the American gothic tradition, Supernatural unearths the racism of the past. However, it also infers that racism belongs to the past, and in defeating the racist spirit it is being buried for good. This is essentially a conservative position that denies contemporary racism and therefore suggests a historical narrative of continual progress rather than the traditional gothic theme of cycles of historical violence and repression. It also reflects the post-9/11 narrative of national unity against an external threat.

The brothers' role in exorcising this evil, together with Dean's revelation about his girlfriend, helps obviate the easy presumption that the Winchesters may be racist. However, two episodes in the second season are more troubling: "Crossroads Blues" (2:8) recreates the Robert Johnson myth that the blues singer sold his soul to the devil in return for his incredible guitar talents; and in "Bloodlust" (2:3) the brothers encounter Gordon Walker (Sterling K. Brown), the only black demon hunter shown in the first five seasons. In "Crossroads Blues", white and non-white characters make different deals with a demon: whites sell their souls for socioeconomic success, whereas non-whites like Johnson and the painter George Washington Carver ask for talent but, significantly, not fame, which means they will not attain great wealth. As Julia Wright has noted, these portrayals are racialised as they imply that white people are naturally interested in economic success whereas non-whites desire "cultural rather than material success" (12). The internal logic of this paradigm explains why black Americans are less likely to achieve economic success: it is not the result of racism, but instead black Americans are themselves to blame as they do not have the proper work ethic. Wright also points out that the script of this episode goes to some lengths to avoid showing an interracial kiss, which leads her to conclude that this plotline "is unreflectively conservative" in its attempt to "maintain racial segregation in depictions of sexuality" (12).

"Bloodlust" also explores the theme of the gothic doppelganger: at first it appears Gordon and Dean share an identical philosophy about their lifestyle. Friedrich Nietzsche warned, though, "He who fights with monsters should be careful lest he thereby become a monster" (54), and it soon becomes clear that Walker is a cold-blooded killer who enjoys his work a little too much. In gothic texts, the doppelganger's appearance often invokes a discussion about the duality of human nature. However, according to David Punter, it is also a metaphor for wider concerns about imperial decline. Punter claims that the doppelganger raises questions about degeneration and debasement, as it poses the query "how much can one lose — individually, socially, nationally — and still remain a man?" (240). Dean is invited to critically examine his motivations, his fear that he does not in fact serve a higher purpose and instead may simply be like Walker, a cold-blooded killer. In asking how much of oneself can be retained when one absorbs the qualities of the debased other, the doppelganger paradigm is apposite for the American situation in the post-9/11 world. American hegemony, which had dominated the post-World War II world and triumphed with the fall of the Soviet Union, was suddenly revealed on 9/11 to be vulnerable. In turn, the American response to 9/11 invited an inward analysis of the nature of American character and American violence.

In "Bloodlust" Sam and Dean further explore the issue of race by way of a moral dilemma: should they kill a group of vampires even if the creatures are doing no harm? Although at first Dean and Walker see eye to eye on the subject, eventually Dean separates himself from his "double" by choosing not to treat the vampires as if they are an inherently evil race. In contrast, Walker sees no difference between harmful and harmless vampires and proposes to torture and kill them all. The situation comes to a head in a scene resonant with racial fear — Dean snaps when he discovers Walker torturing a bound white woman — and it is resolved in typically macho fashion with Dean defeating Walker in a fistfight. However, in portraying Walker as analogous to the evil beings the brothers face every week, there are suggestions of the racist stereotype of the dangerous, unthinking black male, a typecast that can be traced back to slave era. Walker is like a modern day Nat Turner, taking his revenge by killing every enemy in his path, regardless of gender, age or guilt. As the slaveholders dehumanized Turner, making it seem like he was a vicious and bestial force of nature, Walker's humanity is diminished through his violent actions. In addition, as Wright points out, Walker's main role is to inform Dean's character development by giving Dean a moral dilemma to solve. In this way, Wright notes, "Dean's new ethical position" is defined "in opposition to blackness" (13) and he is revealed as "more moral" (14) than Walker. As with all the main black characters in Supernatural, Walker is destined to die (in "Fresh Blood" (3:7)). This was once a predictable fate for black characters on screen, now unfortunately revisited in Supernatural. For example, black hunter, Rufus Turner (Steven Williams), provides some expository dialogue about his white ex-hunting partner Bobby Singer (Jim Beaver) in "And Then There Were None" (6.16). However, once this is accomplished, Turner is killed off. "All Hell Breaks Loose" (2:24) introduces another black hunter named Jake Talley (Aldis Lodge). Like Walker, Talley's character arc does not so much advance the plot as demonstrate what Sam might become if, like Talley, he were to give in to his darker urges. For his sins, Talley dies at Sam's hands, which proves to be the third time in the series that a white character kills his black alter-ego (Dean kills Gordon Walker, Bobby kills Rufus Turner and Sam kills Jake Talley).

Definitions of good and evil

Thus far, Supernatural follows the trend of many modern horror drama series wherein definitions of good and evil are flexible and ambiguous. However, in "What Is And What Should Never Be" (2:20) the villain is unambiguously evil, and has clear linkage to the "War on Terror". This episode offers a counterfactual history of the Winchesters, illustrating what life might be like if...
the brothers were not hunters. In this reality their mother and Sam’s girlfriend, Jessica (Adrienne Palicki), are still alive, Sam is in college and Dean leads an ordinary life with his girlfriend in the suburbs. However, all of this is an illusion, caused by a djinn, a figure, Wright argues, “explicitly associated with Islam and also implicitly with the Arab tradition of the genie” (14). The term djinn derives from an Arabic root word signifying to veil or conceal and it was made popular in the West by the Arabian Nights (1706). Here, the djinn is a trickster who induces hallucinations while feeding on its victims, in this instance, Dean and a young white woman. One of the main narratives to emerge from 9/11 was that America’s comfortable consumer culture had left it vulnerable to attack and reliant on foreign oil supplies. As with Pearl Harbor, the country’s political and military leaders were supposedly “asleep at the wheel” and the attacks were a “wake-up call” to a new reality of ongoing conflict in a dangerous world. Dean, though, rejects the djinn’s offer of a comfortable existence, escapes, frees the woman and kills the monster. Seen in a post-9/11 context, this episode can be read as a victory of Christian forces over Islamic: for example, in a scene that invokes Christ’s plea to his Father in the Garden of Gethsemane, Dean asks “Why is it my job to save these people? Why do I have to be some kind of hero?” Like Jesus, Dean accepts the need for sacrifice and awakens from the dream by killing himself within it. Further, Dean kills the djinn with a knife dipped in the blood of a lamb, which offers a crude but effective link with Jesus as the “lamb of God”.

Gender roles and the family

Gothic tales often allude to the advantages of the privileged life the djinn offers to Dean: Fredric Jameson claims for example, that such a life “seal[s] you off from other people” and, in so doing, creates a sense of fear about what is on the other side of that “protective wall … behind which … all kinds of envious forces may be imagined in the process of assembling, plotting, preparing to give assault” (235). Like those who saw 9/11 as vindication of their worldview that America’s enemies are everywhere, Supernatural exists in a closed space where peace is an illusion and everyone is a potential enemy. Dean plays the role of the dutiful American, rejecting the fantasy of a comfortable existence. Central to that illusion is the promise of suburban family life. In road genre tales, such an existence is an anathema as maintaining a stable home requires time, effort and a sense of responsibility that is often lacking in road genre protagonists. For males, the home is often depicted as a feminised space, which acts as an anchor to hold men in place when they would rather be on the road. In the handful of female-orientated road tales, the home is often portrayed as a claustrophobic world of domestic abuse and unattained ambitions. As a result, in road narratives “the family unit is preserved only as a memory or desire with less and less substance” (Corrigan 145). Not only then is Dean’s rejection of the djinn’s illusion an acceptance that his/the “war on terror” must continue, it is also an unreflectively conservative statement that a woman’s place is in the home — the sacrifice she must make to allow Dean and other males to continue their adventures. As for the djinn, like Walker in “Bloodlust”, it made the mistake of attacking a helpless white woman, which acts as a catalyst for Dean’s “awakening”. If he accepts the American Dream of a comfortable life, America’s enemies would have free reign to terrorise defenceless civilians like her. However, he “rejects that fantasy in order to defend the lives of others” which, Wright notes astutely, “allies him with a foundational military ethic in which self-sacrifice” is the central motivation (15).

In general, women in Supernatural play the role usually assigned to them in American road stories, as burdens to be left behind, incidental characters, or playthings for males. Corrigan notes, for example, that the genre is “traditionally focused, almost exclusively, on men and the absence of women” (143). Supernatural is unapologetically nostalgic for the casual, unthinking sexism found in the road narratives of Henry Miller, Hunter Thompson and Kerouac, or in films such as Easy Rider, Two-Lane Blacktop or Taxi Driver. In almost every episode women are portrayed either as decorative diversions or as helpless victims. Most are disposed of as victims or are left behind after providing amorous diversions for the brothers. To be sure, there are some recurring female characters who prove resourceful: bounty hunter Bela Talbot (Lauren Cohan) manages to outwit the brothers on occasion; Ellen (Samantha Ferris) is a bar owner with knowledge of hunting and her daughter Jo (Alona Tal) not only wants to be a hunter but also resists Dean’s trademark flirtation; however, they are the exception rather than the norm. In any event, it may well be that the Ellen and Jo characters were introduced only to provide new dynamics and allow for further plot developments, which is something an ongoing weekly television series must always be cognisant of. For example, after the roadhouse is destroyed in the finale of season two, Ellen and Bobby Singer sit across from each other drinking whisky. This scene has obvious romantic overtones, and there is a suggestion that Ellen might replace Bobby’s dead wife and thus become a symbolic mother to Sam and Dean. This demonstrates Kripke’s sedulous attempts to restore order, his impulse to reunite the family unit even though this goes against the flow of the road narrative, with its tendency to feature loners like the mechanic and driver of Two-Lane Blacktop or hopelessly fractured families, as in Paris, Texas.

Kripke’s attachment to the family unit evokes the national dialogue about family which followed 9/11. McGuire and Buchbinder contend, for example, that in the aftermath of 9/11 family was used as “both a metaphor for and a metonymy of the nation and the disarray and continuing disruption caused by the threat of international terrorism” (300). Perhaps the main sentiment arrogated to “family” is a sense of safety and security, and after 9/11, images of the family played a major role in helping Americans cope with their sense of loss and pain. For example, the first reflective documentaries about 9/11 to appear on major US television networks from March 2002 deployed “sentimental images of the family in crisis” (Spigel 270) to retell the event. Significant media attention was focused on the families of 9/11 victims, and unlike the veneration of “Gold Star Mothers” of previous conflicts, here 9/11 widows were put in the spotlight. Spigel relates, for example, that news narratives maintained traditional gender-encoded roles by portraying “men as heroes … and women as victims,” especially suffering and/or pregnant widows (12). In setting the focus of suffering on widows rather than mothers, post-9/11 narratives made motherly sacrifice less important than spousal duty. While the former suggests maternal loss and pain, the wife’s position is legally encoded through marriage vows, and her role suggests duty and obligation. Some of these women — particularly those who accepted large compensation settlements or who quickly formed new relationships — were subject to harsh judgmental scrutiny for not living up to their supposed responsibilities as grieving widows.

This moral framework is inherently conservative and in a supposed “war against evil” in which the likes of Robertson, Falwell and D’Souza have identified the family as a core American value, those threatening the family become, by default, immoral allies of the evil forces threatening America. So while “family values” plots are hardly new to television drama series, conservative attempts to align their concept of family with patriotic narratives gave familial representations in shows such as Supernatural an added moral emphasis. It is perhaps for this reason that Kripke killed off Bela Talbot, who featured in six episodes of season three. Unlike Sam and Dean, Talbot’s association with the supernatural is for material gain: she is a mercenary rather than a hunter. An attractive, strong-willed character, who often outmanoeuvres the Winchesters. Talbot also has many of their antithero
Apocalypse Now

The major plot arc of the first two seasons is the good versus evil struggle against Azazel, a demon cited in the Book of Leviticus, with recurring allusions to Judeo-Christian themes. Seasons four and five are almost entirely concerned with Christian mythology about the Apocalypse, including appearances by angels, the Antichrist and the Four Horsemen. By this point, all non-Christian religions have been marginalised, and their demons and gods vanished. The brothers use Christian symbols such as holy water, the crucifix and rosaries to fight evil, and they banish demons with Latin chants and exorcisms. While these icons are overt and theatrical, making them useful tools for a television drama series like Supernatural, they also establish the brothers’ credentials as crusading Christian warriors. The cumulative weight of these themes indicates that Christianity is the primary religion featured in the series, and its prominence suggests it is meant to convey more authority than all other religions.

Supernatural is, therefore, relentlessly conservative in its use of visual and aural iconography. However, its conservative tone is softened and masked by the portrayal of its two main characters as blue collar everymen. They are apolitical and appear tolerant of socially marginal characters. As likeable “good old boys”, they are antiheroes in the tradition of The Dukes of Hazard (1979-85) rather than Deliverance (1972). Given the potentially sinister connotations of a show featuring two white vigilantes, Kripke conscientiously allays suspicions about Supernatural’s potentially racial subtext. However, those few episodes featuring black characters only repeat past racial typecasting and in its treatment of race, the series sticks to a simplistic black-white racial binary, ignoring America’s diverse multicultural demographic. In opposition to the core rebellious impulse of the road story, the series’ Christian storylines are designed to appeal mainly to an American audience, three quarters of whom self-identify with one of the Christian churches (Engstrom & Valenzano 70). By employing a postmodern pop cultural style, with numerous references to popular television programmes, movies and music, Kripke invokes a sense of nostalgia for an idealised America before 9/11’s “unmaking”. While nostalgia is not always conservative, it does provide an easy emotional outlet for reactionary feelings. Furthermore, its emotional impact is driven by the realisation that the past is lost and irrecoverable, and in the aftermath of 9/11 the idea that “the world had changed” forever became a familiar refrain, with the inference being that Americans had been too complacent, too used to their soft consumer culture, which blinded them to enemies home and abroad. While Supernatural strives hard to appear “middle-of-the-road”, the centre depends always on the width of that road. In the landscape it inhabits, and in its traditional exploration of themes such as family values, gender, race and holding the line against evil, Supernatural follows a narrow path, by championing conservative values as the norm.

Works Cited


Further Reading

You may also be interested in reading these two articles on similar television series.

'Sometimes forbidden fruit tastes the sweetest, doesn’t it?’ Breaking Bad: the transgressive journey of Walter White, by Hazel Work (lecturer in sociology at the University of Abertay, Dundee). This article addresses some of the key moments in the first two seasons of Breaking Bad (2008-2013). The paper utilises the concept of the liminal subject to address the ways in which protagonist Walter White's actions disrupt and trouble the boundaries between criminal and conforming behaviour; in so doing, the paper suggests that the series' narrative framework orients viewers' attention toward a sociological, rather than a populist understanding of crime and deviance.

"Love American Style": Race, Cuban Identity and Cultural Tyranny in Showtime’s Dexter By Donna Maria Alexander (University College Cork) This article focuses on representation of Cubans in the television series Dexter, paying particular attention to episode 1.5, "Love American Style" with some brief references to other episodes. Assimilation, the American Dream, nationalism and crisis of identity are among the themes and issues that this article investigates. Border theory provides the dominant theoretical framework of the article.

If you have any comments on the article, please submit them using the form below.

Title of Article 'All I saw was evil': Supernatural

What is your name? 

What is your email address? 

Do you have any comments on this article?

Submit