UNIVERSITY OF VAASA

School of Marketing and Communication

Master's Degree Programme in Comparative Cultural Studies

Topi Takamäki

"The Road So Far":

Supernatural as an American Road Narrative

Master's Thesis in English Studies

Vaasa 2019

TABLE OF CONTENTS

UNIVERSITY OF VAASA
School of Marketing and Communication
Author: Topi Takamäki
Master's Thesis: "The Road So Far": *Supernatural* as an American Road Narrative
Degree: Master of Arts
Programme: Comparative Cultural Studies
Discipline: English Studies
Date: 2019
Supervisor: Helen Mäntymäki

ABSTRACT

Tämän tutkimuksen tavoitteena on tutkia amerikkalaista televisiosarjaa *Supernaturalia* (2004-2019) tienarratiivina. Tarkennettuna, tämä tutkimus käsittelee miten *Supernatural* toistaa tienarratiivien keskeisiä elementtejä ja kommentoi ympäröivää kulttuuriaan.

Tienarratiivi on erityisesti amerikkalainen genre, joka käsittää sekä kirjallisuutta että elokuvia. Genren esikuvina pidetään yleisesti Jack Kerouacin romaania *Matkalla* (1957) ja Dennis Hopperin ohjaamaa elokuvaa *Easy Rider – matkalla* (1969). Tutkin miten *Supernatural* toistaa näiden teosten teemoja omassa kerronnassaan. Genren tutkimus on hyvin nuorta, sillä se alkoi vasta 1990-luvulla, joten alue on verrattain uusi. Pääasialliset lähteeni ovat Ann Brighamin *American Road Narratives, Reimagining Mobility in Literature and Film* (2015) ja David Ladermanin *What a Trip: The Road Film and American Culture* (1996), jotka käsittelevät genren keskeisimpiä teemoja, joita ovat: vapaus, liikkuvuus ja amerikkalainen unelma. Ladermanin keskeisin löytö on genren kerroksittainen luonne, joka tarkoittaa sen perustuvan useamman genren yhdistelmiin. *Supernaturalin* tapauksessa tämä tarkoittaa kauhuromantiikan ja lännenelokuvien yhdistymistä.

Tutkielmani tulokset osoittavat, että *Supernatural* toistaa säännönmukaisesti tienarratiivien keskeisiä elementtejä, jotka osaltaan välittävät konservatiivisia viestejä, mutta myös Amerikkalaisen identiteetin osia.

KEYWORDS: Road Narrative, American Culture and Identity, Gender, Race, Religion

1 INTRODUCTION

Carry on my wayward son
For there'll be peace when you are done
Lay your weary head to rest
Don't you cry no more
(Kansas – Carry on Wayward Son)

The aim of this thesis is to inspect how the television series *Supernatural* (WB 2005-2006 and CW 2006-2019) reproduces the tropes of the *road narrative* in its storytelling and how the series comments on its surrounding culture. This thesis will also evaluate what is generally understood to constitute a road narrative, as well as discuss the cultural connotations of the storytelling mode. This theoretical framework will then be applied to discussion of *Supernatural.* In other words, I will study the series from the perspective of the road narrative genre.

The American road narrative is a form of narrative that is closely connected to themes of mobility and the road (Brigham, 2015). At the same time, road stories are abundant with cultural commentary and discussion of social issues. While the road narrative has been traditionally discussed mainly in conjunction with film and literature, *Supernatural* is a continuous loop of road tripping, and as such exhibits many of the notable traits of the road narrative genre. This study will discuss these tropes of the American road narrative and observe how *Supernatural* reproduces them.

Arguments have been made in favor of a resurgence of the road narrative in the early 2000s as a way of uniting America (Brigham, 2015: 10-12). This thesis will look into the reasons given for this development and assess if *Supernatural* corresponds to them.

The main storylines of *Supernatural* follow the journey of two male *monster hunters*, adult brothers Sam Winchester (played by Jared Padalecki) and Dean Winchester (Jensen Ackles). The road is a necessity for the story as Sam and Dean ride their car to a new monster hunt in every episode. This thesis includes a short overview of the world of *Supernatural* for helping the reader understand what is discussed without having watched an episode of the series.

The thought process behind developing the aim of this thesis started from a binge re-watch of *Supernatural*. A viewer of *Supernatural* is destined to become confused upon trying to pinpoint the genre of the series. Is it *horror*? The series certainly employs a variety of gothic horror elements. Raised heartbeats during a monster-hunt in a dark cavern or watching the gory decapacitation of a vampire clearly point towards a gothic narrative.

The next intuition leads towards something in the mold of *film noir*. In most episodes, the Winchester brothers first must identify the threat in order to dispatch of it. Sam and Dean pose as detectives, FBI agents, and other operatives during their hunts. During their motel stays, the brothers chug down beers and venture into the closest pubs to pursue short-lived intimacy with the local women. The aesthetic experience is often filled with dark tones, and many episodes include overtly sexualized female antagonists. But this definition falls short as these features do not seem bold enough to suggest categorizing *Supernatural* as film noir.

Upon further inspection, the answer starts to present itself in a connection to the *Western*. The protagonists' perpetual wandering on the roads of America and imagery of outlands and wildernesses establishes a connection to Western stories. Laderman (1996: 43) explains that road narratives are often mergers of more than one genre, including western and film noir. Thus, the consensus is that the road film genre seems to be a bricolage of many popular genres (Laderman 1996: 43), at times resembling a style as well as a genre (Ireland 2013: 15). I will provide arguments for categorizing *Supernatural* as a road narrative.

So, if we assume that the road narrative is a mixture of different genres, what exactly is the defining feature of the genre? The search leads to *freedom*, *mobility* and the *American Dream*. Ann Brigham (2013a, 2013b and 2015) has written extensively about these topics within the American cultural sphere, as well as about their role in road narratives. To better understand how innately American the road narrative genre is, one must also take into consideration the makings of the American national identity and American culture. American culture is an elusive subject, as the actual nation of America is a culturally,

geographically, ideologically, politically and racially diverse entirety (Campbell & Kean 2006: 13). Despite these differences, it is possible to identify some features that constitute the American national identity. These features will be discussed in relation to their significance in the road narrative. In other words, this thesis will concentrate on the cultural intricacies that are most visible in the road narrative.

The road narrative embodies many of the principle ideas that America is built on. As mentioned, freedom is one of those ideas. In road narratives, freedom is mostly derived from the depiction of freedom of movement, mobility. Mobility, which Brigham describes as the "genre's structuring theme and a national mythology" (2015: 22), appears to be the most prevalent feature in academic discussion of the road narrative.

As the road narrative is closely connected to the Western films, the Frontier is also an important cog in the classic works that use the road narrative. The constituents of the road narrative include many important features of the collective American identity, which is also a prominent theme in Western films (Laderman 1996:43). The frontier symbolism is integrated into the collective consciousness of Americans.

There are two main perspectives that dominate the academic discussion of the American road narrative. For Laderman (1996), the road narrative is synonymous with celebration of outsiderness. Laderman argues that outsiderness should be at the forefront in analyzing road narratives, as they "celebrate subversion as a literal venturing outside of society" (1996: 42). When assuming this position in studying road narratives, the focus is adamantly on the features that discuss social problems, outcasts and minority groups. The other popular perspective is voiced by, among others, Ronald Primeau (1996), who assumes the position that road narratives appeal to those who are secure in their lives and social situations. Furthermore, Primeau also argues that the modern road narrative appeals to those who look to gain a feeling of security. As many road narratives focus on the stories of white men, road narratives can be seen to "affirm the value of everyday people and celebrate the ordinary" (Primeau 1996: 12). On one hand, the literary criticism in this thesis will be conducted from Primeau's point of view, as *Supernatural*'s cultural commentary appears to project conservative values, therefore embracing the affirmation

of security and conformity. The point of view in *Supernatural* is distinctively that of two blue-collar white male protagonists, which hints at the narrative operating as an agent of conservative values and strongly implies a yearning for "good old times". On the other hand, I will discuss how the series conveys a racist undertone, thus supporting Laderman's view.

Recent developments within America provide additional affirmation for Primeau's perspective. Ann Brigham discusses the recent resurgence of the road narrative in perhaps the most extensive study on the road narrative: *American Road Narratives: Reimagining Mobility in Literature and Film* (2015). In the 21th century, road is trending in popular culture. Brigham (2015: 10-12) argues that among other events, the 9/11 terrorist attacks had an impact on the American identity. Americans felt a need to unite, and as a result many were looking at the roots of the Euro-American identity. Many were keen to "rediscover America". As a result, Americans turned their heads to domestic travel. In 2002, the Travel Industry Association of America identified a growing interest in "travel experiences that provide connections – connections to family, connections to the natural environment and connections to America itself". In 2001 and 2002 the American Recreational Vehicle reported a record increase in sales of RV's. Consequentially, RV campgrounds were reporting record numbers, and visit numbers of patriotic sites grew by 22 percent. Similar trends were noted in the post-WW1 era of the 20th century, the era of the America First campaign. Thus, the recent resurgence of road narratives coincides with the heightened demand for American values.

From fiction, Jack Kerouac's 1957 novel *On The Road* is generally heralded for the popularization of mobility as a theme in road literature (Laderman, 1996: 42)(Talbot 1999: 1) (Brigham 2015: 22), and *Easy Rider* (1969) is generally considered as the prototype for road films (Laderman 1996: 43). *Supernatural* reproduces the genre defining features of these prototypes in its portrayal of America. These features are discussed in depth in chapter 3. Moreover, the road narrative usually employs a male buddy dynamic, which will also be discussed in this thesis.

In an interview published on the website www.theage.com (2006), the creative mind behind the series, Eric Kripke, describes his choice of using road tripping as the vehicle of telling the stories:

> (Road tripping is the) best vehicle to tell these stories because it's pure, stripped down and uniquely American [...] These stories exist in these small towns all across the country, and it just makes so much sense to drive in and out of these stories.

Aside from road tripping, *Supernatural* offers great variety in its content. Some of the themes of the series are urban legends, family relations, comradery, substance abuse, ancient mythology, sexuality and genre, religion and popular culture.

Likely due to the relative popularity of *Supernatural* and the amount of cultural commentary within it, there has been a considerable amount of published research conducted on the series. However, discussion of the road narrative is an aspect that seems to have been overlooked regarding *Supernatural*. In general, talk of the road movie and television genre is often missing in academic discussion: "As a film genre, road movies are frequently bypassed by some of the best studies of the genre" (Corrigan, 1991: 143). Thus, moving into this direction is an aspiring thought, as it seems plausible that many of the topics I will cover are yet to be discussed. The most similar discussion to this thesis about the road and its meaning in *Supernatural* is an article by Brian Ireland (2013), "*All I saw was evil": Supernatural's Reactionary Road Trip*, where he discusses how *Supernatural* projects a hegemony of conservative values as a response to the 9/11 terrorist attacks. Ireland's work is referenced in this thesis, while trying to also expand on his arguments.

Most of the other studies on *Supernatural* consist of analyses of the portrayal of religion and gender roles, as in the extensive collection of articles called *Supernatural, Humanity, and the Soul: On the Highway to Hell and Back* (2014, Edited by Susan George and Regina Hansen). The articles focus on many different topics regarding *Supernatural*, ranging from the series' depiction of apocalyptic religion to gender roles.

Aside from published literature, *Supernatural* is also relatively popular among writers of theses. Much like the published work, many of these studies concentrate on the religious aspects of the series. For example, a study that discusses the portrayal of religion in *Supernatural* is *Searching for God : portrayals of religion on television* (2014) written by Alicia Vermeer. Other studies have described *Supernatural*, among other things, as a masculine narrative. One of those is by April Boggs, who writes thoroughly about hero types and gender-related issues in her thesis *No Chick Flick Moments: "Supernatural" as a Masculine Narrative* (2009).

The structure of this thesis is based on first assembling what is generally considered to constitute the American road narrative. In order to have a better grasp of the complex story of *Supernatural,* I have chosen to include a short material overview into the thesis. The material overview is followed by a discussion of the definitions of the road narrative and the development of the genre. I will then cover how road narratives discuss the American national identity. After assembling the literary review of the road narrative genre, I move into more specific critical viewings of *Supernatural*, discussing how the series commentates on American culture and society. Finally, I gather my findings and evaluate if the aim of the thesis was achieved.

1.1 Conservative Values

Throughout this thesis, I will refer to "conservative values" many times. This will include all of Russell Kirk's six core beliefs of conservativism, which are:

I. Transcendent order – There is a need for enduring moral authority
II. Social continuity – The preservation of tried social practices
III. Prescription – The elders know better
IV. Prudence – Everything needs to be evaluated thoroughly, rapid change is harmful
V. Variety – Inequality is real and natural
VI. Imperfection – No perfect social order can ever be created

(Intercollegiate Review 2018)

1.2 Material Overview

This thesis will primarily focus on the first five seasons of *Supernatural*, which conclude the first main storyline, the rise of Lucifer and the advent of the biblical Armageddon. The overarching Armageddon storyline was initially planned to only last for three seasons, but Kripke later decided to prolong it for two more seasons (Buddytv.com). The later seasons, from six onwards, are mainly discussed regarding how they begin to deviate from the road narrative pattern that is instrumental in the first five. Because the plot progression speed of television is much slower than that of films, including a large number of episodes is beneficial for the purposes of this thesis. As mentioned, different seasons of *Supernatural* have different emphasis. The first seasons have more classic horror elements, and later the tone of the series shifts towards high-action drama. Seasons three to five have a significant emphasis on Christian mythology and biblical events.

Supernatural begins as a quest of two brothers, Sam and Dean Winchester, trying to find their missing father, John, and purge the world from as many evil beings as they can. After Sam and Dean finally locate and meet with their father, they join him in his vendetta to kill Azazel, a yellow-eyed demon who murdered their mother, Mary. Sam is the younger brother and is initially presented as the more rational and kinder brother, while Dean is more impulsive and masculine. Initially, Sam is the more fantastic character, as he has psychic powers as a result of being fed demon blood as a baby by Azazel (these powers are written out after season five).

As Boggs (2009: 71) has identified, Sam and Dean's initial personas are "merely a front", and the series will gradually reveal their true nature. As a result of their dysfunctional family life and being forced to grow up too early, both brothers have developed "short-term personalities" (Boggs 2009: 71) which they employ to endure temporary stays in new towns. The series suggests that Sam's kindness and empathy during their hunts is a tool he has developed to manipulate people into getting what he wants. For Dean, his masculine "bad boy" persona is a way of charming people for short durations. He is unable to commit to any long-term relationships, because he is afraid of getting hurt.

Despite seeing glimpses of their true personas throughout the duration of the series, their masks continue to exist, especially when confronting new people.

The brothers call themselves *hunters*, humans who have knowledge of the supernatural beings that prey on average people. While Sam and Dean are on a *hunt*, typically Sam tries to gather information about the object of the hunt through researching lore, while Dean looks for clues around the town. A typical middle-season episode of *Supernatural* will involve one type of a *monster*, as the series labels any fantastic creature, that only operates locally, which Sam and Dean go out to investigate. The search for their father takes place in *monster-of-the-week* episodes (similarly to X-Files), where the brothers pick up *cases* portraying investigations of strange deaths or unsolved murders. Most monsters of same species possess similar abilities. However, in larger factions of monsters some are more powerful than others, depending on their rank. As a season progresses, the larger storylines will be followed more closely, and typically the last episodes of a season will have a focus on a much larger scale event or hunt.

The writers of *Supernatural* have adopted a plethora of creatures from American urban legends, folklore and religions from around the world. Displaying American folk lore is consistent of with the innate Americanness of road narratives. An example of an urban legend-inspired monster is Bloody Mary (*Supernatural* #1.5), who, according to the legend, appears to a mirror after having been summoned three times. When summoned, she bleeds the person who summoned her dry through the eyes. As Sam and Dean face these monsters, they always find a weakness that can be exploited to eliminate the threat. For example, ghosts such as Bloody Mary are always tied to their remains, or to a haunted item or an object, which can be as small as a lock of hair or as large as an entire building. Therefore, to release the restless spirits, their remains or the cursed object must be salted and burned. Many monsters have additional weaknesses that Sam and Dean can take advantage of. For example, a ghost cannot pass a line of salt, and is also forced to withdraw for a while after touching an item cast of iron. In addition to ghosts, the viewer of *Supernatural* will encounter vampires, genies, werewolves, and various other fantastic creatures that appear in folklore and mythologies.

Along their journey, Sam and Dean become involved in much larger scale events, for example the rise of Lucifer and multiple threats of apocalypse. Furthermore, Lucifer is one of the main antagonists in *Supernatural* and the leader of Hell's forces, the demons. The brothers get sustained help from an angel in a trench coat, Castiel, who is an important supporting character in the series. Both demons and angels can possess human bodies, thus they are portrayed by human actors.

The road narrative is arguably present from the first episode to the currently (2018) latest episodes, yet its importance seems to fade starting from season six. For example, starting from season eight, Sam and Dean settle into a bunker that they call home, and thus the significance of the road is lessened. The brothers' car, a 1967 Chevrolet Impala, which Dean refers to as "Baby", is one of the recurring elements in the series along with the main protagonists. While the Impala does not have a personality like KITT in Knight Rider, the vehicle is a necessity for the stories. It is Sam and Dean's primary form of transportation, and their monster hunting equipment is stashed in its trunk.

Demographically speaking, the America of *Supernatural* is a homogenous country (among humans), where white people represent an overwhelming majority of people. Most episodes take place in small towns or suburbs and most of the citizens are white families with two or three children. There are African-American and Asian characters, but a disproportionate amount of people is of Caucasian decent. The victims are dominantly white, and often there is a damsel-in-distress situation, an innocent woman from a small town or the suburbs, who is helpless and requires the assistance of the strong white male protagonists, Sam and Dean. This aspect of the series is discussed further in the analysis.

Religion is part of what is viewed as the supernatural, and the series emphasizes this fact by using myriads of religious mythology as a source for its monsters and events. The only prevalent Abrahamic religion in the America that is portrayed in *Supernatural* is Christianity. Judaism, Islam and other Abrahamic religions do not feature in *Supernatural*. Having other monotheistic religions involved would probably only create confusion, because the role of Christian mythology is so profound. At the same time,

Christian mythology takes a position of authority in the series, thwarting other religions in importance and prominence. The Christian God is the supreme being in the universe of *Supernatural*. *Supernatural* also presents the afterlife, as the viewers get to see shots of Heaven and Hell, as well as the Purgatory. Akin to Judo-Christian tradition, the soul of an individual is what emerges in one of these locations. The portrayal of religion will be analyzed more intricately in chapter 5 of this thesis.

Supernatural has a flexible world in which many of the more powerful entities can teleport themselves, bring people back to life, mind control other beings, create powerful illusions and even travel in time. Again, the travel motif that is important in road narratives is in a major role. With the existence of said powers of various creatures, Sam and Dean end up on many adventures that bend the reality in some way or the other. Basically, anything could be possible in a world that is roamed by creatures ranging from Lucifer to vampires and Greek gods.

This general information about the series provides a foundation for the upcoming discussion in this thesis, as I examine what is generally considered to constitute a road narrative, and how *Supernatural* corresponds with these definitions. This overview should also prove useful for following discussion on cultural commentary in *Supernatural*.

2 ON DEFINITIONS OF THE ROAD NARRATIVE

I have already pointed out multiple times throughout this thesis that *Supernatural* should be regarded as a modern American road narrative. Therefore, discussing what is generally viewed to constitute a road narrative is in order. This chapter will focus on supplying definitions of the genre, discussing the development of road narratives from travel writing to film, and also identifying the key characteristics of road narratives and observing how they are reproduced in *Supernatural*. Recognizing the road film as a genre is a rather young practice:

> Despite the obvious popularity and significance of the road movie throughout the history of American cinema, there has not yet been much sustained inquiry into what precisely qualifies a film as a road movie [and] how the genre relates to the social and cultural history of the United States. (Cohen & Hark 2001: 3)

While this statement might seem disheartening, it does not mean that the road narrative has been completely disregarded by academics, only that by 20001 the genre was still in adolescence regarding academic definitions. Even as of today, the definitions of the road narrative have not been as universally agreed on as for some other genres. Moreover, Ireland (2013: 15) argues that a specific adaptation of the road narrative can sometimes be so interlaced with multiple genres, that the road narrative could be thought of a style as well as a genre. Despite this apparent lack of consensus, this thesis pursues to assemble a cohesive overview of academic discussion around the road narrative.

The academic search for definitions for the road narrative usually begins from Timothy Corrigan's descriptions of use of the narrative in cinema. Later inputs to the discussion of the road narrative tend to refer to Corrigan as a starting point for their definitions for the genre. For example, Cohen & Hark (2001: 3) and Talbot (1999: 6) cite Corrigan's *Genre, Gender, and Hysteria: The Road Movie in Outer Space* (1991: 137-160) in their assessments of the genre. Moreover, Corrigan's impact is so vast, that succeeding inputs such as Talbot's (1999: 9) five characteristics of the road film are built on Corrigan's work. In the following sub-chapter, *Corrigan's* definitions are compared with *Supernatural* to qualify the series as a modern American road narrative.

2.1 Corrigan: Six Disparate Characteristics of the Genre

This sub-section contains discussion a of how Corrigan (1991: 137-160) assesses the genre-defining features of the road narrative. While Corrigan's definitions are derived from Kerouac's *On the Road*, road films also reproduce these tropes. Thus, road novels and films are very similar in terms of their narratives. As I will later argue in 4.3.1, *Supernatural's* main characters are highly influenced by examples set by Kerouac. Therefore, Corrigan's definitions are extremely well-suited for categorizing *Supernatural* as a road narrative. I will refer to Corrigan's theory through Talbot's summarized list of his discussion:

I. A breakdown of the family unit - a longing for a family that is long gone, but a fading memory. Resulting in amplified male subjectivity and disempowerment.
II. Events influence the characters.
III. A mechanized quest motif often associated with the two prior points.
IV. The windows of the vehicle are the lense of the camera.
V. Extensively self-reflecting and self-conscious characters.
VI. While the road and the country are familiar, something has made them foreign. (Corrigan qtd in Talbot 1999: 9)

Supernatural follows the first definition rigorously. The entire story of the first two seasons revolves around the broken Winchester family. According to Cohan and Hark (2001: 3), the expected result of this breakdown of the family is a highlighted sense of male individualism in road narratives. Indeed, The Winchester men are highly individualistic in their decision-making. Their inability to process personal sorrow drives them to insane actions, such as making deals with demons to avoid having to cope with losing one another. For example, in #2.22, Dean sells his soul to a demon to resurrect Sam who has died to a stab wound. Dean's motivation for the deal is revealed to be selfish rather than honest and martyr-like – he cannot cope with the idea that he let his family down. His monologue next to a dead Sam before making the deal also describes the Winchester family's complicated domestic life:

> You know, when we were little, you couldn't have been more than 5. You had just started asking questions: [imitates Sam as a child] "How come we didn't have a mom?", "Why do we always have to move around?", "Where did Dad go?" when

> he'd take off for days at a time. I remember I begged you, quit asking, Sammy. You don't want to know. I just wanted you to be a kid. Just for a little while longer. I always tried to protect you. Keep you safe. Dad didn't even have to tell me. It's just always been my responsibility, you know? It's like I had one job. I had one job, and I screwed it up. I blew it, and for that, I'm sorry. I guess that's what I do. I let down the people I love. You know, I let Dad down, and now I guess, I'm just supposed to let you down, too. How can I? How am I supposed to live with that? What am I supposed to do? Sammy? What am I supposed to do? What am I supposed to do[emphasis]?
> (Dean Winchester, *Supernatural* #2.22)

As a consequence of his deal, the demon will claim Dean's life exactly one year after Sam's resurrection. Therefore, Dean forces Sam into his previous position by making the deal. Additionally, the breakdown of the family unit forces the road narrative's main characters out of their homes, leading towards a nomadic lifestyle on the road.

Moreover, the Winchesters are obsessed with their late mother, Mary, and are disempowered by her memory. Their mother's death scene is repeated multiple times in the series, usually portrayed as either Sam's or Dean's nightmare. As a result of their troubled past, the brothers are incapable of forming lasting relationships with women and hide their low self-esteem behind overt machoism. Likewise, John Winchester is unable to cope with Mary's death and is portrayed as absent and overly controlling father. The Winchester family motto (initially presented by Dean in *Supernatural* #1.2), which is repeated multiple times throughout the series: "Saving people, hunting things, the family business", is a massive façade, masking the pain of hurting individuals.

Corrigan's definitions II (events influence the characters) and III (A mechanized quest motif) and are reproduced jointly in *Supernatural*. The initial quest motif of the main storyline in *Supernatural* is built on Sam and Dean trying to find their father. The quest is mechanized by necessity, as the brothers have to drive their Impala around America in order to trace him. The events inside the episodes influence Sam and Dean's physical destination, their learn skills and companions, along but also their stances on matters of faith and ethics.

Corrigan's definitions IV (The windows of the vehicle are the lense of the camera) and V (Extensively self-reflecting and self-conscious characters) are also attached to each other in *Supernatural.* Most episodes contain at least one scene dedicated to an arduous dialogue between Sam and Dean, in which they ponder their past and the consequences of their actions. These discussions are often intertwined with the windows of the car becoming the lense of the camera, as many moments of self-reflection take place inside the Impala. For example, in *Supernatural* #1.5, when Sam feels guilt over the demise of his girlfriend Jessica:

Dean:	Alright, you know what? That's it. This is about Jessica, isn't it? You think that's your dirty little secret? That you killed her somehow? Sam, this has got to stop, man. I mean the nightmares and, and, and calling her name out in the middle of the night. It's gonna kill you. Now listen to me, it wasn't your fault. If you want to blame something, then blame the thing that killed her. Alright, why don't you take a swing at me? I mean, I'm the one who dragged you away from her in the first place.
Sam:	I don't blame you.
Dean:	Well, you shouldn't blame yourself, 'cause there was nothing you could've done.
Sam:	I could have warned her.
Dean:	About what? You didn't know it was gonna happen. And besides, all of this isn't a secret. I know all about it. It's not gonna work with Mary anyway.
Sam:	No, you don't.
Dean:	I don't what?
Sam:	You don't know all about it. I haven't told you everything.
Dean:	What are you talking about?
Sam:	Well, it wouldn't really be a secret if I told you, would it?
Dean:	No... I don't like it. It's not gonna happen. Forget it.
Sam:	Dean, that girl back there is going to die unless we do something about it. And you know what? Who knows how many more people are going to die after that? Now, we're doing this. You've got to let me do this.

This type of dialogue is a persistent feature of *Supernatural*. Sam and Dean constantly question their actions, ponder on their position in the world and dwell on past events, wowing to learn from their mistakes, usually failing to do so.

Identifying the appliance of Definition VI (something has made the country and road foreign) is very straightforward in its surface elements. In *Supernatural*, the road and the

country are familiar in the sense that Sam and Dean live on the road. In essence, the road is their home. The brothers spend their nights in sketchy roadside motels and humble small-town diners. Moreover, Sam and Dean navigate through the continent with ease. Evidently, the monsters which the brothers are striving to purge are the source of foreignness. Furthermore, *Supernatural's* variation of the road narrative vehemently emphasizes this characteristic of the genre, as the series employs gothic horror as an integral part of its amalgam of genres. I will explore the theme of otherness and how *Supernatural* affirms conservative values further in chapter 5.

As each pattern of Corrigan's definitions is reproduced in *Supernatural*, the series is consistent with his assessment of the genre. As pointed out in the preceding discussion, *Supernatural* is ample with reproductions of the genre defining features of the American road narrative. With the basics of the genre covered, it is easier to digest the upcoming discussion of its development.

3 THE AMERICAN COLLECTIVE IDENTITY IN THE ROAD NARRATIVE

In order to achieve a better understanding of the cultural significance of *American* road narratives, it is beneficial to discuss the American collective identity they reflect. In this chapter, I will cover mobility, the culture of American road and ultimately how they affect the mythos of the American Dream. This is done to better understand the cultural context in which the American road narrative was created in and derives from. These ideas will be mainly discussed in terms of their significance in the road narrative. While covering the scope of literature, references to *Supernatural* will be made regarding the appliance of these components of American identity.

Mobility is perhaps the most dominant cultural component that appears in academic discussion of the road narrative. Academics such as Brigham (2015), Laderman (1996) and Primeau (1996) all have much in common in their in-depth analyses of the prominence of mobility in the road narrative. Therefore, mobility and its acceptance to the American national mythology appears to be the logical starting point for this discussion of the cultural context.

3.1 Mobility in America

In this sub-section, I will cover how mobility has always been a part of the American culture. Additionally, I will discuss how increased mobility in the twentieth century affected the American identity and its portrayal in the road narrative. Mobility has always been closely attached to stories that employ the road narrative. “Because of its ubiquity in American culture, we think we know how mobility is foundational to an understanding of American identity. It means freedom, rebellion or reinvention; there exists the promise of escape.” (Brigham, 2015: 13). Seemingly, freedom and rebellion are deeply embedded into the American identity, originating from the concept of mobility.

However, mobility has many other meanings in the context of American culture. Thus, according to Brigham (2015: 13), mobility should be in the center of any analysis on the

road narrative. *Supernatural* employs freedom and rebellion as integral parts of the series adaptation of mobility: the entire overarching storyline of seasons three to five concentrates on Sam and Dean trying to dismantle a prophecy about Armageddon. The brothers form an unlikely alliance with the rogue angel Castiel to protect free will, labeling themselves as the *Team Free Will*: "Team Free Will. One ex-blood junkie, one dropout with six Bucks to his name, and Mr. Comatose over there. Awesome." (Dean Winchester, *Supernatural* #5.13*)*

Amidst pressure from Lucifer and the armies of Heaven, the brothers and Castiel maintain their position that mankind has *free will*, resisting both factions wish of an apocalyptic conflict between Heaven and Hell, which would decimate the mankind and result in the end of the world. Moreover, road narratives alter the collective perspectives on mobility by displaying "rifts around class, race, ethnicity, gender, sexuality, culture, geography and American identity." (Brigham 2015: 13). *Supernatural* also provides commentary on these topics mentioned by Brigham and they will be analyzed in depth in chapter 5 of this thesis.

Regarding physical movement, the direction of the travel in the road narrative is of great significance (Ireland, 2013 :15). Traditionally, the movement in road narratives occurs westwards towards California, as in the example set by John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath*. Ireland explains that this is because of California's reputation as the "land of milk and honey" (2013:15). However, Ireland points out that modern road narratives can employ a journey eastward from California to a contrary effect, as contemporary conservatives consider California as an epitome for everything wrong in America. Thus, the journey in *Supernatural*, which starts on a westward trajectory from Sam's university campus in Palo Alto, California is arguably a method to embrace conservative values. Therefore, it is plausible to expect *Supernatural* to provide cultural commentary from a conservative viewpoint. As mentioned in the introduction to this thesis, the aftermath of 9/11 was and still is a time when Americans embraced conservative values as a way of uniting the country. The conservative stances that are projected in the series will be expanded on in chapter 5.

Despite the natural response to associate mobility with movement, mobility is also connected to "immobility and stillness, physical and social boundaries" (Andreeva 2016: 19). *Supernatural* is abundant of themes around incarceration and loss of autonomy of your body in the shape of mind control or telekinesis. Moreover, "Mobility is associated with freedom of movement but also with its direct opposite" (Woodward cited in Andreeva 2016: 19). Andreeva points out the fact that many are forced to relocate because of natural crisis, wars or famine. Under each set of circumstances, experiences of mobility differ. Mobility is often romanticized in Western conditions, but many early Americans relocated to America out of necessity rather than by choice. Despite this, the American road narrative mostly focuses on the positive connotations of mobility, often romanticizing it.

Brigham (2013b: 103), points out that mobility has been an integral part of American society since settlers first set foot on American soil. Compared to Europe, a static and already explored continent, America was founded on the promise of endless search for new and the possibility of moving west. This focus on mobility seems to have been instrumental in creating a collective American identity, which developed much later than its counterparts in Europe.

To attain an understanding of how mobility developed into an integral part of American identity, I refer to the historian Robert M. Crunden. In *A Brief History of America,* (1990: 69-71), Crunden discusses the observations on American culture of a 19th century French thinker, Alexis de Tocqueville. In the aftermath of the French Revolution, the lawyer de Tocqueville found himself in a helpless situation, unable to practice law without allying himself with enemy. De Tocqueville had long been fascinated by America and chose to escape the conflict by visiting the curious country. Upon arriving on the continent, de Tocqueville was confused by an apparent lack of national character. At first America was a "genuinely puzzling" nation for de Tocqueville (Crunden 1990: 70) and the Frenchman was surprised by the lack of "*moeurs* of family, church and state", which were easily identifiable in his native France. However, De Tocqueville soon noticed that mobility was something that connected each American, noting: "a restless temper seems to me one of the distinctive traits of this people" (De Tocqueville quoted in Crunden 1990: 70). De

Tocqueville adds to his remarks on mobility: “the American has no time to tie himself to anything, he grows accustomed only to change, and ends by regarding it as the natural state of man” (De Tocqueville quoted in Crunden 1990: 70). The sheer surprise of a European native is apparent in de Tocquville’s remarks. The development of America hailing from the settlement and focus on expansion seems to have created a national identity that values mobility. After his initial shock by the lack of a national identity, de Tocqueville seemingly changed his view: “in America, even more than in France, there is only one society… It may may be either rich or poor, humble or brilliant, trading or agricultural; but is composed everywhere of the same elements” (De Tocqueville in Crunden 1990:70). The most obvious of these elements, as noted by de Tocqueville, seems to be a deeply embedded appreciation of mobility.

So, if we assume that mobility was one of the most important cultural components in the birth of the American national identity, how does this echo into more modern times? Tim Cresswell (2006: 2) notes that mobility is more important to the world and our understanding of it than ever before, yet with its many meanings, mobility remains somewhat ambiguous. It is a topic that Creswell, along with Brigham have tried to explain. According to Cresswell, mobility has many connotations in America, but also a dualistic nature: “Mobility as progress, as freedom, as opportunity, and as modernity sit side by side with mobility as shiftlessness, as deviance, and as resistance.” (2006: 1-2). Moreover, Brigham argues that because of the contradictions within mobility, it is especially important in the study of road narratives: “[the] genre has primarily been read in terms of familiar binaries: home/away, conformity/rebellion, confinement/liberation” (2015: 17).

According to Brigham, one of the most important aspects of mobility in America is its position as a “process of engagement and incorporation” (2015: 17). Rather than focusing solely on mobility’s function as an escape mechanism, Brigham suggests that we should consider it for its qualities that make it “[emerge] as a dynamic process for engaging with social conflicts”. The reasoning for this is derived from the way road narratives focus on unsettling processes, such as border-crossing, travel, self-searching and the conflict of spaces (Brigham 2015: 17). In other words, we could look at road narratives as sources

of otherness and chaos, and in turn mobility as the process for "working out the fact of difference", as in *engagement* (Brigham 2015:17).

The role of mobility as a process of *incorporation* is related to engagement, because it is a natural successor in the chain of events that lead to engagement. After engaging into the unsettling processes provoked by otherness, mobility can then act as a source of incorporation. Brigham describes her use of the term incorporation as follows: "incorporation, that is, joining or merging of one thing, with or into another. Crossing borders, pursuing distance, navigating new spaces, and reinventing oneself- these are all about incorporating subjects and spaces" (Brigham 2015: 17). Mobility as in incorporation can function as a uniting, transformative response, for both an individual citizen, but also for the nation-state. Brigham gives an example and refers to the time surrounding the 9/11 terrorist attacks. According to Brigham, mobility can function as incorporation as it "gives expression to acts of, and conflicts joining with an entity larger than the self" (2015: 18). This entity can be a "community, place, or […] the search of IT" (2015: 18), with IT referring to Sal and Dean's search of IT in *On the Road*. Similarly, Sam and Dean's adventures in *Supernatural* are motivated by larger than self-causes, from finding their father and reuniting their family (incorporation), to saving mankind from the Apocalypse.

Furthermore, incorporation in road narratives can also act as the process of adding specific places into the consciousness of America. Brigham gives a final meaning for incorporation in road narratives: it can give a material form for discussing something intangible, for example "America" as a projection of an ideal (Brigham 2015:18). With its many functions, Brigham argues that mobility as incorporation can provide an "analytical approach that counters understandings of mobility as an "either/or" proposition" (2015:19). Incorporation abolishes the mindset of discussion in absolutes, by inviting to join into search for new spaces and opportunities.

In conclusion, mobility is arguably one of the most important features in the American identity. Therefore, mobility is also one the most important aspects to consider when analyzing road narratives. In road narratives, mobility, both physical and social usually

occurs on the road. Thus, the next sub-section will discuss the concept of the road and its place in the American collective identity.

3.2 The Road

> From pioneer trails to the latest car commercial, the "open road" has continually been perceived as a mythic space of possibility. In the vast United States, and in our vaster imaginations, the road offers new horizons to an individual liberated from the confines of home and society. (Brigham, 2015: 12-13)

While (auto)mobility may often dominate the discussion in scholarly analysis of road narrative, the role of *the road* itself should not be overlooked. Many scholars agree on the importance of the road as a major building block of the American identity, mostly because of its direct relation to freedom (Brigham 2013a: 18). The road is very visible in *Supernatural*, and much of the dialogue of the series takes place in the brothers' car.

The road has always been a staple theme in the American culture (Cohan & Hark 2001: 1). Its inclusion into popular mythology dates back to America's frontier ethos but received new forms after the "technological intersection" of cinema and the automobile that took place in the twentieth century (Cohan & Hark 2001:1). Furthermore, constructing a travel narrative in a manner that pits the "liberation of the road against the oppression of hegemonic norm, road movies project American Western mythology onto the landscape traversed and bound by the nation's highways" (Cohan & Hark 2001: 1) Thus, the road becomes an embodiment of the empty space between town and country. In this empty space lie endless possibilities for "romanticizing alienation as well as for problematizing the uniform identity of the nation's culture" (Cohan & Hark 2001: 1).

While road films aspire to project alienation and otherness, usually they are too focused on glorifying the stories of the protagonists' struggles:

> Road Movies are too cool to address seriously socio-political issues. Instead, they express the fury and suffering at the extremities of civilized life, and give their restless protagonists the false hope of a one-way ticket to nowhere… … road

> movies are cowled in lurking menace, spontaneous mayhem and dead-end fatalism, never more than few roadstops away from abject lawlessness and haphazard bloodletting … … road movies have always been songs of the doomed, warnings that once you enter the open hinterlands between cities, you're on your own. (Atkinson qtd Cohan & Hark 2001: 1)

One could not more accurately describe the socio-political commentary within *Supernatural*. While *Supernatural* addresses many socio-political issues, in the end the protagonists' temporary triumphs are met with false hope of a better tomorrow. For every monster they kill, another one appears in the next episode. Additionally, the protagonists are forced to digest the horrible fates of people that turned into ghosts. Many instances of people turning into ghosts in *Supernatural* deal with tragic deaths involving social problems, such as in #1.3, when Sam and Dean investigate a series of mysterious drownings that are dismissed as suicides. The culprit is revealed to be the ghost of Peter, a local boy who was bullied by two other children 35 years ago, accidentally drowning him. While the ghost is eventually laid to rest, there is no actual redemption for any of the participants, as Peter manages to drown the two people responsible for his death, along with two other victims. The ghost will no longer claim more lives but bullying remains an unsolved problem, waiting to be reproduced somewhere else.

Despite the lack of depth in socio-political commentary, road films can still present a medium for commentating on the current state of the American society. According to Cohan and Hark (2001: 2), the road narrative has historically mirrored the cultural ethos of time, providing means of exploring the "tensions and crises of the historical moment during which it is produced". Some of these moments include periods of "upheaval and dislocation", e.g. the Great Depression, or timeframes of ideological demand for "fantasies of escape and opposition", for example the late 1960s (Cohan & Hark 2001: 2). I will discuss how *Supernatural* appears to function in a similar manner in the post 9/11 America in chapter 5 of this thesis.

Brigham (2013a: 15) further highlights the importance of road in the road narrative genre in her critical essay *Critical Meeting Places: Major Approaches to the American Road Narrative Genre*. While the car enables Americans to travel their continent, the roads and

the landscape are just as important in the road-tripping experience. Brigham describes the position of road in contextualizing road narratives:

> As a space and a symbol, the road represents expansiveness and open-endedness. It may lead out of somewhere specific, but it could go anywhere. In the vast United States, and in our vaster imaginations, the road twists and turns, offering new directions, exciting detours, unprecedented access, and a beckoning horizon. (2013a: 15-16)

The road allows travelers explore the space and landscape of America, an enormous country offering vastly different experiences in its many cities and rural areas. The road symbolizes unpredictability, as travelers can often be placed in placed in places they were not planning to head to. At the same time, the road also lends its traveler many possibilities: it is always an option to go back, alter your direction or just follow the road. The existence of many choices instantly connects the road to the American admiration of *freedom*. Furthermore, Brigham (2013a: 16) presents an interesting thought about the relationship of the road and city streets. The road is spacious and limitless, almost a polar opposite to streets, which are "readily and carefully mapped… … anchored by buildings and addresses and situated by businesses and residences". By nature, city streets are restricted and bound to their surroundings. When compared to roads, which "hold out the promise and possibility of the unknown – and unrealized" (Brigham 2013a: 16), it is easy to see why the road is so important in the road narrative. The road allows its travelers to be freed from their commitments, struggles and routines, which are often tied to their local space.

Moreover, the freedom provided by the road enables the traveler to engage in critical self-evaluation. Not only for those escaping from struggles, but also for those who are satisfied with their lives, but need relief, by allowing escapes from their everyday life. Thus, escapism provided by the road can be equally valuable as the possibility of attaining a new beginning in life. In both cases, the road narrative can display freedom in a distinctively American manner: "the road narrative seems to represent a form that is characteristically, perhaps uniquely, American in the way that it explicitly links the road with a larger national ideal of freedom" (Brigham, 2013a: 18). This deep connection to

freedom and American identity clearly points in the direction the American Dream, an American national myth.

The interpretation of road in *Supernatural* is closely tied to its positive connotations. Sitting in the car with American rock music playing in the background is considered the most comforting and familiar space for Sam and Dean. As soon as the Impala's engine stops running, the sense of security is disrupted. For example, in episode #2.21 Sam and Dean park their car in front of a road side diner to the tune of a classic American rock song. Sam proceeds to jump off the car to order something to eat. Moments later, the music starts to have electromagnetic interference and Dean grows suspicious of the situation. He enters the diner to search for Sam, only to find the diner staff with their throats sliced open by demons. This sense of security inside the car is also highlighted in the finale of the first season (#1.21), where Sam, Dean and John are discussing their recent fight with Azazel in the Impala. At this point in the series, the viewer has grown accustomed to the safe space of the car, and the sense of security is amplified by a mellow country song. During their discussion, a demon suddenly crashes a truck into the Impala. In a series filled with suspense, this is perhaps the most shocking moment of the first season.

3.3 The American Dream

The American Dream is often an important cog in the road narrative: Andreeva (2016: 30) notes in her critical reading of two classic road novels, Kerouac's *On the Road* and John Steinbeck's *Grapes of Wrath* that one of the important similarities between the two is the protagonists' quests towards the American Dream. The American Dream is often described as one of the myths of the American national identity, yet there is no real consensus on the meaning of it. Lawrence R. Samuel pursues definitions for this myth in his study *The American Dream: A Cultural History* (2012). After surveying his fellow Americans, he notes that the American Dream is usually associated with making a fortune and being able to retire, living "the good life" and the pursuit of happiness, making it seem like a "wish list" (Samuel 2012: 1), rather than a national mythology. According to

Samuel (2012: 1), the most important finding about the American Dream is that it is not actually real, as "the fact that many of us have assumed it to be entirely real makes the story even more compelling".

This raises the question: if the American Dream in fact is not real, why is it so important? According to Samuel, the American Dream is the key to understanding American cultural history, as it remains central to the "American idea and experience…, thoroughly woven into the fabric of everyday life" (2012: 2). The American Dream is one of the few things that Americans share, and it defines the national identity by affecting self-awareness, choices and reasoning. The Dream in its many different interpretations is present in many facets of the American society, including: "economics, politics, law, work, business and education" (Samuel 2012: 2). Furthermore, even counterculture movements and such as feminism and civil rights owe much to the American Dream, as the Dream contains the idea of "equal opportunity essentially guaranteeing it will play an important role in any major economic, political or social conversation" (Samuel 2012: 3). As America continues to become even more multicultural, Samuel is convinced that the Dream will in fact increase its importance.

Historically speaking, the American Dream, as we understand the term today, did not exist before the 1930s, yet the ideals it contains were always embedded into the American identity (Samuel 2012: 3). As discussed by many historians, America was founded on the principles of endless progression, independence and personal transformation (Samuel 2012: 3-5). As such, this national mythology has deeply affected the forming of the United States of America. Samuel attributes the coining of the term to James Truslow Adams in 1931, situated amidst the Great Depression:

> The dream is a vision of a better, deeper, richer life for every individual, regardless of the position in society which he or she may occupy by the accident of birth. It has been a dream of a chance to rise in the economic scale, but quite as much, or more than that, of a chance to develop our capacities to the full, unhampered by unjust restrictions of caste or custom. With this has gone the hope of bettering the physical conditions of living, of lessening the toil and anxieties of daily life. (Adams qtd in Samuel 2012: 13)

Therefore, The American Dream was born out of a need of uniting the nation during a time when collective efforts for repairing the damaged American society were essential. The reason why this timing is significant for the road narrative is obvious: this period coincides with the popularization of the automobile and travel. It was during this era when motor travel originally emerged as a "ritual of American citizenship" (Shaffer, 2001: 4). During the emergence of this ritual, an organized nationalism was defined, "linking national identity to a shared territory and history" (Shaffer, 2001: 4). Thus, the road has been historically attached to the American Dream. The combination of these two has been instrumental when Americans have been projecting a need for comfort and a united America.

The deployment of the American Dream in *Supernatural* can be assessed through the goals of its protagonists. Symbolically, the series positions Sam and Dean as patriotic protectors of the American dream. In their quest to retain free will for humanity, Sam and Dean operate as champions of American values against hostile powers, such as monsters, angels and demons. For the brothers, their adaptation of the American Dream is the preservation of the American nation and its values and identity. Sam and Dean go to extreme lengths to reject the prophecy of Armageddon, the ultimate goal of the angels and demons, as doing so would mean losing autonomy and surrendering the world (basically, America) under the rule of Heaven or Hell. The brothers are pitted against each other in the prophecy, as Dean is supposed to fight for Heaven and Sam for Hell.

The way the concept of Armageddon is portrayed in *Supernatural* evokes images of the Cold War - angels value authoritarian leadership and lack of material possession, suggesting an allegory with communism, the classic adversary of American traditions and the nation's ideals of freedom and materialism. Dean is especially fond of nostalgic post World War 2 cultural items and preserving them, as he loves his classic American rock music, fast food and has an emotional attachment to his Chevrolet Impala. Moreover, Lucifer and the forces of Hell wish to destroy all life on Earth just to spite God – the fallen angel's goal projects a more modern enemy of America, jihadist terrorism.

Having acknowledged how road narratives are associated with the American collective identity, and discussing its prominence in *Supernatural*, I will now advance into more specific discussion on how *Supernatural* is influenced by previous works in the road narrative genre.

4 THE HISTORY OF THE AMERICAN ROAD NARRATIVE

This section covers the historical development of the American road narrative regarding literature and film, looking at the trends that have impacted interpretations of the road in fiction. The adoption of mobility, physical but also social, into the American national identity is apparent in the evolvement of road literature (Brigham, 2015: 36-37). For this reason, I will present the discussion in a somewhat chronological order, taking a look at the historic trends of the road narrative while discussing their impact on the modern road narrative and the American culture. At the same time, I work my way up from general travel writing to road narrative literature, ending the literature overview with a comprehensive discussion of the road film. The process starts from discussing what is generally viewed as *travel writing.* After discussing the concept of travel writing, the next step is observing the early road literature, which paved way for the modern road narrative in literature and film. As the road narratives discussed in this thesis operate mainly in an American context, the discussion will naturally include commentary on some constituents of the American culture.

4.1 Travel Writing

The production of recordings of travel has seen an enormous spike in recent times. Thompson (2011: 2), states that it is a direct result of the modern state of humankind. We populate a world in which travel and relocation, willful or unwilful is at an all-time high. Globalization has made “mobility, travel and cross-cultural contacts … … facts of life and an everyday reality” (Thompson 2011: 2). This development has created various reasons for an increasing demand of travel writing, as well as other forms of recorded experiences for travel. The growth of tourism allows us to escape into and learn from other’s descriptions of foreign cultures and places. The viral video sharing platform YouTube is now populated by video bloggers with millions of views on their video (e.g. content creators such as *vagabrothers* and *Erik Conover*). However, inadvertent movement of people is also at an all-time high, as people are forced to be “displaced through economic hardship, environmental disasters and wars” (Thompson 2011: 2).

Travel writing originating from these kinds of situations can help us better understand the turmoil that people must face in their lives. The book has traditionally been a popular medium for those looking to capture their stories, as well as for those looking for a chance to escape reality and be placed in someone else's story.

Personal descriptions of travel and recordings of voyaging have existed all over the world virtually since mankind was able to record its actions. Over time, the road narrative has evolved from simple travel writing to capturing the nuances of the writers' cultural surroundings. Travel writing has been the target of many studies by literary scholars, and most do not fail to mention the massively layered nature of the genre, which demands being specific while discussing travel writing. This layered nature also leads to the conclusion that travel writing comes in many shapes and forms and is immensely hard to define (Adams 1983: 281). Travel writing can categorically include contributions to different fields of science ranging from anthropology to geography. The focus may be on descriptions of the surroundings or the nature. Additionally, the authors can push different agendas or describe various forms of travel. Furthermore, the writing can be expanded from simply the physical world to elaborate recordings of self-observation. Exploration of self can also be considered a form of travel, if viewed as a psychological journey.

But categorizing every kind of movement through space as travel creates several problems. Thompson (2011: 9) demands criteria for labeling movement as travel, because if all movement is traveling, is every kind of writing also travel writing? Thompson digests this problem by stating that "the term is a very loose generic label and has always embraced a bewilderingly diverse range of material" (2011:11). He finds additional support for this diverse nature of the form from Patrick Holland and Graham Huggan and quotes them: "the form can embrace everything 'from picaresque adventure to philosophical treatise, political commentary, ecological parable, and spiritual quest' whilst simultaneously borrow[ing] freely from history, geography, anthropology and social science'" (2011: 11-12). Therefore, according to Thompson, categorizing anything as travel writing can seem like an impossible task. Thompson (2011:11) then suggests that instead of defining "travel writing", one should concentrate on conveying "a sense of the diverse forms and modes that the genre has taken historically". Despite how

discouraging Thompson's arguments may seem, other scholars have also pursued ways to categorize the narration of movement.

Youngs (2013: 3), quoting Peter Hulme notes that it is a must to find an exclusive definition for travel writing, because "there is almost no statuesque literature" and also because "the journey pattern is one of the most persistent forms of all narratives" (Blanton qtd in Youngs 2013: 3). According to Youngs, Hulme suggests visiting the location the writer is describing is a necessity for the writing to be considered travel writing, which appears to be a reasonable suggestion.

Exploring the definition of travel writing further is not beneficial for this thesis, so I accept the evasive nature of the genre and settle for Andreeva's (2016: 13) resolution: "it is impossible to find a critical term describing the genre perfectly". Despite the layered nature of the genre, I will now discuss at the most prominent works that have influenced *Supernatural's* adaptation of the road narrative.

4.2 The Early 20th Century

While *On The Road* is heralded for the popularization of mobility as a theme in road literature (Brigham: 2015: 3), Jack Kerouac had his predecessors. The inclusion of (auto)mobility into the collective American identity became a marquee feature of the American culture in the early 20th century. Its many nuances are covered in depth by Ann Brigham (2015). In this sub-section, I will review Brigham's critical readings of four influential early road novels:

1. *Three Speeds Forward: An Automobile Love Story with One Reverse (*Lloyd Osbourne 1906)
2. *A Six-Cylinder Courtship (*Edward Salisbury Field 1907*)*.
3. *On the Trail to Sunset* (Thomas Wilby 1912)
4. *Free Air* (Sinclair Lewis 1919)

While these novels cannot yet be categorized as modern American road narratives, their impact in introducing automobility to fiction is significant - their greatest merits are in their reflections of their cultural surroundings. These novels are important for the purposes of this thesis because they started to discuss matters of class, ethnicity and gender in narratives that focus on road. The increased importance of mobility has had many growing pains and repercussions, which will be under consideration in the following discussion.

The early 20th century was the period when automobile sales skyrocketed in America, as cars started to become affordable to the public, and the vehicle started to take its place in the American national mythology. The mass production and affordability of a specific car, the Model T, changed the cultural status of the automobile (Brigham 2015: 36-37). The car now enabled the middle class and even the working classes to engage in motor touring, once a privilege of the upper class (Brigham 2015: 37).

This newly found mobility challenged "traditional social demarcations" by placing members of different classes in the same tourist camps and roadside restaurants, provoking both positive and negative responses (Brigham 2015: 37). Some, like Norine H. Morton (Quoted in Brigham 2015: 37) saw the intermingling of social classes as an unusual showing of democracy and congeniality, marveling at how the owner of a Packard (a luxury car) could be seen sitting around with the owner of a Ford (an affordable variant). Others, such as Geithmann (quoted in Brigham 2015:37) cynically described the sudden diversity:

> The lame, the halt, and the blind, the pigeon-toed, bow-legged and hare-lipped, grizzled grandfathers and dimpled infants were all on the road leading from somewhere to somewhere else… … There were rattletraps of ancient times threatening to collapse at a moment's notice and aluminum palaces, walnut-trimmed and fitted up like Pullman cars.

Geithmann's stance, apparent worry about the collapse of class sections at the hands of automobile travel, suggests that the image of a socially united America is not as clear-cut as it may seem from Morton's description. Looking into Geithmann's account, it is easy

to picture members of the upper classes sneering at migrant workers while camping next to them (Brigham, 2015: 38). In any case, the seeds for cross-class familiarities in America were planted during this period, pointing towards increased mobility. Mobility would become a key constituent of American national identity and engrave itself deep into the road narrative.

Likely as a response to this newly created automobile culture that can spark new social relations, resulting in the "mitigation and enunciation of class, ethnic, and gender differences", early road novels focused on this aspect (Brigham, 2015: 38). Brigham's critical reading reveals how the movement towards formulated descriptions of travel with automobile started from *Three Speeds Forward: An automobile Love Story with One Reverse* and *A Six-Cylinder Courtship* (2015: 38). These novels present intimate heterosexual relationships across traditionally socially and spatially split groups of people, which at the time was considered unacceptable, taboo. The travel aspect in these two novels is restricted to a regional, rather than national, level, reflecting the limitations in commuting at the time. The perspective of distance was much greater during the early twentieth century, so the lesser scale of travel does not diminish the impact of nullifying great social distances and "the unification of contrasting groups". (Brigham 2015: 38-39) The nature of the mobility provided by the romance in *Six-Cylinder Courtship* is gapping the bridge between an easterner and a westerner. In *Three Speeds Forward*, the mobility occurs between old and new money. In both novels, the wealthier part of the relationship, the moneyed male protagonist is the automotive expert. This in turn forces the men into crossing into territories traditionally occupied by working-class men. Thus, the situations reflect Morton's and Geithmann's observations of the changing tides where members of higher social classes are placed side to side with working class people. (Brigham, 2015: 39)

While Osbourne's and Salisbury Field's novels made attempts at introducing the defusal of social differences, they ultimately fell short. Brigham (2015: 41) notes that two later novels, *On the Trail to Sunset* and *Free Air*, operate on a different scale because of their portrayal of the transcontinental journey. Both novels feature social outsider protagonists: In *On the Trail to Sunset,* the protagonists consist of a Mexican national, a new woman

and an orphan. Similarly, *Free Air* displays a new woman alongside an orphaned working-class mechanic. In both novels the protagonists are alienated from the American society because of their social status. Brigham describes how the "outsiderness signifies individuality, a trait that paves the way for the reconsideration of entrenched ideas and group identity" (2015: 42).

Wilby's and Lewis' novels raise the question: how significant incorporating the outsider is in the American experience? Both road narratives discuss the question of national suitability through their male protagonist. According to Brigham (2015: 42) these novels display a conflict between two existing visions of the representative American: the individualist American and the assimilated American, wondering if they can "ever be synonymous". (2015: 42).

This type of outsiderness that is highlighted by individuality is still a relevant topic in modern America. However, *Supernatural* is too focused on the normalness and easily acceptable qualities of its two white male protagonists and their quests to display actual outsiderness. Quite frankly, the series projects white male hegemony – the Winchester brothers' have been alienated from society both by being born into a family of monster-hunters and leading their lives on the road. Despite this setting, Sam and Dean assimilate and blend into new situations in new surroundings by virtue of their looks and manners. If one considers that outsiderness is portrayed symbolically through the monsters that Sam and Dean hunt, in most situations the monsters get very little pity before being killed off. The portrayal of minorities in *Supernatural* will be discussed in chapter 5.

Even though these very early road novels highlight the automobile in their storytelling, "the social scope covered is decidedly narrow" (Brigham 2015: 40). Instead of truly breaking social boundaries to create a new democratic order, the novels only discuss social mobility inside a clearly set social hierarchy. While the above mentioned early 20th century road novels do not yet fit inside the road narrative formula, they have their place in the road literature discussion. The early 20th century road novelists tackled the concepts of road, mobility and outsiderness and took the initial steps for discussing them in fiction.

Post-war fiction would continue this trend as the road narrative genre was rounding into shape. The following sub-section will cover the prototypes of modern road narratives.

4.3 Post World War 2 Road Narratives

According to Brigham (2015: 71), the postwar era was defined by its restless nature. As such, the period was apt for discussing racialized masculinity in fiction. The focus of this sub-section is on discussing the impact of the most influential post-war fiction that is generally considered to belong to the road narrative genre, providing information on how the genre is shaped. David Laderman's (1996) arguments on the cross-genre nature of the road film form an important part of the discussion.

4.3.1 Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*

The road narrative genre went through a surge in popularity after the second world war (Brigham, 2015: 68). The modern American road narrative is generally perceived to being prototyped during this era by Jack Kerouac's 1957 novel *On the Road* (Laderman 1996: 42) (Talbot 1999, 5). Thus, the consensus among academics is that Kerouac's novel established the genre's distinctive features which were discussed in chapter 3. Moreover, Primeau (1996: 8) argues that Kerouac's impact on road narrative literature is so vast, that many authors from various origins have repeated the road pattern Kerouac defined. Because of Kerouac's impact on the genre, to create different interpretations of the road narrative others must make attempts at "getting out from under his influence". (Primeau 1996: 8). Eric Kripke did the exact opposite with *Supernatural* and embraced Kerouac's formula, even paying homage to *On the Road's* main characters, aspiring writers Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty, by naming his protagonists after them.

The similarities do not stop there. *On the Road* follows two male buddies on a quest to find Dean's homeless father. As discussed in 1.2, *Supernatural* starts a quest of finding John Winchester. Both the novel and *Supernatural* are maturation stories based on emotionally immature main characters, who are isolated and alienated from the society.

On the Road is an autobiographical novel and the characters and events are based on Jack Kerouac's own experiences. *On the Road's* narrative is even more erratic than that of *Supernatural*, as the novel's protagonists seem to bounce irrationally lacking direction, spending three years trying to find a magical *IT.*

Furthermore, Sal and Dean and Sam and Dean embody similar assessments of the male buddy dynamic. Both pairs are dependent on each other, but still unable to fully connect because they restrain themselves. In *On the Road*, Sal idolizes Dean's outlaw mentality. Similarly, to function together as a whole person in their quests, Sam and Dean must reconnect after their ways separated before *Supernatural* #1.1. Both narratives' protagonists are also unable to form lasting relationships with anyone else. Much like Sam and Dean in *Supernatural*, Sal and Dean in *On the Road* are emotionally immature and unable to settle down, thus living a nomadic and erratic life. At the end of *On the Road*, Sal and Dean grow apart as Sal realizes that he cannot depend on the completely irresponsible Dean. As of 2019 and season 14, *Supernatural's* protagonists have yet to come to the same realization save for some brief moments. The characters' similarities will be discussed more in chapter 5.

Moreover, in *On the Road*, Kerouac began to include cultural commentary to road literature and set freedom and mobility as the genre's key features (Brigham 2015: 3). Kerouac is widely regarded as a significant voice of the *beat generation*, a literary post-WW2 counter-cultural movement: "*On the Road* is an artifact of the […] Beat movements, both of which embrace poetry, drug use, and jazz music" (Capewell 2015: 5). Despite Kerouac's countercultural ambitions and romanticizing of a rebellious bohemian lifestyle, *On the Road's* narrative's focus on its two white male characters affirms conformity and conservative values (Laderman 1996: 42). Laderman (1996: 42) discusses this contradiction that is abundant in Kerouac's prototype: "*On the road's* idealism becomes haunted by the very norms the followers of the book sought to alter". The discussion of cultural commentary in *Supernatural* in chapter 5 of this thesis will expand on this notion.

In the spirit of *On the Road*, Sam and Dean's life as outlaw bandits reproduces the contradiction between their rebellion and conservative values in America. The Winchester brothers consider themselves above the rules of the society, in that they are willing to use any means necessary to purge their society of evil. Despite this, as I will argue in chapter 5, the series portrays some unquestionably conservative attitudes. For example, the protagonists love lives consist of disposable one-night stands, promoting sexism. Additionally, the series has a tendency of portraying black characters based on racial stereotypes.

Contrastingly, as Wright (2008: 17) argues in her discussion of class-related issues in *Supernatural*, Dean's rejection of the idyllic middle-class home in episode #1.8 displays a contempt for "suburban conformity". In the episode Sam and Dean investigate a bug infestation in a middle-class suburb, and Dean displays his malice towards the suburban idyll: "Growing up in a place like this would freak me out. The manicured lawns - How was your day, honey? [sarcastic tone] I'd blow my brains out" (*Supernatural* #1.8). As a result, *Supernatural* often displays countercultural properties even though the viewpoint of the series is of a blue-collar white male brother pair.

Supernatural's mentality is strikingly similar with *On the Road.* Sam and Dean are outlaws, who disobey the American standards of conformity and following societal norms. Clearly, the Winchesters are not functioning members of society, yet they do not actually question the ethics of their actions. Whenever Sam has a moment of doubt about the honesty of their lifestyle, Dean is hasty to extinguish the situation, as evidenced by this dialogue:

Dean:	Hunting's our day job. And the pay is crap.
Sam:	Yeah, but hustling pool, credit card scams... it's not the most honest thing in the world, Dean.
Dean:	Well, let's see. Honest... fun and easy. It's no contest. Besides, we're good at it; it's what we were raised to do.
Sam:	Yeah, well, how we were raised was jacked.

(*Supernatural* #1.8)

Additionally, this dialogue also serves as another example of the contradiction between glorifying counter-cultural rebellion and still portraying the importance of family and respecting your elders, important conservative values. For Sam and Dean, hunting runs in the family. Sam often makes remarks about how they conduct their hunting is not correct and projects a more liberal mindset in general. Despite this, Sam usually succumbs to the authority of their father or his older brother. Sam's critical approach disappears in an instant – he accepts that his elders know better – projecting the conservative belief of prescription.

4.3.2 Shaping the road film: *Easy Rider*

"Generally speaking, the road film carves out an antigenre narrative path; by venturing beyond society in its content and imagery, it also ventures beyond the traditional rules of genre." (Laderman 1996: 43) The road film draws from the same tradition as the road narrative literature – a deep contempt of the stale society. In 4.1, I discuss how categorizing travel writing under a distinct genre can be hard. Likewise, road films are elusive and naturally combine a variety of narrative elements that the specific story desires: "closer inspection reveals that the road film is not an antigenre so much as an amalgam of genres" (Laderman: 43). For this reason, categorizing films as road films is complicated, and a road film can at times employ many elements of a distinct genre, deceivingly operating like it belongs under a different category. As discussed in the introduction, identifying the genre of *Supernatural* can provide similar difficulties.

Easy Rider (1969) is regarded as the prototypical road film (Laderman 1996: 43). The film tells the story of Wyatt (nicknamed Captain America), and Billy, two motorcyclists smuggling cocaine from Mexico to New Orleans, Louisiana. Like *On The Road*, *Easy Rider* portrays the America with rebellious intentions. It is a story of nomadic exploration of the South and a portrayal of America outside the society. Wyatt and Billy's first stop is at a humble farmstead, where they have a meal with the farmer's family. Shortly after leaving the farm, they pick up two hippie hitch-hikers and eventually spend time at the hippie commune, doing drugs. The protagonists are then arrested in their next destination

in New Mexico for joining a parade without a permit. In the jail they meet an alcoholic lawyer, George, who accompanies them after they get out.

The film then begins projecting the society's hostility towards outsiderness, as the trio get attacked after eating in a local diner. The locals follow the protagonists and attack them, beating George to death. Billy and Wyatt then reach their destination and go on to do drugs with two prostitutes. Their story ends the next morning as they are shot dead on their motorcycles by local men in a truck.

While the stories of *Easy Rider* and *Supernatural* are very different, and *Easy Rider's* protagonists are more anti-heroes than traditional heroes, *Easy Rider* is a significant source for aesthetic motivation for *Supernatural*. They also have much in common with portraying the American between cities as a safe and familiar space, and the cities as uncomfortable sites filled with danger. Moreover, *Supernatural's* sound track consists of classic American rock, following the example of *Easy Rider*.

A classic road film typically carries elements from three classical film genres: The Western, the gangster film and film noir, all of which predated *On the Road* (Laderman 1996: 43). *On the Road* is generally attributed as the starting point for this symbiosis, invoking Western and gangster films through its narrative (Laderman: 43). As a result, authors, screenwriters and directors have put varying amounts of emphasis on the genres in different road narrative.

From Western films that predate the road film, John Ford's *Stagecoach* (1939) and The *Searchers* (1956) have been attributed as works that greatly influence the road film (Laderman, 1996: 43). The road film borrows from western the concept of endless, unfulfilled wandering, and also the "aesthetic and thematic emphasis on vast open spaces of the Old West" (Laderman: 43). Additionally, Laderman mentions how the connection to Westerns infuses road narratives with a "focus on the confrontational and ambiguous border between culture and nature" (43). According to Klinger (2001: 178), early road films such as *Easy Rider* were instrumental in presenting the American landscapes that exist in the empty space between cities and towns.

Moreover, Roberts (2001: 45) discusses how road narratives have alluded parts of American identity from the Western in the shape of frontier symbolism. The impact of embracing frontier symbolism is supplying the narrative with male individualism and aggression. Roberts finds the "ideal of masculinity" (2001: 45), which is central in conceptualizations of American national identity, an integral part of both road narratives and the Western. As *Supernatural* is a story exclusively revolving around its two hypermasculine male characters, this connection to the road film is obvious.

Like Roberts, Laderman (1996: 48) proposes that the tradition of male individualism and aggression in road narratives is inherited from westerns. *Easy Rider's* protagonist Captain America reproduces the character archetype of a "stoic cowboy", a peaceful yet fierce outlaw who is free from the grind of the average people. However, The Western allegories do not end in character traits. Even more surface-level elements, such as modes of transportation and mobility point towards an inherent link with the Western: In *Easy Rider*, the cowboy's horse is substituted by the motorcycle as an enabler of mobility (Laderman, 1996: 48). Similarly, in the monster of the week episodes of *Supernatural,* Sam and Dean operate akin to cowboys in westerns, they ride their own substitute of a horse, the Chevrolet Impala into small towns to free the locals from the burdens of the foreign evil infiltrating their homes. Importantly, this connection to the Western also seems to have been a supply of very conservative attitudes towards women.

The prominence of vengeance motifs is another important similarity between the Western and road narratives. Laderman (1996: 43) discusses how vengeance is the initial motivator of the journey in road narratives but is replaced by the "revelations of the voyage itself". As discussed in chapter 2, the vengeance motif is centric to *Supernatural's* narrative*,* in the shape of seeking revenge on the yellow-eyed demon, Azazel. Immediately after defeating Azazel in the season 2 finale, Sam and Dean's ambitions shift towards enjoying life in the only way the know, purging the world of as many monsters as they can. At this point, Dean has made a deal with a demon to save Sam (see 3.1) – he traded his own life for a year together with Sam. This marks a shift in the series from

seeking vengeance towards acting as saviors of the mankind. Dean's new mentality is brought to flesh in his dialogue with Sam:

Dean**:**	Truth is, I'm tired, Sam. And, I don't know, it's like there's a light at the end of the tunnel.
Sam**:**	It's Hellfire, Dean.
Dean**:**	Yeah, well, whatever. You're alive, I feel good for the first time in a long time. I got a year to live, Sam. I'd like to make the most of it, so what do you say we kill some evil sons of bitches and we raise a little Hell, huh?
Sam**:**	You're unbelievable.
Dean**:**	Very true.

(*Supernatural* #3.1)

The next chapter will develop the themes discussed in this literature review. I will discuss how following the formula of the road narrative genre set in *On the Road* and *Easy Rider* impacts the gothic-style storytelling of the series.

5 CULTURAL COMMENTARY IN *SUPERNATURAL*

After assessing the cultural significance and the history of the road narrative, I can delve deeper into second part of the aim of this thesis and discuss how *Supernatural* provides cultural commentary. As discussed in sub-chapter 4.3, American road narratives tend to convey conservative cultural meanings despite their attempts to glorify rebellious outsiderness. In the case of *Supernatural,* the conservative-based portrayals of women and minorities are a product of this tradition. While road narratives aspire to describe the America outside of society, the constant affirmation of traditional gender roles and biased presentation of race reinforce white male hegemony. In contrast, *Supernatural* does not seem to support conservative leanings in its portrayal of religion, which will also be discussed.

Furthermore, I will discuss how the series adaptation of the road narrative is closely connected with thematics of the American Gothic and the Western, genres associated with conservative values. The discussion on conservative values concentrates on select episodes from the first five seasons of the series, which are most prominent in projecting the road. This chapter is concluded with a discussion on how the seasons starting from six onwards start to portray a diminishing importance of the road narrative tropes, also softening the conservative undertone of the series.

Brian Ireland (2013), agrees with Brigham (see chapter 1) in that the aftermath of 9/11 was a major factor in the resurgence of the American road narrative, describing the socio-political debate surrounding the attacks:

> 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 (Ireland, 2013: 14)

According to Ireland, (2013: 14), many post-9/11 road narratives, such as *Supernatural,* are suitable for positioning themselves on the conservative side of the culture wars because of their embracement of American ideals. In other words, the counter-cultural commentary in modern road narratives can be understood as a way of suggesting that America is not sufficiently American.

5.1 Gender in *Supernatural*

As established earlier, *Supernatural's* main characters are dominantly male, but many supporting characters are female. After all, there are only so many stories you can tell with just your two male protagonists. I will discuss how *Supernatural's* connection to *On the Road* and the series adoption of the gothic as a part of its mixture of genres communicate a conservative image of femininity.

As Corrigan notes, road narratives are "traditionally focused, almost exclusively, on men and the absence of women" (1991: 143). Moreover, road narratives contradict their own rebellious ambitions through the projection of these conservative attitudes (see 4.3). Individualism and aggression are marquee features of the protagonists of *Supernatural*, and this sub-chapter will discuss how the prominence of these characteristics impacts the portrayal of women in the series. Furthermore, road narratives are systematically protective of their male buddy dynamic, which is also a clear feature of gender in *Supernatural*.

Additionally, adoption of elements of the American gothic horror, including gloomy settings, suspense and Christian mythology is arguably an important cog in *Supernatural's* position on gender-related matters. *Supernatural* persistently employs three archetypal gothic fiction female tropes, the damsel in distress, the monstrous "predator" woman and the caretaking nurturer. The "predator" refers to a dangerous but overwhelmingly seductive type, portraying the gothic "pain/pleasure" paradox (Clamp 2018: 1). The damsel in distress refers to a helpless and feeble character in need of rescue. Sometimes the damsel in distress also represents a trophy of sexual desire for the hero. I

will discuss how *Supernatural* is very consistent in displaying femininity in this manner, which reinforces the male hegemony that is prevalent in road narratives.

5.1.1 Following the example of *On the Road*

In the first five seasons of *Supernatural*, women are often reduced to minor roles and are portrayed as expendable playthings. I will discuss how this tradition is inherited from Kerouac's *On the Road*, and its two main characters, Sal Paradise and Dean Moriarty. Arguably, *Supernatural* follows Kerouac's characters' example to a very significant degree in his portrayal of the Winchester brother's love life. I will refer to Boggs' (2009) critical readings for deeper understanding of *On the Road*.

According to Boggs (2009: 80), *On the Road's* protagonists' supposed prowess with ladies is mostly a façade. While Sal and Dean are constantly searching for female company, their insecurity stops them from maintaining anything long term. Boggs' argument is summarized in her statement: "Sal does not really know what to do with a woman once he has her and Dean doesn't know what to do once he's had her" (2009: 80). Most of the sexism in both narratives is derived from the Deans. Dean Moriarty is the driving force of pursuing temporary pleasure with women in *On the Road* and is known for being able to talk to ladies. However, he contradicts himself by being afraid of letting go, as his erratic nature does not allow him to settle down (Boggs 2008: 81). Moreover, he lacks the focus to concentrate on only one woman. He ends up trying to maintain multiple relationships in different cities only to see them falter.

Similarly, Dean Winchester in *Supernatural* is able to use his "bad boy" persona to gain women's attention. Unlike Dean Moriarty, Dean Winchester is conscious of his inability to form lasting relationships with anyone other than his brother and is content with a constant string of one-night stands. Dean is afraid of losing something by committing to relationships as a result of his constant moving as a teenager and losing his mother as a child (explained in *Supernatural* #4.13). Despite his cocky exterior, he fears any deep connections with women, and as a result does not even try to connect with them on an

emotional level. Consequently, his sexist mindset leads into the series portraying women as sources of temporary pleasure or expendable playthings left behind in the last motel. Sal Paradise and Sam Winchester also have their similarities, but they are still inherently different regarding their love lives. In *On the Road*, Dean Moriarty is constantly trying to arrange hookups with women for Sal. However, when presented the opportunity to progress with women, Sal falters. Similarly, Dean Winchester is constantly trying to find company for Sam, as he thinks it will compensate for Sam's personal loss of losing his girlfriend Jessica in *Supernatural* #1.1. However, Sam is initially not interested in any of this. In fact, he often calls out the way Dean treats women.

As the series progresses, Sam's love life activates, but it is not because of Dean's arrangements. Instead, women have a habit of throwing themselves at Sam until he wears out and submits into their advances. Therefore, Sam is sort of an irresistible object of lust for women around the America of *Supernatural*. Moreover, Sam's girlfriends always portray a certain demographic, an educated, intelligent and self-confident brunette. In most cases Sam's romances end the same way, he leaves the town for a new hunt, leaving a disappointed woman behind without saying goodbye. When anything further starts to materialize, Sam becomes worried that his current attraction would end up dead like Jessica. Like Dean, Sam is too self-centered to consider the feelings of her girlfriends as he discards them. In the end, Sam portrays a similar lack of regard for women's emotions as Dean, only he seems less aware of it. By portraying the protagonists' love lives in this fashion, *Supernatural* reproduces the tropes of the road narrative genre by highlighting male individuality and autonomy.

5.1.2 The damsel in distress and the nurturer

The damsel in distress trope is regularly reproduced through women in Sam and Dean's quests. As the character type is rather one-dimensional and easy to identify, I will only concentrate on one recurring character, Jo Harvelle. Jo contains the connotations of fertility and young age often associated in the trope, replicated for example in Angela Carter's (1987) short story *The Snow Child* (Clamp 2018: 1).

Jo is initially introduced as Dean's love interest when they meet in *Supernatural* #2.2. Jo is a bartender at her mother Ellen Harvelle's Roadhouse, a common meeting-place for hunters. On a side note, the Roadhouse is another reminder of *Supernatural's* connection with the Western, as it resembles a typical Western-style saloon, always accompanied with slow acoustic guitar music. Surprisingly, Jo is one the only characters Dean does not try to charm with his "bad boy" persona, because he is too devastated with the death of his father, John, which occurred in the previous episode. Therefore, Jo is the first woman in the series to see the "real" Dean, and becomes attracted to him, stating: "Most hunters come through that door think they can get in my pants with some pizza, a six pack, and side one of Zeppelin IV" (Jo Harvelle, *Supernatural* #2.2). Akin to gothic tradition, their relationship is about repressing their feelings, yet they constantly explore their mutual attraction. Eventually, Dean and Jo agree that they should not pursue a relationship: as it would be "wrong place, wrong time".

Similar to Snow Child, Jo's age and fertility are emphasized in the series. It is implied that Jo is too young to be a hunter, yet Dean feels attracted to her. Ellen is very protective of Jo and does not want her to become a hunter. Jo's character arc then leads her into becoming a victim in *Supernatural* #2.6, when she secretly joins Sam and Dean on a hunt against her mother's wishes. In this episode, the monster is the ghost of H. H. Holmes, often recognized as America's first serial killer. Eventually the ghost captures Jo, and she becomes an object of rescue for Sam and Dean. Jo becoming a victim of a ghost from the 19th century is a fitting choice, as it emphasizes the use of the gothic damsel in distress trope. Despite the promise of sexual reward for Dean, nothing comes out of their relationship. This is consistent with his character's inability to connect with women on an emotional level.

Moreover, *Supernatural* also explores the fetish of incest with Jo, as her mother Ellen becomes a replacement mother figure for the Winchester brothers. Perhaps because the writers of the series did not want to pursue this development further, Jo is written out of the series by blaming John Winchester for the death of Jo's father. Moreover, positive portrayals of femininity in gothic fiction are often assigned a role of a caretaker or nurturer. Ellen is the most prominent and positively portrayed female character in the first

five seasons. While she makes recurring appearances throughout seasons 2 to 4, her role is often reduced to a voice on the phone, so she does not disrupt the male buddy dynamic. Ellen was likely introduced as a necessary character for plot development, as the brothers often call her when needing information or emotional counselling. In doing so, the series portrays Ellen as motherly, nurturing and almost entirely positive character. By providing the brothers information about the lore and the hunter community, Ellen symbolizes the mother they never had. Essentially, the orphaned and disempowered Sam and Dean replace their mother Mary with Ellen. Eventually, like most significant women in *Supernatural,* Ellen is killed off, forcing Sam and Dean to relive the painful memory of their mother's death. Therefore, the series revisits the motif of broken family (see 2.1) to justify further male individualism. Furthermore, the tendency of killing off all the women conveys misogyny.

5.1.3 The gothic predator

Starting from the series pilot episode (#1.1), *Supernatural* is consistently using the gothic monstrous sexual predator type as a model for female characters. This archetype is derived from characters such as the "snaky villainess" of *Lair of the White Worm*; the vampire women in Dick Donovan's *The Woman with the 'Oily Eyes'* (1899); E. F. Benson's *The Room in the Tower* (1912) and *Mrs. Amworth* (1922); Arthur Conan Doyle's *John Barrington Cowles* (1886); the phantom seductresses of Vernon Lee's *Amour Dure* (1890) (Hurley 2002: 201).

Moreover, the pilot episode is also extremely persistent in tying the road and the gothic together. The uncanny is visited through five popular forms in *Supernatural* #1.1: repetition, animism, uncertain sexual identity, silence and death (Bennett & Royle 2004: 36-37). Interestingly, all the appliances of these forms are tied to the road, reinforcing the symbiosis of the road narrative and gothic in the series.

In their first hunt, Sam and Dean investigate a series of murders in Jericho, California. They soon realize that the murders are connected to a local urban legend of a murdered woman who has turned into a ghost. According to the legend, she hitchhikes in her ghostly

form and kills anyone who would let her in their car. Thus, the evoking of the uncanny in the form of death is tied to the road. The motif of death is reinforced when Sam and Dean identify the ghost as woman called Constance Welch, who killed herself after her children drowned.

Sam and Dean then begin to figure out why the woman turned into a vengeful spirit – they learn that Constance actually killed her own children because his husband had an affair. Here, Constance is first conceived as a gothic predator type. She then committed suicide as she could not live with herself, and now preys on the road. Constance is portrayed as a seductress in a very minimal dress, killing any man that would cheat on their significant other with her. The form of sexual identity is addressed with Constance, as she is a ghost, and her silence and repetition further amplify the uncanny in her appearance, as she will only repeat: “Take me home”.

At one point of the investigation, Sam and Dean are separated. Before they have a chance to figure out a way to exorcise Constance, she appears to Sam in the Impala. However, Sam is able to resist Constance’s seduction. The uncanny is then visited by using animism of the Chevrolet Impala, as Constance controls it with her ghostly powers. As the car is a very important symbol of freedom in the road narrative, losing control over it is a powerful theme, and especially daunting for Sam and Dean. Constance guides the Impala to the house where she drowned her children and forcefully kisses Sam, satisfying her need for a motive to kill Sam. As Constance attacks Sam, Dean arrives at the scene to save the day, and Constance’s spirit disappears as she embraces her children’s ghosts.
Furthermore, the character archetype of the female predator is extremely prevalent in seasons four and three of *Supernatural*, especially embodied by two recurring characters, Bela Talbot and Ruby. As they are portrayed in very similar fashion to Constance Welch, I will not analyze their characters further.

5.2 *Supernatural* and the Issue of Race

This sub-chapter contains a brief overview on how African Americans have been represented in film, continuing into a discussion of the portrayal of race in *Supernatural*. Previously, Wright (2008) and Ireland (2013) have discussed racialized conservative leanings in the series. I am going to provide further arguments for considering some of the subtext of the first five seasons as an affirmation of conservative stances that emphasize racial differences. I will first discuss how *Supernatural* is inherently racialized, as the protagonists hunt humanoid monsters that are deemed inferior. The second part of my discussion is centered around the first two important characters portrayed by black actors in *Supernatural*: Gordon Walker and Jake Talley. More accurately, I will present a discussion on how their interactions with Sam and Dean project a certain racist stereotype, the *Brutal Black Buck*.

According to Ireland (2013: 16), by embracing the gothic, *Supernatural* channels a return to the past, revisiting the "repressed and denied" secrets that the society does not want to admit exist. As employed in the series, the American gothic tradition "unearths the racism of the past "(Ireland 2013: 16). Ireland (2013: 16) also observes that despite the arguably racist undertone of *Supernatural*, the writers have taken great care in portraying Sam and Dean as open-minded and non-racist blue-collar protagonists. Ireland explains that this is achieved in *Supernatural* #1.13, where Sam and Dean exorcise a racist spirit. Moreover, the episode shows Dean visiting an African American ex-girlfriend, Cassie. The couple is shown reigniting their love for a moment. Therefore, the series relieves the hypermasculine Dean of any doubt of racism.

However, this does not devoid the series of racist undertones. Ireland (2013: 16) points out that by placing the spirit in the history, the episode has a conservative leaning, suggesting that racism is a thing of the past. The racist spirit was born in the 1960s, when a ruthless racist murderer called Cyrus Dorian was killed by a Cassie's father, Martin, in an act of self-defense.

Wright (2008: 23) has identified similar tendencies in another episode, *Supernatural* #2.8. In this episode Sam and Dean investigate a series of mysterious deaths they identify as the work of Hell-Hounds. The Hounds are collecting souls of people who traded them for

success in life. As Wright (2008: 23) points out, white characters traded their souls for wealth and success in life, whereas the black characters focus on "cultural rather than material" success.

Moreover, superiority of the human race over other species in *Supernatural* be seen as an analogy for the constant post 9-11 War on Terror. Portraying other species of creatures as inferior to humans reinforces the racialized good-versus-evil setting, reflecting the mindset of imposing a superior culture upon others. Sam, Dean and other hunters use symbolic cultural, ethical and racial superiority as justification for killing anything that is deemed *evil*. The ethical dilemma of killing monsters is presented and dismissed many times during *Supernatural*, often mediated through vampires, who are humanlike in appearance and intellectually, but are made evil by their human blood diet.

For example, *Supernatural* #1.20 tells a story of a vampire hunt. The vampires are portrayed wearing Goth fashion, all-black clothes, dark hair and makeup. Their threat towards the white America is amplified by their choice of victims, the gothic-stereotype of helpless and sexualized woman. The vampires are in possession of the most powerful gun in the *Supernatural* universe, the Colt, which the Winchesters need for killing Azazel. At the conclusion of the episode, there is a Mexican standoff between the vampires and the Winchesters, (a reminder of the narrative's connection with the Spaghetti Western). In the situation the leader of the vampires, Luther, overpowers Sam and threatens to break his neck if they do not let him and his kind go. Sam and Dean's father John becomes the solution to the situation, as he wakes up from a previous fight. At the conclusion of the scene Luther screams: "You people! We have as much right to live as you!" to which John Winchester, in his macho style, replies to: "I don't think so." and shoots the vampire dead with the Colt. As Luther collapses to the ground his vampire family becomes frantic and leaves the scene with his body, while the camera shifts to John, whose expression is a pleased smile. In an alternative reading, this story and the final exchange could be used as a suggestion of John's overly violent nature. However, the entire episode is spent portraying the vampires as unquestionably evil monsters. Therefore, they lack any positive qualities which would redeem them – justifying John's merciless behavior.

5.2.1 The Brutal Black Buck amplified with doubling

The way the black population of America is discussed in media is innately tied to its history. Starting from slavery, African Americans have been dehumanized by disregarding their "feelings, emotions and sensibilities" (Luther, Ringer Lepre & Clark, 2012: 57). As time has passed, portrayals of the Black population have become more accurate, but the situation still appears to demand further progress to provide fair and unbiased representation (Luther, Ringer Lepre & Clark, 2012: 78). Arguably, *Supernatural* operates in the continuum of displaying African Americans based on racial stereotypes.

According to Oliver (2003: 3), race plays a role in mistakenly identifying individuals as hostile or dangerous. Keenan (1975: 378), explains that Donald Bogle's classic work on racial stereotypes in media, *Toms, Coons, Mulattoes, Mammies & Bucks: An Interpretive History of Blacks in American Film* (1971), encompasses this phenom. Bogle describes "*the Brutal [black] Buck"* as a hypermasculine, aggressive and violent black man: "Bucks are always big, baaaaaaddd… …, oversexed and savage, violent and frenzied as they lust for white flesh." (Bogle qtd in Keenan 1975: 378).

The image of an African American as a Brutal Black Buck was first used by D.W. Griffith in *The Birth of a Nation* (1915) (Laufs 2013: 54). According to Laufs, this stereotype of a violent and overall evil black man was presented as a threat to the white society. Moreover, the stereotype can be divided into the "Black Brute" and the "Black Buck" (Laufs 2013: 54). The Black Brute conveys the black man as a violent and physically powerful beast, who needs to be tamed, whereas the Black Buck is a violent hypersexual threat to white women. However, I will only use the generic term "Buck" that contains both these definitions.

As Ireland (2014: 17) has noted, *Supernatural* explores a classic gothic motif, the *doppelgänger,* in its storytelling. The doppelgänger is a classic gothic fiction motif of repetition, regarded as one of the forms of conveying the uncanny (Bennett & Royle 2004: 35) The doppelgänger can be employed in a variety of symbolical or literal manners. In

the episodes in this discussion, it is used by assuming similarity between two characters and highlighting their difference. I will argue how the impact of the stereotype of the Black Buck in *Supernatural* is amplified with a systematic use of doubling in its portrayal of the series three most prominent black characters. Both characters discussed in this analysis have a white double: the series asserts similarity between Dean and Gordon as well as Sam and Jake.

Bennett & Royle (2004: 209) discuss how otherness can be in fact be displayed more effectively by asserting likeness: "If you say that one thing is the opposite of another, you are at the same time asserting their mutual dependence, in that it is pointless to contrast two things from different categories". (2004: 209) Therefore, a comparison between things that are similar can be more powerful.

5.2.2 Gordon Walker

Gordon Walker is the first prominent black character to appear in *Supernatural*. Gordon is introduced in episode #2.3. He is a masterful hunter who specializes in vampires, being a black vampire slayer in the spirit of Blade, the anti-hero of the Marvel Comics *Blade* film trilogy (1998-2004). As with Blade, Gordon's aesthetic difference with the vampires is highlighted because the vampires have extremely pale skin. Sam and Dean first meet Gordon while tracking a vampire nest. Even their initial encounter in an alleyway envisages Gordon as a threat, as he lurks in the shadows, following Sam and Dean. The brothers notice that someone is tailing them, and they ambush Gordon to question him. They are eventually satisfied with Gordon's explanation for tracking them as he reveals that he is a hunter like them. Gordon is after the same vampire nest Sam and Dean were trying to locate and insists on working alone. As we see Gordon leave to hunt the nest, the first instance of doubling occurs: he has a classic muscle car reminiscent of Dean's dear Impala. Despite Gordon's wish to work alone, in the following scene Gordon is shown being overpowered by the vampires and Sam and Dean rescue him from sure death. As a token of gratitude, Gordon offers to buy the brothers a round in the local bar. As Gordon, Sam and Dean socialize in the bar in the following scene, Gordon is assumed as Dean's double. Gordon shares a story about how he began hunting – when he was 18,

his sister was killed by vampires. Dean identifies with Gordon's personal loss as the brothers lost their father in episode #2.1 Furthermore, Gordon explains how he uses the memory of his sister as motivation:

Dean:	Really, I have this…
Gordon:	Hole inside you? And it just gets bigger and bigger and darker and darker … Good, you can use it, keeps you hungry. Trust me, there's plenty out there' needs' killing and this will help you do it. Dean, it's not a crime to need your job.

(*Supernatural* #2.3)

However, Sam is still suspicious about Gordon's true nature. Gordon's likeness with the violence and aggressiveness contained in the stereotype of the Buck is established when Sam calls Ellen Harvelle to inquire additional information about Gordon:

Sam**:**	I thought you said he was a good hunter.
Ellen:	And Hannibal Lecter is a good psychiatrist. Look, he is dangerous to everyone and everything around him. If he is working on a job, you boys just let him handle it and move on.

(*Supernatural* #2.3)

Notably, Ellen compares Gordon to Hannibal Lecter (*Silence of the Lambs* (1991) and its sequels), famous for his cannibalism and sadism. While Gordon is not a sexual predator as associated with the stereotype of the Buck, his sadistic tendencies fulfil the promise of "lust for white flesh" (Bogle quoted in Keenan: 378).

After Sam's phone call, the next scene is back in the bar, where Gordon expands on his philosophy and further highlights his supposed likeness with Dean: "You know why I love this life? It's all black and white. There's no maybe. [You] find the bad thing – kill it. See, most people spend their lives in shades of grey. Is this right? Is that wrong? Not us […] You and me, we were born to do this, it's in our blood." Gordon's dealing with absolutes is another sign of projecting otherness. At this point it is important to note that Sam and Dean follow a certain ethical code in their hunting – they only kill monsters that are a threat to humans. The vampires in this episode are different from others as they only drink animal blood. Therefore, according to the hunter ethics, they should be let live.

After Gordon's arduous speech, Dean starts to question that code and is adamant that all vampires are evil and should be exterminated. Meanwhile, Sam has been abducted by the vampires, and Sam discovers that these vampires are not killers.

After the vampires let Sam go, he proceeds to explain to Dean the true nature of the vampires. Dean is hesitant to accept that any vampire could resist the urge to kill. Dean is clearly affected by his conversation with Gordon but gives Sam the benefit of the doubt. As Sam and Dean are having their discussion, Gordon has gone hunting the pacifist vampires. He is shown torturing them for information, revealing the sadistic side that Ellen warned Sam about. Furthermore, Gordon reveals that his sister was not actually killed by vampires but turned into one. Actually, Gordon was the one who killed his sister: "Killed my sister… That filthy fang didn't kill my sister. It turned her, made her one of them. So, I hunted it down, and killed her myself." Furthermore, Gordon reveals that he knew that the vampires are not killers, but wanted to hunt them anyway, breaking the hunter code. Dean beats Gordon in the ensuing fist fight, preventing him from killing the vampires. During their dialogue in the fight, Gordon is cemented as a Brutal Black Buck, highlighting his sadistic nature:

> Gordon: Come on Dean, we're on the same side here.
> Dean: I don't think so, you sadistic bastard. […]
> Gordon: You're not like your brother. You're a killer like me.
> (*Supernatural* #2.3)

As Dean ties Gordon to a chair, he humiliates him by taunting him and knocking him out, displaying unnecessary violence which is portrayed as a minor and acceptable act. Dean's misstep into violent behaviour in this episode is dismissed hastily, and the Brothers ride their Impala into the sunset, reminding the viewer of the road narrative. Capewell describes the tendency of excusing white men behaving violently in road narratives in her discussion of *On the Road*: "Regardless of the rebellion present in the novel through drug use, violence, and poor decision-making, *On the Road* still upholds that white men are allowed to make these decisions and still be sanctified by society and the legal system" (Capewell, 2015: 5).

Gordon's violent nature and threat to the white protagonists is taken even more seriously in his subsequent appearances. In *Supernatural* #2.10 Gordon learns about Sam's psychic abilities (see chapter 2) and becomes convinced Sam is a tool of demons, therefore starting to hunt him. Sam and Dean eventually best him, and Gordon is captured by the police as they discover his weapons stash. In his next encounter with Sam and Dean in #3.7, Gordon is further dehumanized as he has been turned into a vampire. Gordon's problematic story in *Supernatural* ends with a graphic execution, as Sam decapitates him with a razor wire.

5.2.3 Jake Talley

The next significant black character in *Supernatural,* Jake Talley, appears in episodes #2.20 and #2.21. The episodes deal with the conclusion of the Azazel storyline, where Sam and Dean seek revenge for their dead mother. Jake is a soldier who has been abducted to America from service duty by Azazel. As with Gordon, the series uses doubling to associate Jake with Sam. Jake's demeanor is similar to Sam – he is tall, calm and physically imposing. Akin to the first conjuring of the doppelganger in *Supernatural* #2.3, Sam and Jake share a bonding moment where they share their life stories. Furthermore, like Sam, Jake is one of Azazel's *special children* [a fandom term for children Azazel fed his blood in infancy (Supernaturalwiki)]. All of the special children have supernatural powers as a result of the demon blood. The series turns back into the stereotype of the Buck with Jake's power, superhuman strength. Jake is the only black special child and his power is different from the others - they all have some variety of psychic power, for example telekinesis or mind control.

Azazel's intention is to have the special children fight each other in the style of *Hunger Games*, to have a sole survivor. According to Azazel's plan, the surviving special child will open a *Devil's Gate* and release all the demons of Hell on Earth. Eventually, Sam and Jake are the two surviving special children, but Sam refuses to fight Jake. Jake is hesitant to trust Sam, but Sam tries to convince him by dropping his knife to the ground. At this moment Jake reveals his true nature, becoming the Buck, and suddenly punches Sam. Even though Jake has superhuman strength, Sam miraculously bests him in a fight,

and despite Jake was hostile towards him, Sam decides to let Jake live. As Sam leaves Jake lying on the ground, Jake recovers and manages to stab Sam lethally, fulfilling Azazel's plan.

As discussed in chapter 2, Sam is then resurrected as a result of Dean's deal with a demon, and he returns to confront Jake in a Mexican standoff scene. At this point Jake has fully succumbed to the evil of Azazel and learned the power of mind control. Jake taunts Sam but does not realize that Sam is resistant to his powers. Ultimately, Sam shoots Jake. Jake's character arc is not very long, but Sam's death by his hand sends a powerful message. In a series constantly flirting with death, a rare black man is the one killing one of the two protagonists for the first time. Jake's lethal blow also has cowardly connotations as Jake stabs an unsuspecting Sam in the back.

In conclusion, portraying the rare black characters of *Supernatural* as adaptations of the stereotype of the Buck injects the series with a racist undertone. The pattern is only amplified by the use of doubling, as each black character has a direct, good, double, establishing that Gordon and Jake are the opposite, evil. Moreover, Gordon and Jake and betray the role of a hero. In their own ways, they should be guardians of the American way: Gordon is a *hunter*, Jake an American soldier. The stereotype-influenced portrayal of important black characters is consistent with Wright's and Ireland's analysis of the series' racist tendencies.

5.3 Religion in *Supernatural*

In this sub-section, I am going to argue how the portrayal of religion in *Supernatural* is different from the strikingly conservative attitudes regarding gender and race. As *Supernatural* is sprinkled with religious themes, the depiction of religion in the series is a topic that has sparked previous academic discussion. Contrary to my perspective, Ireland (2013) has argued that like gender and race, the series' portrayal of religion sides with conservative values. The discussion will focus on how expanding the scope of episodes up to season five can set a different tone for the interpretations on specific

episodes that Ireland concentrates on. This is not done in any capacity to undermine Ireland's research - his arguments are undoubtedly sound and valuable. However, the episodes that discuss faith and religion attain different connotations by placing them against the entire story of the first five seasons.

As Vermeer (2014: 18) has identified, despite the prominence of themes derived from Christian tradition, the theology of the of the show is inherently humanist. I am going to pursue this direction in my discussion. Furthermore, I will discuss how Sam and Dean's self-absorbed individualism, which is a key feature of road narratives, (discussed in sub-chapter 2.1), only amplifies the series' more liberal take on religion. More specifically, *Supernatural* takes the traditional good and evil setting between Heaven and Hell and alters it so that both, in their own ways, are enemies of the human race. In doing so, the writers approach a humanistic view of the world.

As mentioned in the material overview, Christian tradition is the most important source for religious themes in *Supernatural*. As road narratives are stories of America, it is fitting that Christianity defines the religious mythology of the series. In 2004, a year before *Supernatural* was launched on television, "94 per cent of Americans said they believed in God, 63 per cent said they belonged to a church of some kind, and 44 per cent attended a weekly church service. Another 59 per cent believed religion was very important in their lives, and answered their problems" (Cambell & Kean 2006: 106). Other statistics, such as the surveys published by ARIS (American Religious Identification Survey) support the fact that the United States of America is a country in which religion has a profound impact on everyday life, and that Christianity is the dominant branch of religion (Kosmin & Keysar 2009: 2).

Religion and the idea of freedom have been essential parts of the United States of American since the creation of the country. (Campbell & Kean 2006: 107). The two are connected to each other in a bizarre symbiosis, as religion tends to apply a strict set of ethical rules to follow for its members. As discussed earlier, *Supernatural* is very consistent with idolization of freedom, therefore suggesting an opposition between the two.

Today, religion affects politics and American culture. This is an interesting development, because founding fathers of the United of States of America actually chose to separate church and state from each other by declaring religious freedom in the First Amendment (Campbell & Kean 2006: 107). United States have developed in a distinctively different way from other modernized countries, because the other societies in which religion has maintained a significant role have had religion tied to the state. In contrast, most European countries have become secularized under the modernization process. (Campbell & Kean 2006: 108).

As is, the Christian tradition is very strong in America and is tied to conservative values. Ireland (2013: 18) makes a valuable point by noting that the prominence of the Christian mythology in *Supernatural* lets the American audience identify with the story. Moreover, Ireland argues that *Supernatural* deposits its heroes as Christian crusaders by having them use Christian symbols such as holy water and the crucifix to fight evil. While Ireland is correct, presumably in a fundamentalist mindset even portraying these things on television would be considered blasphemous. As I will argue, considering the portrayal of religion and faith in *Supernatural* as positive will prove hard to do.

5.3.1 Discussion of faith

The following discussion will cover how discussion of faith is constant in the first five seasons of the series. It is a curious topic, as Sam and Dean constantly deal with death around them and are also aware of the existence of ghosts and other undead creatures. Sam is assumed to have faith in God, and Dean is a skeptic. Therefore, the series is consistent with road narrative genre's fascination with freedom by enabling that faith is a personal choice, highlighting individualism in decision-making, but also promoting religious freedom. The buildup for this dynamic begins in *Supernatural* #1.12, when Sam asks a hesitant Dean to pray for a dying woman:

Sam**:** Maybe it's time to have a little faith, Dean.

Dean: You know what I've got faith in? Reality. Knowing what's really going on.
Sam: How can you be a skeptic? With the things we see everyday?
Dean: Exactly. We see them, we know they're real.
Sam: But if you know evil's out there, how can you not believe good's out there, too?
Dean: Because I've seen what evil does to good people.
(Supernatural #1.12)

Moreover, the entire episode undermines the concept of divine intervention, as the monster Sam and Dean are hunting is a *reaper* who is controlled by a faith healer. In the lore of *Supernatural,* reapers are creatures who collect the souls of dead individuals, usually portrayed as neutral entities. However, this reaper is controlled by a local faith healer practicing black magic. As the faith healer saves someone, the reaper will collect a soul from someone else. Therefore, this this episode strongly implies that faith healers are frauds that take advantage of their followers.

The next discussion of their religious beliefs occurs in *Supernatural* #2.13 when Sam and Dean investigate murders committed by ordinary people, claiming they were guided by an angel. Sam is again portrayed as the believer, and Dean the non-believer, as Dean is quick to shut down any possibility of an angel intervening in their world. The supposed angel is revealed to be the ghost of Father Gregory, a priest who was shot on the stairs of a local church. Since his death, Father Gregory has haunted the area of the church, and genuinely believes he is an angel. Moreover, he has been mandating kills on people who confessed crimes to him when he was still alive. The brothers learn this as Father Gregory appears to Sam and tells him to kill a man who is about to attack a woman. Eventually another priest, Father Reynolds, says the Last Rites to Gregory's ghost, releasing his spirit to rest. However, the man Sam was told to kill is soon shown attacking a woman on the street, and Dean starts to chase him until he crashes with a truck and dies. Dean and Sam then discuss their faith in a motel room:

Sam: You were right. It wasn't an angel. It was Gregory […]
Sam: I don't know, Dean, I just, I wanted to believe ... so badly, ah ... It's so damn hard to do this, what we do. You're all alone, you know? And ... there's so much evil out there in the world,

Dean, I feel like I could drown in it. And when I think about my destiny, when I think about how I could end up...
Dean: Yeah, well, don't worry about that. All right? I'm watching out for you.
Sam: Yeah, I know you are. But you're just one person, Dean. And I needed to think that there was something else, watching too, you know? Some higher power. Some greater good.
(*Supernatural* #2.13)

Arguably, Sam craves spirituality because of his disconnection from his family, while Dean avoids any thoughts of it because he wants to avoid the memories of painful losses. The events of this episode shake Sam's faith, but he still remains a believer. However, it is a step towards Sam discarding his faith in higher powers and symbolically taking control of his own fate, promoting the individualistic mindset commonly found in road narratives. Meanwhile, Dean's reply affirms the buddy dynamic that dominates the road narrative.

5.3.2 The mystery of God

The idea of God is first brought up as Dean looks for an answer for his sudden resurrection from Hell, after his soul was collected as his end of the bargain with demon (see 2.1). Dean summons the angel Castiel with an ancient ritual. This is the first instance of seeing angels in the world of *Supernatural*, and the skeptic Dean questions Castiel:

Dean: What … … are you?
Castiel: I'm an angel of the Lord.
Dean: Get the hell out of here, there's no such thing.
Castiel: This is your problem, Dean, you have no faith.
(*Supernatural* #4.1)

At the conclusion of this dialogue, Dean asks Castiel: "Why'd you do it?" to which Castiel replies: "Because God commanded it." This is revealed to be a lie in *Supernatural* #5.16, as God has not been in command of Heaven since Lucifer's fall. Instead, it was the command of Archangel Michael who wants Dean to participate in starting the apocalypse. In Christian tradition, especially American evangelist theology, God is perceived as an active deity. People around America pray daily for his guidance and help. The God in

Supernatural's Armageddon storyline is the opposite, a passive entity. In *Supernatural* #5.16, Sam and Dean seek for God's help in stopping the looming Armageddon as a last resort. The mission is launched by Castiel, who explains that angels are rumoring that heaven's gardener, Joshua, talks to God. After an eventful quest, Sam and Dean finally reach Joshua. While the audience with Joshua confirms that God does indeed exist, God is presented as an absent father, a disinterested bystander. Joshua explains that God does not care about the possible Armageddon:

> Joshua: Actually, he has a message for you. Back off.
> Dean: What?
> Joshua: He knows already. Everything you want to tell him.
> Dean: But…
> Joshua: He knows what the angels are doing. He knows that the Apocalypse has begun. He just doesn't think it's his problem.
> Dean: Not his problem?
> […]
> Dean: But he can stop it. He can stop all of it.
> Joshua: I suppose he could, but he won't.
> Dean: Why not?
> Joshua: Why does he allow evil in the first place? You could drive yourself nuts asking questions like that.
> Dean: So he's just going to sit back and watch the world burn?
> Joshua: I know how important this was to you, Dean. I'm sorry.
> (*Supernatural* #5.16)

As is evident from Dean and Joshua's interaction, *Supernatural* brings up many of the common problems of Christianity and an active deity. Most importantly, if God exists, why is there evil in the world? Thus, the undermining of Christian theology in *Supernatural* is arguably systematic and suggests that people should be the authors of their own fate.

5.4 Parking the Impala – The Road Disappears

In seasons 6 up to 12 of *Supernatural,* the writers have seemingly begun to deviate from the abundance of conservatively motivated portrayals of racial and gender stereotypes

that are prominent in the first five seasons. Coincidentally, *Supernatural* becomes less of a road narrative and more of an American Gothic and mythology-inspired drama from season six onwards. A gradual shift in genre is actually an expected development for a series that has currently been on air for 14 years: "the cumulative effect of repeated tweaking of the format and content amounts to a change in genre more finely grained, and more readily available, viewing figures have the effect of influencing content, format and ultimately, genre" (Neale & Turner 2001: 6). Moreover, similar tendencies have been identified in other long-spanning road narratives, for example, the original Mad Max trilogy (1979-1985) (Falconer 2001: 249). This sub-chapter has a focus on identifying new characters and motifs and how they mandate the change in the sub-text of the series.

To achieve this cumulative shift, the creative minds behind *Supernatural* have introduced more important characters belonging to social, ethnical and cultural minorities. Doing so diminishes the hegemony of white masculinity that is prevalent in road narratives. Moreover, the portrayal of religion in season 11 begins to undermine Christian tradition even further by introducing God and his sister (yes, God has a sister in *Supernatural*) Amara to the mythology of the series. These developments collide strongly with the early seasons and their embracement of conservative cultural values that is commonplace in road narratives.

As discussed previously, Corrigan's first definition of the road narrative genre (see 2.1), the breakdown of the family unit and a contempt of the domestic life (see 4.3) are integral patterns in road narratives. *Supernatural* abandons the disapproval of a physical home in season 8, when Sam and Dean locate a bunker that belonged to the Men of Letters, a defunct secret order of elite hunters, some 50 years before their time. The bunker symbolizes a new-found feeling of security previously only found on the road inside the Impala – the bunker contains immense amounts of research on supernatural beings and is protected with warding against angels, demons and other threats. One of the only surviving members of Men of Letters describes the bunker to Sam and Dean: "It is warded against any evil ever created. It is the supernatural motherlode. If knowledge is power, then this is the most powerful place on Earth." (Larry Ganem, *Supernatural* #8.12).

As Sam and Dean settle into the bunker, it becomes a regular setting for some scenes that were previously set on the road. For example, at the conclusion of many episodes, the final scenes show Sam and Dean laying in in their beds inside the bunker. This is in stark contrast with the Western-influenced driving into the sunset scenes that dominate the first five seasons. The Impala is not completely abandoned as a safe space - many episodes still contain dialogue scenes from the car. However, the importance of the Impala as an enabler for Sam and Dean's quests is also lessened, as their new allies, such as Castiel and the petty and spiteful demon Crowley, can teleport them long distances if needed. Moreover, the fact that Sam and Dean can work together with a demon undermines the good versus evil -setting that is prominent in the first five seasons.

5.4.1 God appears

The inclusion of God into the cast of *Supernatural* develops the humanistic view on religion (described in the previous sub-section) even further. God finally reveals himself to Sam and Dean in *Supernatural* #11.20. The portrayal of God in this episode is even harsher than considering him as an absent father. He is portrayed as a self-absorbed and disinterested bystander, and it is revealed that he was in fact aware of the entire scope of events in the series, including the advent of Armageddon. Therefore, *Supernatural* ridicules the concept of an all-powerful deity that is prevalent in Judeo-Christian tradition. Consequently, this portrayal of God further alienates the series from a conservative standpoint on religion.

The storyline of God and his sister begins in the finale of season 10, *Supernatural* #10.23. As a result of killing Death, one of the Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse in the Book of Revelations, Sam and Dean release God's sister, The Darkness (also known as Amara) from a prison to which God confined her many millennia's ago. Amara lays destruction on the world throughout the course of season 11, as she wants revenge on God. However, Amara is not completely villainous, as her motive for destruction is that she wants to force God out of hiding. After trying everything in their power, even forming a temporary alliance with Lucifer, the Winchester's are forced to concede that they cannot stop Amara. As Sam and Dean are waiting for Amara to unleash her full wrath and destroy the

universe, God finally reacts and reconciles with his sister. Before God's arrival on Earth, the series explains that he has been watching and ignoring the events, masquerading as Chuck Shurley, a prophet of God. Chuck is an important character in the Armageddon storyline during seasons 4 and 5. Closely following viewers would be able to pick up hints about Chuck's true nature, as he is posing as a writer who has had visions about Sam and Dean's stories, and created a word-to-word book series about them. The series keeps portraying him as the eccentric writer during his introduction. When God first reveals himself, he has abducted his former scribe, the angel Metatron. The scenes are set in God's personal hideout, his favorite jazz club. God's love for the jazz clubs, his mundane activities and portraying him as a writer reminds the growing-up story of Sal Paradise in Kerouac's *On the Road*.

Metatron**:**	So, what you been up to?
God**:**	Oh, I've been super busy. Yeah, I traveled.
Metatron**:**	Mmm…
God**:**	I started a blog. Mostly just pictures of cats.
Metatron**:**	Oh.
God**:**	They're so cute.
God**:**	And uh, Oh, I signed up for Snapchat. A-And I started a new series of books. Yeah. *Revolution*. But, I don't think it's going anywhere.
Metatron**:**	Why did you put on the Chuck suit in the first place? How did that make any sense to you?
God**:**	I like front row seats. You know, I figured I'd hide out in plain sight. You know, plus, you know, acting is fun.

(*Supernatural* #11.20)

God's absolute disregard for the fate of mankind is highlighted in this discussion. As the series' protagonists have saved the world from the brink of destruction multiple times, God has been blogging about cats and snapchatting. Additionally, God's act as Chuck portrays a more sinister side, as he was fully aware of what was happening, but chose not to intervene, instead taking great pleasure in watching the events unfold and acting along. Moreover, God reveals why he needs Metatron, he wants editorial advice for his autobiography. In the ensuing conversation about God's autobiography, the series quite openly criticizes the biblical story of creation:

Metatron: Details are what make a story great. This is lacking in some details. Like all of them.
God: In the beginning, there was me. Boom – detail. And what a grabber. I mean, I'm hooked, and I was there.
(*Supernatural* #11.20)

Moreover, God is apparently tolerant of non-traditional gender roles, as he reveals to Metatron that while disguising as Chuck, he has had both girl- and boyfriends. By revealing this, the series deviates away from conservative stances on gender. Furthermore, this affirms a more liberal take on Christianity, where gender and sexual minorities are tolerated.

God**:** I did some great stuff as Chuck. I mean, I-I told you about my blog.
Metatron**:** Oh. Oh, right, yeah.
God**:** Right.
Metatron**:** Your uh… your cat-pic blog.
God**:** Right. They're super cute.
Metatron**:** Yeah.
God**:** So, there's that. And, uh, I traveled a lot, you know?
Metatron**:** Right.
God**:** And, uh, I dated. Yeah, I had some girlfriends.
Metatron**:** Mm.
God**:** Had a few boyfriends.
Metatron**:** Oh.
(*Supernatural* #11.20)

God's dialogue with Metatron also initially narrates an antihumanist philosophy. Antihumanism is a branch of posthumanism which criticizes the value of human beings (Ferrando 2013: 31-32). At first, God is disappointed at his creations and claims that instead of the human race, nature is his greatest achievement.

God**:** Nature? Divine. *Human* nature – toxic.
Metatron**:** They do like blowing stuff up.
God**:** Yeah. And the worst part – they do it in my name. And then they come crying to me, asking me to forgive, to fix things. Never taking any responsibility.
Metatron**:** What about *your* responsibility?
(*Supernatural* #11.20)

Metatron's follow-up question starts a process of change in God, and after Metatron vehemently praises the mankind, God finally reveals himself to Sam and Dean. Eventually, God reconciles with Amara, preventing the apocalypse. In the process, God accepts that despite mankind is flawed, he should be proud of its perseverance. Thus, God begins to drop his antihumanist stances in favour of anthropocentric humanism, accepting that humans are the pinnacle of life on Earth. As God prepares to leave Earth, Dean asks him: "What about us? What about Earth?" to which God replies: "Earth will be fine. It's got you… and Sam." (*Supernatural* #11.23) Even though God stops Amara from destroying the world, he makes it clear that the mankind must survive without him, as he is tired of their troubles. By referring to God's responsibility, Metatron also generally refers to the responsibility of an individual as in taking authority of your own fate, much like Sal Paradise eventually did in *On the Road*.

5.4.2 Changing views on gender and diversity

With the inclusion of positively portrayed gay minority characters, such as hacker girl Charlene "Charlie" Bradbury, the writers and producers seem to pursue a shift away from the conservative stances the series projects in earlier seasons, especially during the first five seasons analyzed in this thesis. Charlie performs heroic actions in helping Sam and Dean in their quests for retaining free will, but her flaws make her appear realistic and likeable. As such, this is a significant deviation from the first five seasons, where homoeroticism is demonized, and women are often reduced to temporary love interests or predatory villains.

Charlie makes her first appearance in *Supernatural* #7.20. According to Jessica Mason on the website themarysue.com, Charlie was universally liked among the fans of the show. Moreover, Mason states that because she was "the fandom: a plucky, queer, nerdy girl", she became an avatar for many fans of the series. While Charlie was eventually killed off rather unemphatically and her death is consistent with the way women are discarded in *Supernatural*, the character and her arc introduced a new kind of femininity into the series.

Charlie is initially introduced as a hacker for Richard Roman Enterprises, a big money corporation that has been hijacked by the Leviathan, a species of human-devouring monsters. While Charlie is a hacker, she also employs her hacking skills by illegally donating money from massive corporations to charities as a hobby. Charlie's past is ambiguous, but it is implied that her hacking has gotten her into trouble with the law. Charlie is eventually assigned to hack a file from Frank Devereaux's hard drive. Frank is Sam and Dean's personal paranoid hacker friend, who is gathering information on the Leviathan. Charlie's curiosity gets the best of her, and she eventually looks inside the stolen data, finding out the true nature of her employees. Preparing to flee into hiding, she is confronted by Sam and Dean, who manage to convince her to aid them in stopping the Leviathan. Her heroism is similar to Sam and Dean's, in that she is an outlaw who operates for the greater good.

However, Charlie is a more realistic character than Sam and Dean, as her hesitation almost gets the best of her many times. Because she must overcome her fears before she can save the world, her heroism is more genuine than that of the male protagonists. After defeating the Leviathan, Charlie becomes a recurring character, appearing many times until season 10, whenever the plots require her expertise.

6 CONCLUSIONS

As mentioned in the introduction, this study was initially conceived as a simple study of *Supernatural's* genre. After countless hours of watching the episodes and reading of previous research, I started to picture a more dedicated aim of discussing *Supernatural's* position in post-9/11 culture wars. The ample amount of cultural commentary in *Supernatural* soon started to guide the thesis towards this direction. Thus, the aim of this thesis was firstly to evaluate if the first five seasons of *Supernatural* can be considered as a modern road narrative and secondly to discuss the prominence of cultural commentary in the series. As discussed in this thesis, *Supernatural* is persistent in employment of the motifs, themes and cultural stances that are prominent in the road narrative.

The rising demand for the collective American feeling, as noted by Brigham (2015: 10-12), can be argued to be a motivator for bringing the road narrative back into the popular culture. As a product of the post 9/11 America, *Supernatural* seems to answer for this demand. While television can be a slightly different format of storytelling from film and literature, notably because of the slow progress of the storyline and increased potential of variance for themes, Supernatural is persistent in using the road narrative as a vehicle for telling its stories.

As pointed out in the discussion in chapter 3, mobility is a key factor in the American road narrative. Mobility is consistently maintained as a core motif in *Supernatural*, in turn producing an American feeling. Furthermore, the road is in a central position as a setting and a symbolic source of security for Sam and Dean. As the American Dream is closely associated with the aforementioned two features of the American collective identity, it is an important part of the road narrative. Logically, *Supernatural* also projects the ideal of the American Dream through its protagonists struggles to maintain free will in America.

Supernatural's first five seasons are especially closely tied to Jack Kerouac's *On the Road*. The protagonists of the two different adaptations of the road narrative are remarkably similar in their attitudes and lifestyles. Moreover, their love lives are mirror images of each other. Therefore, *Supernatural's* position on gender reflects the 1960s

classic by asserting conservative roles to women. As a result, women in *Supernatural* are often reduced to dispensable playthings for men, reinforcing white male hegemony.

Moreover, as discussed in chapter 5, *Supernatural* embraces the gothic genre. The series merges the classic road narrative tropes with the gothic tradition, which creates a unique interpretation of the road narrative. However, as a result of reproducing the tropes of both the road narrative and gothic horror, *Supernatural* conveys an unapologetically conservative mindset regarding gender roles and race.

Despite the abundance of Christian theology inspired themes, *Supernatural* does not arguably act as an advertisement for Christianity. By highlighting human choice in faith and depicting God as an absent father, the series steps away from the otherwise prevalent conservative mindset in this regard. Therefore, *Supernatural's* adaptation of conservative values disregards the importance of religion, portraying a more humanist variant. Perhaps this is a form of modern counter-cultural rebellion, much like what Jack Kerouac aspired to achieve with *On the Road* in the 1950s.

This is only amplified in seasons six to twelve, as *Supernatural* gradually moves away from the road narrative formula and its conservative image of America. The portrayal of God as a disinterested, manipulative and self-centered writer is an even harsher one than the absent father. Moreover, the series begins to accept social and gender minorities through positive portrayals of characters belonging to these groups. At the same time, *Supernatural* also drops some earlier connections to the prototypes of the road narrative genre. As mentioned, Sam and Dean accept a permanent home, thus decreasing the nomadic and erratic wandering around America.

Overall, the trends in the late seasons suggest that the series has evolved from a gothic television adaptation of Kerouac's *On the Road* into a road-trip themed gothic drama. In doing so, the series has considerably toned down the conservative attitudes it used to portray, but also lost some of its identity as a series that initially celebrated everything innately American. Despite the obvious sexism and racist undertones derived from embracing the formula of a product of the 1960s, *Supernatural*'s first five seasons form

a complete story about the American ideals of mobility, freedom and ultimately the American Dream.

The success and scope of the analysis in this thesis are debatable, as only a certain number of episodes can be analyzed in a study of this size. In 2019, *Supernatural* has been renewed for a 15th season, making the season span over 15 years in time. As so many episodes have been created, some degree of variety within the content is to be expected. Also, alternative readings for the episodes analyzed in this thesis are possible, as the series mythology and storytelling are influenced by an immense amount of inter-textual material. Even the topics studied in chapter 5 could be expanded on easily by including a larger amount of material, but for the largest part unmentioned characters and events are consistent with what was analyzed.

In general, studies on road narratives, and especially their commentary on matters of religion and race are a rarity within the academic spheres. Therefore, this thesis was perhaps an over-ambitious leap in the dark, as at times finding previous research proved impossible. I did my best on trying to form a consistent narrative throughout the thesis, and I hope it shows.

WORKS CITED

PRIMARY SOURCE

Supernatural. Television series. Episodes 1.1 to 12.23. WB (2005-2006) CW (2006-). [DVD] Warner Bros Television (2005-2017).

SECONDARY SOURCES

Adams, Percy G (1983). *Travel Literature and the Evolution of the Novel*. The University Press of Kentucky, Lexington.

Andreeva, Ekaterina (2016). *"All We Do Is Drive" The Promise of American Mobility in John Steinbeck's The Grapes of Wrath and Jack Kerouac's On the Road*. Master's thesis. University of Joensuu.

Bennett, Andrew & Royle, Nicholas (2004*). An Introduction to Literature, Criticism and Theory*. Third edition. Pearson & Longman, UK.

Buddytv.com (2008). *Creator Eric Kripke Talks 'Supernatural' Season 4 - Buddy TV*. [Online] [Cited 22.2.2017] Available at: http://www.buddytv.com/articles/supernatural/supernaturalconvention-brings-18107.aspx

Brigham, Ann (2015). *American Road Narratives, Reimagining Mobility in Literature and Film*. University of Virginia Press.

Brigham, Ann (2013a). Critical Meeting Places: Major Approaches to the American Road Narrative Genre. In Ron Primeau (ed.) *Critical Insights: American Road Literature.* Ipswich, Massachusetts: Salem Press. 15-31 [Online] [Cited 14.3.2018]

Brigham, Ann (2013b). Sinclair Lewis's Free air and the 'Voyage into Democracy'. In: Ron Primeau (ed.) *Critical Insights: American Road Literature.* Ipswich, Massachusetts: Salem Press. [Online] [Cited 15.3.2018]

Boggs, April (2009). *No Chick Flick Moments: 'Supernatural' as a Masculine Narrative*. Graduate College of Bowling Green State University. Master's thesis.

Campbell, Neil & Kean, Alasdair (2006). *American Cultural Studies. An Introduction to American Culture.* Second edition. Routledge, London & New York.

Capewell, Cassandra (2015). *The American Road Narrative: A Brief History*. Emmanuel College.

Cohan, Steven & Hark, Ina Rae (2001) *The Road Movie Book*. Routledge, London & New York.

Corrigan, Timothy (1991). "Genre, Gender, and Hysteria: The Road Movie in Outer Space." In *A Cinema Without Walls: Movies and Culture After Vietnam* 137-160. Rutgers University Press, New Brunswick, New Jersey.

Creswell, Tim (2006). *On the Move: Mobility in the Modern Western World*. Routledge, New York. [Online] [Cited 16.3.2018] Available at: https://edisciplinas.usp.br/pluginfile.php/122110/mod_resource/content/1/Tim%20Cresswell%20On%20the%20Move%20Mobility%20in%20the%20Modern%20Western%20World%20%202006.pdf

Crunden, Robert M. (1990). *A Brief History of American Culture*. Suomen Historiallinen Seura, Helsinki.

Engstrom, Erika (2014). Television, Religion, and Supernatural: Hunting Monsters, Finding Gods. In Susan A. George & Regina M. Hansen (eds.). *Supernatural, Humanity, and the Soul: On the Highway to Hell and Back*.

Falconer, Delia (2001). "We don't need to know the way home". The disappearance of the road in the Mad Max trilogy. In Cohan, Steven & Hark, Ina Rae (eds.) *The Road Movie Book*. Routledge, London & New York. 249-270.

Fernandez, Maria Elena (2006). *On the road trip from hell*. The Age. [Online] [Cited 14.3.2018] Available at: http://www.theage.com.au/news/tv--radio/on-the-road-trip-from-hell/2006/01/03/1136050443994.html?page=2

Ferrando, Francesca (2013). Posthumanism, Transhumanism, Antihumanism, Metahumanism, and New Materialisms: Differences and Relations. In *Existenz* Volume 8, No 2, Fall 2013. Columbia University.

Hurley, Kelly (2002). British Gothic fiction, 1885–1930. In *The Cambridge Companion to Gothic Fiction*. Jerrold E. Hogle (ed.) Cambridge University Press, UK. 189-208.

Intercollegiate Review (2018). *Russell Kirk - The Six Core Beliefs of Conservatism*. [online] [cited 12.4.2019] Available at: https://home.isi.org/six-core-beliefs-conservatism

Ireland, Brian (2013). *"All I saw was evil": Supernatural's Reactionary Road Trip*. In American Studies Today, issue 22-2013, 14-19. John Moore's University, Liverpool.

Keenan, Richard C (1975). Negative Image. Black Actors and American Film. In *Literature Film Quarterly.* Fall 75, Vol 3 Issue 4. 376-379. [Cnline] [Cited 14.4.2019] Limited availability at: http://web.a.ebscohost.com.proxy.uwasa.fi/ehost/pdfviewer/pdfviewer?vid=0&sid=18a1ff2e-d03a-4e52-8fe4-83e7d246fa2e%40sdc-v-sessmgr02#

Klinger, Barbara (2001). The Road to Dystopia: Landscaping the Nation in Easy Rider. In Cohan, Steven & Hark, Ina Rae (eds.) *The Road Movie Book*. Routledge, London & New York. 179-203.

Kosmin, Barry A & Keysar, Ariela (2009). *American Religious Identity Survey (2008)*. Trinity College, Hartford Connecticut. [Online] [Cited 15.4.2018] Available at: http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-srv/metro/documents/aris030609.pdf

Laderman, David (1996). *What a Trip: The Road Film and American Culture.* In Journal of American Film and Video, vol 48, no 1/2 Spring and Summer 41-57. University of Illinois Press.

Laufs, Stefanie (2013). *Fighting a Movie with Lightning. "The Birth of a Nation" and the Black community.* Anchor Academic Publishing, Hamburg.

Luther, Catherine A., Carolyn Ringer Lepre & Naeemah Clark (2012). *Diversity in U.S. Mass Media.* Wiley-Blackwell.

Neale, Steve & Turner, Graeme (2001). Introduction: What is Genre? In *The Television Genre Book*. BFI, London. 1-7.

Oliver, Mary Beth. African American Men as 'Criminal and Dangerous': Implications of Media Portrayals of Crime on the 'Criminalization' of African American Men. *In Journal of African American Studies*, vol. 7, no. 2, 2003, pp. 3–18. JSTOR [Online] [Cited 18.4.2019] Available at: www.jstor.org/stable/41819017.

Primeau, Ronald (1996). *Romance of the Road : The Literature of the American Highway*. Bowling Green State University Popular Press. Bowling Green, OH.

Roberts, Shari (2001). Western Meets Eastwood: Genre and gender on the road. In Cohan, Steven & Hark, Ina Rae (eds.) *The Road Movie Book.* Routledge, London & New York. 45-60.

Samuel, Lawrence R. (2012). *The American Dream: A Cultural History*. Syracuse University Press.

Shaffer, Marquerite S (2001). *See America First: Tourism and National Identity, 1880-1940*. Smithsonian, Washington, DC.

Supernaturalwiki (2019). *Special Children*. [Online] [Cited 18.4.2019] Available at: http://www.supernaturalwiki.com/Special_Children

Talbot, Jill Lynn (1999). *This Is Not an Exit: The Road Narrative in Contemporary American Literature and Film*. Dissertation. Texas Tech University.

Thompson, Carl (2011). *Travel Writing*. Routledge, London and New York.

Vermeer, Alice (2014). *Searching for God : portrayals of religion on television*. University of Iowa. Master's Thesis.

Wright, Julia M. (2008). Latchkey Hero: Masculinity, Class and the Gothic in Eric Kripke's *Supernatural*. *Genders* 1998-2013. University of Colorado Boulder. [Online] [Cited 22.2.2019] Available at: https://www.colorado.edu/gendersarchive1998-2013/2008/06/15/latchkey-hero-masculinity-class-and-gothic-eric-kripkes-supernatural

Youngs, Tim (2013). *The Cambridge Introduction to Travel Writing*. Cambridge University Press.