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I'm Anna Caterino from the University of Milan and today I'll be talking about the first iteration of hell within the TV show Supernatural in relation to Dean which has this trauma as the title of this presentation suggests.

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Before moving on, I'd like to provide a brief introduction about supernatural photos of you who are not, familiar with the show.

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So supernatural started airing in 2,005 and aired its final episode in 2,020 after a 15 year long run.

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It was created by Ericrik Kripke and every Quicky is nowadays most famous perhaps for his work on the boys which is currently streaming on Amazon which is an adaptation of the comic by the same name but he also worked on NBC Revolution, Timeless, and even his first movie, Boogie Man, co directed by Sam Raini throughout let's say the entire

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corpus made by prickly we have some in your themes that funds now a day and online fundamentally like to criticize such for example the focus on muscularity and the domestic sphere.

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Now, a free things become clear if we look at the 15 year long run. First of all, as Mark Lemon Grace point out is that supernatural is one of the longest running first run syndicated television shows.

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Secondly, that throughout these 15 years television, so an increased diversification of its character specifically when it comes to gender and sexuality and race obviously and also the fact that supernatural is part of the past 9 11 television which bennett analyzes in her volume on apocalyptic TV.

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No, post 9 11 television focuses as cookie does on masculinity and here we have very violent and manly men who usually save today and a focus on domestic steer which is usually threatened by what for the calls the dark skin non-Christian.

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So we have a stranger who is usually standing in the backyard who threatens this ideal peace and American greatness.

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Now the question is, does Quickly reprise it within his TV show according to fans online he does for them supernatural is nothing if not the clarification of the independent my borrow man this however is not the cause ever since the pilot episode, Eric Crick, he tries to subvert the hegemonic thought and thus both masculinity and the domestic take on a different appearance.

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At the beginning of the pilot episode, we have an iconic sequence in which we have the mother of the family, Mary Winchester, played by Samantha Smith, who goes into the her son's nest, the and sees a strange and dark figure standing alone in the room.

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The fret is imminent, however, instead of calling for her husband, she mistakes the dark figure.

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For the husband and thus supernatural initiates the story in which the monster or is already inside the house and takes on the sentence or the of the masculine patriarchal authority who lives at the end of the corridor.

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Now this obviously creates a nightmarish microcosm both in life as in death. On the one hand, this idea that something rotten is already inside the family creates a story about Monster of the Week in which the characters try to exercise the past and trying to escape the childhood memories if they cannot deal with it.

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However, they are unable to do so. And this is represented both by the representation of the car with which the camera with which they travel across the country, the 1,967 Chevrolet in Para as a gothic castle that thinks of alcohol and violence as well as the continuation between the violence on earth and the violence in the afterlife, specifically in hell.

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One of the most striking references to hell in the first iteration, that is to say within the first 5 seasons of the show when Ericrik Krikey was working a show runner.

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He's in wishful thinking when some is pestering his brother Dean, played bedrooms and uncles, about his time in hell.

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And Dean escaped this sort of pestering by saying, quote, I do remember everything that happened to me in the pit, everything.

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I won't lie to you anymore, but I'm not going to talk about it. Do you really think that a little heart-to-heart, some sharing and caring is going to change anything.

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Hmm? Somehow heal me. I'm not talking about about day here. The things I saw, there aren't any words.

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There is no forgetting. There's no making it better because it is right here forever. You wouldn't understand and I could never make you understand.

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So I am sorry, unquote. So here we have 2 things to keep in mind. As you when Chester speaks, he taps his own head, which means that there is a correlation about this inspeakable thing that he nevertheless witnessed and lived true.

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And this unspeakable thing he cannot describe. Despite having spent 40 years in hell. Now, DM of this essay is that is to analyze hell in the first 5 seasons as we see it in a risk for the wicked at the end of season 3 in relation to trauma and how it is constructed as a place that exists.

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And Dean's head. First, I will look at the iconography, then at the relationship with the The Dean has to his father and lastly the role played by awareness in salvation or like there.

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Now, throughout 15 years, supernatural changed its own mythology repeatedly. If you go look at the depictions of hell, we have 3 most clamorous instances which you can see here put into pictures.

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The first one is season 3 in which we have this sort of very abstract space in season 6 the man who would be king we have a very long waiting line and every time saw reaches the beginning of the line it has to start again.

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From the back. And lastly we have a Gothic castle. Now of these 3 iterations the first one the one I'll be talking about is the one that most suits the show's premise about this functional form in your relationships and the gothic use to investigate societal taboos such as incest and violence within the home.

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Nevertheless, season 6, the duration of hell does fit St. Reganble's tenure of the show and Ben Edwin's attempt at having a deconstruction of a America's consumerism and indeed the Gothic Castle where the exaggerated statues and rudger does fit the sort of campaign notes of the later seasons.

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But nevertheless, it seems like in line with what's supernatural was supposed to be. So, a brief overview about what happens before I start to look at hell.

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At the end of season 2, some Winchester dies and Dean Winchester whose entire identity is shaped around the fact that he has to protect his brother makes a deal with hell.

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This very much reads as a suicide and indeed it is not the first time nor will it be the last one in which Dean Winchester tries to take his take his life.

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In this instance, however, he is successful in doing so. And although the 2 brothers spend the entirety of season 3 trying to undo this deal, some through quite mythological processes such as the reach for immortality, Dean sort of gives it up and decides that it is better to die in order to find some relief.

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Of his life on earth. At the end of season 3, despite an occasional change of heart, as seen an episode dream a little dream of me in season 3.

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Dean Winchester is ultimately dragged to hell as anything else would have been a cop-out.

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And he is is more by hell hands and I will not actually show you the clip. For you to see the 35 s sequence at the very end of the season in which hell is introduced.

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Sick and boys.

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Stop.

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Yes!

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I said back.

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Think so.

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Oh

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You I'll go.

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And this is how season free ends. Which hell winning and the Winchester actually losing. So obviously if you introduce hell, you have to follow up with what has been said before with the limitation imposed by budget.

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In a companion volume to season 3, Kripy admits that the first initial idea of hell was actually to be quite different and we need more in line with how it was described by Demon Ruby in season 3 following Revelation, 2,000, and 10, sorry.

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So as to say, to have this burning pit in which sores are done forever. However, because of budget limitations this would not have been possible but they still had to create the quote West hello, literally ever, unquote.

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So, how did they find a solution to this? They create a place that is actually unquantifiable and defies any kind of description.

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This way we have a play on subjective nature of fear and torment, but also on the repeat and repeated lack of descriptions that Dean makes.

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So every single member of the audience has to put in what hell is not only by the implications that the show makes, show makes about abuse, but also about our own view of health.

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Thus it does not quite reprise the classical, description made by Dante, let's say in in, which was used as a way to warn people off in for path, nor does it the price, let's say any, Renaissance painting or Bush's painting in which hell is seen.

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Differently as opposed to supernatural. But if we watch the show and if we watch the 35 s long clip we do find some associations.

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So we have this Twin, or Labyrinth twine of cables, Dean hanging in the middle.

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He is very isolated and it has iconographic associations but for the micrographs and drawing of Golgi stain murals and missile bodies.

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And this enhances the idea that hell is a place that exists exclusively and Dean's head, and therefore cannot be accessed, nor can it be talked about.

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This idea is hardly new. All writing in season 2, we have an understanding that the Winchester childhood specifically deans is the worst thing on earth and even torture now is nothing compared to it.

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When the demon Mac possesses some inborn on the about sign she says all I had to hold on to was that I would climb out one day and that I was going to talk to you nice and slow like pulling the wings of an insect.

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But whatever I do to you, it is nothing compared to what you do to yourself, is it? I can see it in your eyes, Dean.

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You are worthless. You couldn't save your doubt and deep down, you know that you can't save your brother.

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They've been better enough without you. Unquote. So We have here, the understanding that Dean has lived a life that is so terrible and bleak and so isolated that not even aternal donation compares to it, which means that John's abuse on his first son is completely unprecedented.

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This obviously creates an association between health and trauma. First of all, hell is there for constructed as a consequence of the failing father.

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Obviously, John Winchester's main feeling other than neglect is the fact that Dean fails to comply to his expectations.

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Within the Winchester families, we have what Bell Hooks defines a culture of longing for which the sons try to shape themselves after the hyper masculine father.

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But do you need anything successful to do so, even though he completely copies his father in everything that he does.

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He drives a muscle car. He wears a leather dcket. He is a womanizer.

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He eats fast food, but all of these take on different connotations. When we ascribe them to John in which, case we have this sort of idea of masculinity and almost an exaggeration of it in light of the events of post 9 11 America and in the case of theme they create this character who is actually modeled after the second post war homosexual archetype which itself is

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reminiscent of of actors like James Dean and Marlon Brando. And this creates a establishes that the show has a queer subtext and that the issue between father and son is the luck of compliance to manhood as defined as assertive, violent and an ability to save people around them as well as that their heterosexuality and heteronormativity.

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Furthermore, Dean's lack of compliance to the figure created by the aid. Oh, for created by authority and the patriarchal relationships and dynamics.

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Reproduced in a microcosm, make sure that the show also explores John's reaction to it, which mostly comes in form of physical abuse as highlighted in episodes such as nightmare and sexual abuse, which is

implied not only by the parallel relationship between Dean and Bella Talbot, who is also downed in season 3, but also through his comments on characters who have suffered from,

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relationships within the family. Now, this all accumulates and make sure that teams deal with the crossword demons at the end of season 2 and his consequent suicide in season 3 is seen as him breaking from all this trauma that he can never talk about nor admit to himself.

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The same dynamics that then transpose to health. In hell, Dean is tortured, but at some point the audience finds out that he is off, he is offered the chance to better his place.

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And Liz idea that he breaks is on a textual level defined as the breaking of the first of the 66 seals to jumpstart the apocalypse.

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But we also have an understanding that this is not quite a pyramid scheme as occasionally been described or as a contract between employee and employee, but rather Dean trying to better himself, better his own situation by entering, entering one that is even worse.

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Obviously the moment Team takes on a plate, he enables a revenge fantasy that is nevertheless described as being excessively hollow.

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On the one hand, he gets to revenge himself and everything that was done to him in hell as on earth, but at the same time this creates a temporary satisfaction.

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He cannot undo what his father did to him, nor can he properly kill his father and this creates a further loss of autonomy as he finds himself once more under the control of an older and more violent man in this case the demon Alistair.

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13 constructs himself a second hell within hell itself, defines a liminal space in which violence, rings supreme.

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He tries to shape. Himself after this idea of manhood but pay us to do so ultimately have the opposite effect and creating a sense of unfinished business.

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That will haunt him even as he comes back to earth. Good interpretation of Hell as an insular space that is depicted by sorrow that cannot be properly discussed is, is said, is revealed and family remains in season 4 when the 2 brothers had a conversation.

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Now this episode is one in which the idea that the real monsters are human and they monsters the real monsters in the show are more human than men themselves is centered on 2 children who are the result of an injustice relationship between their mother and their grandfather and these 2 children at some point kill that out slash grandad as theme says some is frightened affected by the story, but Dean takes on this children's size and he said, well.

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I can't say I blame her. To which some replies, I'm sure her life was healthy.

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It doesn't mean she gets a free pass for murder. And Dean says, like you know, what hand is like Some of course takes quite the insult out of this, but at the same time we have this idea that Dean has a complete different sense of their own childhood as opposed to some and indeed throughout the course of the first 5 season it is always highlighted how Sam represents John Winchester the most while Dean is the

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odd one out. So, an ability to communicate with someone who has an opposite view of childhood as he does as in the case of Dean, to communicate with someone who has an opposite view of childhood as he does, as in the case of Dean, creates hell as an insula in an accessible place that cannot be described and he can that cannot be talked about because it would only need 2 more incomprehension.

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Now if we look at, at the Rooms that identified by Faludi and past 9 11 television and how supernatural applies to them, we usually have the manly American men, we're seen as the hero.

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Then we have in women in need of defending and we have the other with the monster. In the case of Sam, this is quite his worldview.

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John Winchester becomes the hero. He is actually quite proud and quite intrigued by the association that Dean makes in Jump the Shark telling him that Sam was in fact the one who resembles the father the most.

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But Dean sees this differently and foot in the real monster is in fact the manly American man. And so the masculine included heroism of the show falls apart and indeed this this mantles the myth of American exceptionalism both within the United States as a whole in the case of some as in the case of the microcosm of the family which is how Dean applies his worldview.

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And this because Dean while trying to shape himself after the monthly American man in his life takes on the role of protector, but he fails to do so and this failing creates a sense of lack of authenticity as well as a sense of having spent his life existing as a failure.

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But the beginning of season 4 because theme was not supposed to die. And was always supposed to come back.

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We have Dean that is resuscitated by the Angels and we have this snagging fear about where the salvation is actually possible or not and if possible if something is always left behind in him and something better can come out by a second chance.

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Although there are hints around the first part of season 4 that things, coming back to life is not quite positive, notwithstanding the fact that hell is a continuation of trauma and abuse.

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We have further confirmation by the time we reach episode death takes a holiday and where in which the repetitive says a second chance really because I'm pretty sure deep down you know something nasty is coming down the road trust your instincts team there is no such thing as miracles by the time you reach half the season then we actually have to wonder if salvation is really possible.

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And indeed it is presented as something quite intricate throughout the rest of Kripke's tenure, not only because it enables a game of mirrors that continuously repeats that.

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The dynamics of abuse and exploitation that we have seen since season one, but also because heaven is an agent of universal disorder as poor calls it, rather than having angels where as children with fluffy wings, halos and halves.

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They are in fact wingless sticks. So indeed the angels do not save Dean to make him reach salvation, but they actually manipulate him once more into a big against further expanding his trauma and highlighting how even benevolent forces can do nothing to save him.

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By the time we reach season 4, furthermore, it becomes clear that gender and sexuality always had a central role in it and that Dean queer himself dams himself because of it.

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Just a textual nature of preness has been up to debate. Has been up to debate and is still now debated over a supernatural entered the popular culture as the queer baiting show for excellence.

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However, this is not the case. Although it does prevent the creation of queer authentic selves, particularly in light of the nation.

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Ever since season one, we have this idea that Dean is destined to help to go to hell because of Prince.

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We have an episode with a faith healer, Faith, episode 1.12 in season one in which we had this idea the dean is destined to die, in season one in which we have this idea that Dean is destined to die, especially now that Dean is destined to die, especially now that Dean is destined to die, especially now that I'm a gay man died in his place and he gets this heart.

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which is always affected and controlled by others. Now obviously on the one hand this distance, you can I'm sure from what, McDermott calls positive effects for which audience tend to look for happy representation and indeed focuses more on the feeling of disgust.

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A burntness and essentially unlovableness of queer characters. And which prevents obviously authenticity.

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All of this is particularly, visible in season 4 because we have 2, subtractually queer relationships.

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One with the demon, Alistair, who is employed to have taken on a sexual, sexual relationship with Dean and Hell as his boss as his mentor and as a substitute father but also with Castile played by Misha Collins.

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In both cases however violence and shame continue to play a central role. Not only because Dean is asked to torture Alistair and because of this time serving Alistair in hell, but also because violence becomes a meet the means by which these homosexual relationships can actually take place as it provides safe mediation that masks them as a continuum with a homosexual.

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And, introduce themselves into a set of standards. That are acceptable by a highly heterosexual environment society.

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So team cannot quite disentangle himself from violence and this idea that he cannot have a happier ending or cannot accept himself also lead to an increased amount of shame and a momentarily acceptance which does occasionally exist especially if we look at episodes such as when the levy breaks in which we have a symbolic wedding between Dean and Castell or the point of no return in which we have a dark allway scene in which the 2 Dean and Castile beat each other

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up, which is a stunning for sexual intercourse of course, and we do not really have any sense of freedom.

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And also the understanding that Dean has not and will not find salvation. And until he allows to let allows himself to let go of the past.

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And the bubble allows himself to simply exist. Bye, the end of Swan Song, which is the original ending of Season 5.

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Which is the ending of season 5 and was supposed to be the original ending of the show, we have 2 key moments.

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One in which Dean talks to his brother Sam in which some urges him to go live a heterosexual lifestyle and another one in which Castile looks at Dean and says, you got what you asked for.

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No paradise, no hell, just more of the same. I mean it, Dean, what would you rather have peace or freedom?

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Of course, we've already said that hell is an extension of life on Earth. So no hell is actually not possible.

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Esteen himself still exist as the carrying the burdens of his childhood. And the same can be said about paradise.

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Here's actually like hell, an extension of trauma, but it is the same time for others who have had happier lives, it's just the repetition of the greatest hits.

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So for Dean, it makes no difference whether he continues to live on Earth or in the afterlife.

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And indeed, the idea of peace or freedom is an interesting question. Of course, one is led to believe that peace is actually the solution and perhaps also reinforced by the fact that Kansas carry on my way with Sun, which is the song that plays at the end of every season.

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Suggest that there will be peace when you are done. However, one cannot have freedom, without peace, in the same way the team cannot find salvation.



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So to conclude. How the first iteration of hell is quite different from the later iterations within the show.

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We have this idea, the hell is constructed through subjectivity of feelings from the audience and Dean and it is a very Luckner's existence in which we only in which the audience is allowed to fill in the gaps themselves and connect the subtext of abuse.

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That the show presents from its very first episode. So how do they depict it? They depicted this very abstract and inescapable place, because of its association to Dean's head as a mental space.

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It allows criticism of societal issues in a rather medium, in a way that is completely mediated by the horizon as well an exploration of the effects of childhood trauma.

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And we have this lingering sense that it cannot be escaped at all. Meaning that ultimately salvation is completely disallowed.

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The self that comes back is the self that went away. And not even third parties and divine intervention have a way to diminish the burden.

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And thus, we are led to believe that the only person who can save himself and allow himself to find salvation is the drop itself.

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But the drop self is does not exist in a vacuum. In fact, he exists in a society and he has stopped forever in familiar relationships that ultimately impose masculinity and metronormativity all the way.

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So perhaps we can wonder if the real hell all along is as hinted at in the first episode of the show The the rotten house in which violence occurs behind those doors translated into the 90 67 Chevrolet impala through with which the Winchester travel the country and if the to if the character is never allowed to leave this space where the hell never really stops or not.

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And ultimately it seems that it doesn't. Here's a show bibliography and thank you for your attention.

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Thank you. So much. Now I would now encourage anyone who has any questions or comments, you can either drop them on the chat or turn on your microphones and ask them directly.

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So to give time to anyone who might be feeling a little shy. I would just like to point out to and I don't know if you've had a chance to see that Grace.

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That in the Discord channel that she found your And now, I lost the comment now, Grace.

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I don't know if she wants to, read it to one of.

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Sure. I was saying I love your connection to the like post war homosexuality and the, like the Hollywood icons that you mentioned there.

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I'm giving a paper on quick coded villains later and so as you were talking about that I was like, oh, yes, that's exactly.

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Dean Winchester. Yes, exactly. That's fantastic.

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Yeah, absolutely. And like, obviously, Supernatural was born as a horror adaptation of Jack Karex on the road.

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And so we have those implications and in Winchester obviously James Dean, the Moriarty.

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And then again if one, you know, if you read the American poetry and literature of the 50 sixties, it's full of these sort of road narratives.

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And nowadays road narratives are perceived as being sort of men escaping the family and the responsibility which isn't exactly the case in those instances.

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For example, in supernatural, he tries to escape his childhood. He tries to escape to a place where he can be and this is actually something that occurs from literature, think about thong guns, poems where you know we have these bikers again you know manly man with beards their dress working class they do not have fancy accents and they just you know they're constantly on the road but they are looking for a

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place where they can exist as queer men and this is the same in supernatural so it's always quite interesting because Sigma Chast is odd legacy, I think as I said, that people think it's sort of like glamorizing manhood, which isn't the case.

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Lamorizing manhood, which isn't the case. Krip is quite honest about it in all of his work.

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I love also that idea of trying to escape family, but in this context and supernatural, like it.

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It's the mechanism through which there's connection to the family, including there's an episode where they personify in turn the impala into a character and like tell the cars story.

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So that's really interesting.

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Yeah, in later seasons. Exactly. It's all shot from the perspective of the of the car.

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But the car has this and it's send in season at the end of season 5, ambivalent nature, you know, on the one hand it's the Gothic Castle.

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On the other hand, it's their home, obviously. And you have this sort of mixed feelings.

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We say this is a place in which we grew up and we've had shelter but at the same time it enables the broadest code dependency and it enables this lack of ability to move on from their past than what happened.

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You're constantly in a place with an angry man and with a ghost of the angry man who preceded him and until Dean Winchester is struck in sort of family.

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He cannot escape because he's persistently putting on this performance and this gender performativity where he has to shape himself after, you know, the independent mudball man in a way to be taken seriously and survived, but at the same time, He cannot, be his authentic self.

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He cannot find happiness because that's the problem. And obviously, it was never intended to last 15 seasons.

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So to have this at core it creates It always creates the same dynamics and obviously you can't end the show.

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Or you can't deviate from the premise. Because that is it. It was not supposed to go on for 15 years.

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You can't introduce, diversity, you can't introduce secondary characters because you have, you know, the core problem is that you have these 2 brothers cannot let each other go.

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So it's.

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Good. I think that was a comment. Don't win Chester being a womanizer.

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It is said that he had this affair once and had a child but it is never dealt into beyond that so We don't really know what John was doing, but Dean is tries to pose as a womanizer as someone who has these repeatedly one-night stands, no connections to other, no, from connections to women, obviously not with men.

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So he definitely fits the type.

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No, absolutely.

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I actually, I have a question of my own. It's, running away a little bit from, Dean, but when you read that, both that he tells Sam that he has no idea what hell he's how do you relate this experience that Dean's Hell is in his head with Sam having had Lucifer being the vessel for Lucifer and how that might have affected that

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dynamic.

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So I think. In the first 5 seasons they have this sort of K enable storyline which is then reprised.

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I think it's about, sort of corruption. With the demon blood and the fact that some, you know, has been fed.

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Demon blood since he was a child. So definitely, but I also think that because hell takes on a different shape according to his talking about it, you are allowed to have some as the one who has to be possessed by Lucifer in the final showdown and you can have Dean as an agent of heaven and Michael's true vessel.

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So I think, you know, keeping it vague and abstract actually allows these. Double perspectives.

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I'm curious what you'd think. Of the, so Crowley is introduced in season 5.

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Nice.

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And it's after that that we start to get some other depictions of how that differ from the first 5 season depictions of help.

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Yeah.

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Do you think that has anything to do with Crowley acting as a character who has more agency in being able to navigate hell that we see different iterations of that.

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I think definitely. Like, it is actually quite interesting what you said because it is also, quite true.

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He's also the one who's constantly changing it. And we have the waiting line obviously and later we had this throne and we see the demons and it's more like you know a king in his subject so it's no longer only about the characters and it's again another perspective from you know someone else in the show where's a different version of what is actually going on and it makes sense because Crowley is the king

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of hell. So obviously you know you expect him to have this sort of throne which he sits he sees the demons he punishes them and then he invites Rowena, right?

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His mother. Towards the end when she's introduced.

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Yes.

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Does anyone else have any topics they would like to discuss? Or if you and I would like to add something.

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Okay.

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Okay, so if the discussion is done, you can keep it going in the discord, trend if you want and also have a moment before the next, panel, feel free to.

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Stay around and if anything But if you any ideas come to mind, feel free to share them with one another.

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And thank you again, Anna, for the presentation.

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Thank you.