

*Supernatural, Humanity, and the Soul*

*On the Highway to Hell and Back*

Edited by

*Susan A. George and Regina M. Hansen*

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*SUPERNATURAL, HUMANITY, AND THE SOUL*

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With my love and gratitude, I dedicate this book to my grandparents,  
Andre and Ludovina Bettencourt, for teaching me to value wisdom  
and not just knowledge, to my parents, Raymond and Delores  
George, and my partner in all things, Ken Stiles.

—Susan A. George

For my great-grandmother Emma Pizzella, who knew about angels,  
and for my beloved husband Brian Kemmett.

—Regina Hansen

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## "We're Just... Food and Perverse Entertainment": *Supernatural's* New God and the Narrative Objectification of Sam and Dean

KT Torrey

Over the course of *Supernatural's* first five seasons, Sam (Jared Padalecki) and Dean (Jensen Ackles) Winchester fight for the right to tell their own story, to maintain the integrity of their own narrative, despite the pressures of their past and the many forces moving to ensure their participation in a single, possible future. For the brothers, this desire to resist objectification, to avoid becoming mere characters in someone else's story—brought into even sharper relief after the events of "The Monster at the End of This Book" (4.18)—ultimately affords them the narrative agency they need to subvert the Apocalypse. However, this flash of authorial self-control is quickly disrupted by an unexpected source: the Winchesters' greatest ally, their savior, their friend—the angel Castiel (Misha Collins).

In season six, Castiel accomplishes what his archangel brothers could not: he subverts the brothers' hard-won narrative agency and transforms them into mere characters, narrative objects in the story of rebellion that Castiel composes on his own. As the events of "The Man Who Would Be King" (6.20) illustrate, Castiel is convinced that his actions following the Winchesters' arrest of the Apocalypse—beginning with Sam's resurrection at the end of "Swan Song" (5.22) and culminating in Castiel's decision to resist Raphael—are designed to protect the Winchesters' free will. Despite the fervency of his conviction, Castiel's

choices serve only to reinscribe the very ideologies against which the angel has attempted to define himself.

Implicit in Castiel's engagement with the chaotic cosmic realities of a non-apocalyptic world is a fundamental desire to negate what he perceives as the dominant set of beliefs—those of Raphael and other angels who want to restart Armageddon—by substituting the beliefs of the oppressed, of his own. Castiel's style of engagement with a world in which he has “ripped up the script” embodies what rhetorician John Muckelbauer calls the postmodern mode of “critique,” a way of being that “seeks to change things” by overthrowing the position that has dominated and supplanting them with “concepts that have been historically derided” (“The Third Man”; Muckelbauer 7). As a creature of power, one is always already trapped within “the apparatus as a whole that . . . distributes individuals in this permanent and continuous field” and Castiel is deeply invested in his identity as a champion of freedom (Foucault, *Discipline* 177). That investment, coupled with his desire to negate his enemies' beliefs, blinds him to the ways his actions cleave Sam and Dean from their narrative agency, thus transforming them into characters in a tale that Castiel ultimately regards as his own. In this way, Castiel, the brothers' most fervent and loyal ally, reframes the Winchesters as objects, mere “food . . . and perverse entertainment” for their new God, rather than wielders of their own free will (“Of Grave Importance” 7.19).

For much of *Supernatural's* first five seasons, the brothers' lack of narrative agency, their inability to “make the fiction” of their own lives, lies at the center of the series' arc (Corder 17). As Suzette Chan notes, this absence has been present in the boys' lives since their childhood. “From living under their father's command, to being infected with demon blood or resurrected by an angel,” she observes, “it has become clear that neither Sam nor Dean has an exclusive claim on his own body—or his fate” (Chan, par. 1.2). Seasons four and five lay bare the extent to which the Winchesters' lives—along with those of their parents and grandparents—have fallen prey to the “unceasing manipulation . . . [of] angels and demons” (Gray, par. 6). In this way, the forces of Heaven and Hell detach Sam and Dean from a fundamental element of humanity: the ability to “invent . . . the narratives that are our lives” (Corder 17). For rhetorician Jim Corder, “each of us is a narrative,” an embodiment of “all the choices we've made, accidentally or on purpose,” choices which form “the evidence we have of ourselves and of our convictions” (18). Sam and Dean's bodies, by contrast, bear the scars of others' choices, including Castiel's

handprint, the absence of Sam's soul, and the psychological trauma inscribed by their mother's death—all of these key elements of the Winchesters' story are created without their consent. For much of their lives, then, the brothers are characters, mere objects, in narratives that are not their own.

However, the brothers manage to resist this final objectification in part because that same script also demands their agency. In order to fulfill their destiny as “angel condoms,” Sam and Dean must freely give their consent to Lucifer and Michael, archangels who must occupy earthly vessels in order to engage in the final battle of the Apocalypse (“Sympathy for the Devil” 5.1). Without the brothers' invocation of agency, albeit temporarily, even Heaven's power is stayed, much to the annoyance of those who, like Castiel's supervisor Zachariah (Kurt Fuller), wish to see the fulfillment of God's original intent.

The increasingly creative nature of the angels' attempts to demonstrate their narrative mastery over the Winchesters reinforces the paradoxical nature of the situation. For example, in “It's a Terrible Life” (4.17), Zachariah wipes the boys' memories and transforms them into Dean Smith and Sam Wesson, two office-bound employees of Sandover Bridge and Iron. Although neither man remembers being a hunter nor that they are related, “Smith” and “Wesson” find themselves joining forces against the homicidal ghost of the company's founder. The experience convinces them both that they are living the wrong lives. When Dean finally confronts Zachariah, who is masquerading as his boss at Sandover, the angel reveals himself and unmask the game: to convince Dean that his best hope for the future lies in fulfilling his destiny by consenting to be Michael's vessel. Initially, Zachariah's actions make it impossible for the brothers to exercise agency; without their memories, stripped of their identities, the Winchesters are temporarily rescripted as characters in a story of Zachariah's own choosing. However, even this extreme display of the potential of the angels' narrative mastery fails, and the incident serves only to solidify Sam and Dean's desire to secure their own agency once and for all.

Indeed, the events of the next episode, “The Monster at the End of This Book” (4.18), suggest the productive potential of such agency when employed as a mode of resistance. In this episode, Sam and Dean discover that Chuck Shurley (Rob Benedict), author of a cult series of books called *Supernatural*, has been writing pulp versions of their real lives within the pages of his novels—texts that will one day be known as “The Winchester Gospels.” Much of the episode's tension arises from Chuck's unknowing status as a prophet, one with

the ability to prescribe events that will befall the brothers. The import of this gift becomes apparent when Chuck predicts the time, date, and location of Sam's death at the hands of Lilith, a powerful demon determined to raise Lucifer and jumpstart the Apocalypse. The brothers manage to prevent Chuck's vision from coming true; using the foreknowledge the prophet provides and an off-the-record assist from Castiel—an element that Chuck did not foresee—the brothers banish Lilith, at least temporarily.

The felicity of these actions, of Sam and Dean's ability to temporarily "make the fiction" of their own lives, underscores the potential malleability of the boys' prescribed destiny and provides a model for the subsequent actions of the Winchesters, Bobby Singer (Jim Beaver), and Castiel, a group Dean nicknames Team Free Will ("The Song Remains the Same" 5.13). The team's tactical resistance, their refusal to let the brothers fall victim to complete narrative objectification, culminates in Sam's death in "Swan Song" (5.22). Holding Lucifer at bay, Sam throws himself into the Pit, dragging the Devil and Michael, in the body of the Winchesters' half-brother Adam (Jake Abel), with him. His sacrifice of body and soul prevents the Apocalypse as written from ever coming to pass. Sam's seizure of narrative agency, and the wider rending of God's original narrative that it represents, appears to remove the Winchesters from the grips of anyone else's story. In this act of subversion, the brothers have finally gained the ability to control their own lives. However, as the end of the episode suggests, Sam's act of self-sacrifice is almost immediately overwritten; in the final frames, Sam appears in the street outside of Dean and his girlfriend Lisa's house, gazing in on his brother's new life ("Swan Song"). In time, the events of "The Man Who Would Be King" (6.20) reveal that the one responsible for rewriting Sam's most significant act of free will is none other than Castiel.

From Castiel's perspective, the choices that he makes in the two years after the Apocalypse—in the year Sam walks the earth without a soul, and in the months after the brothers are reunited—are intended to keep both the Winchesters and the legacy of Team Free Will safe from those who would see their work destroyed. As Castiel observes, God's will was subverted by "two boys, an old drunk, and a fallen angel," a rag-tag bunch who "ripped up the ending" to the "grand story," shredding both "the rules and destiny" along the way ("The Man Who Would Be King"). For Castiel, participation in those events is a source of pride; for many of his heavenly colleagues, however, the erasure of a long-expected climax is a source of consternation

and fear. Facing an uncertain future, Castiel believes that it is his responsibility to act in the tradition of the Winchesters, the humans who "taught me how to stand up [and] what to stand for," even with the knowledge that the reward for such actions is usually a quick and bloody end, like the one Lucifer visits on him in the moments before Sam sacrifices himself ("The Man Who Would Be King").

With those stakes in mind, the most significant choice that Castiel makes in his attempts to uphold the Winchesters' legacy is his decision—as suggested by Crowley (Mark Sheppard), the self-appointed King of Hell—to wage civil war in Heaven against the forces of Raphael, an archangel determined to restore God's original will. In their first confrontation after the Apocalypse sputters, Raphael demands that Castiel "kneel before [him] and pledge allegiance to the flag" in front of an angelic assembly. When Castiel protests, Raphael reminds him why such a public show of fealty is required: "You rebelled. Against God, Heaven, and me. Now you will atone." Faced with the potential destruction of Team Free Will's legacy, Castiel is defiant, even in the face of Raphael's overwhelming strength; however, when he refuses to obey, Raphael promptly knocks Castiel "into next week" ("The Man Who Would Be King").

Ultimately, it is the immediacy of Raphael's threat, coupled with the realization that no other angels plan to stand against him, that drives Castiel to start a civil war. Rather than resist the role of rebel Raphael assigns to him, Castiel once again embraces that identity, one he believed the destruction of God's original "grand story" rendered unnecessary. He is initially convinced that his fellow angels will embrace the opportunity to exercise free will as he did. However, many of his colleagues are fearful of the uncertainty that a future driven by free will presents. Returning to Heaven after Michael and Lucifer's defeat, Castiel encounters Rachel (Sonya Salomaa), one of his loyal lieutenants from the garrison. She and the other angels are amazed to see Castiel alive since they saw Lucifer destroy him. When Castiel tells them that he was somehow resurrected, Rachel ascribes a particular significance to that event: "God brought you back. He chose you, Cas, to lead us." Castiel tries to defer: "No one leads us anymore. We're all free to make our own choices... God wants you to have freedom." "But," Rachel asks, "what does he want us to do with it?" ("The Man Who Would Be King"). At first, Castiel is discouraged by this response. However, reflecting upon his own experience, he recognizes that what his brothers and sisters need is guidance. They need someone who can teach them how and why they should

embrace, rather than resist, the opportunities that free will presents. And who better to offer such instruction, Castiel reasons, than himself, given the lessons about the value of freedom he learned while fighting at the Winchesters' side?

Because of the import he places on his role as a rebel, Castiel is unable to acknowledge or accept his own position as part of the system of power; his actions, no matter how "pure" he believes his motives to be, serve to objectify Sam and Dean by reinscribing them as mere characters in someone else's story, one that Castiel sees as his own ("The Man Who Would Be King"). Muckelbauer's notion of oppositional postmodernism provides a useful lens through which to examine Castiel's exercise of narrative agency in season six. In his book, *The Future of Invention: Rhetoric, Postmodernism, and the Problem of Change*, Muckelbauer argues that, although different in their aims, the three "dominant styles of engagement" that have marked postmodern thought—advocacy, critique, and synthesis—share the same foundation: negation, or the substitution of one set of beliefs for another (4). Of most interest here are the ideologies of the critique style of engagement, one that "seeks to change things by critiquing the conservative position; hoping to overcome its hegemony by supporting the concepts that have been historically derided" (7). Fundamental to critique is an opposition to "the privileging of a universal truth...[and] the privileging of the object," while promoting "the contingency of opinion" and "things like point-of-view and perspective" (7). Those who make use of critique, Muckelbauer argues, intend for their work "to overcome the conventional power structure by inverting the valence within any given binary," to shift power from those who have dominated to those who have been treated as subordinate (7).

Although these attempts at reversal can alter the content of a binary, "the difference offered by such oppositional postmodernism only functions through the repetition of the very dialectical structure it is attempting to overcome" (Muckelbauer 8). That is, in practice, the critical mode of engagement "only accomplishes...change by reproducing the oppositional structure itself...[and] the very dynamics that enabled that conservative position" (Muckelbauer 7, 8). In this way, critique, like the other "supposedly innovative [and] anti-foundationalist" modes of postmodern engagement, is unable to transform a binary without resorting to what Muckelbauer calls the "structural repetition...of refusal and negation" (4, 11).

Read in the context of Muckelbauer's analysis, Castiel's actions over the course of season six are suggestive both of his orientation toward critique and of the oppositional strictures that Muckelbauer argues define postmodern engagement. In "The Third Man" (6.3), for example, during his first conversation with the Winchesters since the not-Apocalypse, Castiel is careful to position himself in direct opposition to what he characterizes as Raphael's "traditionalist," and therefore dangerous, views. When Sam grumbles about Castiel's unresponsiveness to their previous prayers, Castiel explains that his attentions have been elsewhere: "Raphael and his followers, they want him to rule Heaven. I, and many others, the last thing we want is to let him take over." Raphael's succession "would be catastrophic" for the Winchesters in particular, Castiel argues, for his primary goal is to "end the story the way it was written" by putting Armageddon "back on the rails" ("The Third Man"). Although he does not identify himself as the leader of the opposition, the events of "The Man Who Would Be King" underscore that Castiel's understanding of the significance of the civil war is couched in terms of critique. That is, where Raphael and his followers would restore the old regime rendering moot the Winchesters' many sacrifices, those who stand with Castiel are rebels in the style of Team Free Will, anti-foundationalists fighting for freedom and choice.

But, as Castiel himself acknowledges, he is not the first angel to resist what others see as the will of God. Initially, he rejects Crowley's suggestion that he take on Raphael because it is akin to "asking [Castiel] to become the next Lucifer" ("The Man Who Would Be King"). Crowley, however, underscores how Castiel's kind of rebellion is superior to Lucifer's: "Lucifer was a petulant child with daddy issues... You love God. God loves you. He brought you back. Did it occur to you that maybe he did this so you could be the new sheriff upstairs?" ("The Man Who Would Be King"). Indeed, where Lucifer rejected God's will, Crowley suggests, opposing Raphael will actually allow Castiel to restore it. According to Crowley, Castiel's unexplained resurrection is proof that what God *really* wants is for Castiel to lead Heaven himself.

Central to Castiel's confidence in the rightness of his actions is his refusal to recognize that he, like Raphael, is already part of the power structure of Heaven. As Foucault argues in *Discipline and Punish*, although the power apparatus may appear to have a "head" because of its "pyramidal organization...it is the apparatus as a whole that

produces 'power' and distributes individuals in this permanent and continuous field" (177). In Heaven, particularly in the wake of God's sustained absence, power is a distributed and circulating force. Although some angels may possess more brute strength than others, each one is part of that field of power. Thus, Castiel's actions, just like those of his big brothers, enact "discipline [that] makes possible operation of a relational power that sustains itself by its own mechanism," through the actions of all within it (Foucault, *Discipline* 177). In such a model, what Foucault calls "the hierarchized surveillance of the disciplines," power "is not possessed as a thing, or transferred as a property; it functions like a piece of machinery," one which operates in the same manner no matter whose face appears temporarily at its head (Foucault, *Discipline* 177).

Whether one reads Castiel as already a creature of power, as a Foucaultian reading would suggest, or as engaged in a oppositional postmodern struggle within a binary as defined by Muckelbauer, both of these interpretations underscore Castiel's confinement within a system of power, one that renders his identity as a rebel against the forces of Heaven moot even before he starts down the path that will transform him into the self-proclaimed new God. Although he tells himself that his actions are designed solely to protect the gains made by Team Free Will, the story that Castiel sketches during season six leaves no room for the Winchesters to retain the very agency that he is ostensibly attempting to defend. His unwillingness to recognize his own position within Heaven's system of power leaves Castiel blind to the ways in which his actions repeat, rather than resist, the "very dialectical structure" that he believes he is working to destroy (Muckelbauer 7).

For much of season six, the Winchesters remain oblivious to the objectifying effects of the angel's actions; for, until the depth and breadth of Castiel's machinations are revealed in "The Man Who Would Be King," many of his actions appear to underscore his loyalty. In "Caged Heat" (6.10), for example, Castiel rescues the boys via a classic angel-*ex-machina*. Just before Crowley can crush the Winchesters' windpipes, Castiel swoops in and torches the bones of the demon's original human form, sending Crowley up in a blaze of ignominy—a performance staged solely for the brothers' benefit. Later, in "My Heart Will Go On" (6.17), Castiel represents himself once again as Sam and Dean's protector, this time in the face of what Castiel claims is Balthazar (Sebastian Roché) rogue decision to "unsink" the *Titanic*; in truth, Balthazar took this action on Castiel's behalf in order to create "50,000 new souls for [Castiel's] war machine" in Heaven. The

Winchesters, however, know none of this. They only know that when they awaken from what they believe was a nightmare, Castiel presents himself as their savior: "I insisted that [Balthazar] go back in time and correct what he had done. It was the only way to be sure you were safe" ("My Heart Will Go On").

Ironically, it is in the season's most humorous and ostensibly "meta," or consciously self-referential episode that the destructive potential of Castiel's exercise of authorial control becomes apparent. As "The French Mistake" (6.15) begins, it seems to once again underscore Castiel's willingness to protect the Winchesters at all costs. Balthazar, on the run from Raphael's (Lanette Ware) ally Virgil (Carlos Sanz), the weaponskeeper of Heaven, bursts into Bobby's home and casts a spell that hurls the brothers into an alternate reality, one in which "Sam and Dean Winchester" exist only as fictional constructs on a semipopular television show called *Supernatural*. On its face, this "Bizzaro Earth," as Dean dubs it, appears to represent the very sort of fate from which Castiel wishes to protect them: a kind of commercialized version of the Apocalypse in which the Winchesters exist only as vessels for someone else's story. Here, the brothers are just fiction, creatures whose lives are dictated by the show's weary creative team. Like the row of Impalas the boys discover outside the stage door, the constructs of "Sam and Dean" are "friggin' prop[s]! Just like everything else" ("The French Mistake").

In this episode, among an army of grips, three-quarter walls, and a garishly besweated actor called "Misha Collins," the Winchesters confront a universe in which their narrative objectification has been fully realized. Stuck in a world where magic and the supernatural do not exist, the real Sam and Dean find themselves locked into a script more rigid in its structure and bewildering in its demands than that of the Apocalypse. The show's producer is a character named Bob Singer, a self-referential version of *Supernatural's* real-life producer and director of the same name. He instructs the boys that the Winchesters are now in a world where "You cannot make up your own lines" ("The French Mistake"). Thus, the constraints of this universe appear to both the audience and the boys to underscore the importance of the narrative agency Sam and Dean believe they possess within their own universe.

Despite the comedic character of many of their initial adventures, the grotesque nature of this alternate universe rapidly becomes apparent. After their attempt to recreate Balthazar's spell fails, the Winchesters discover that their survival depends upon their ability to

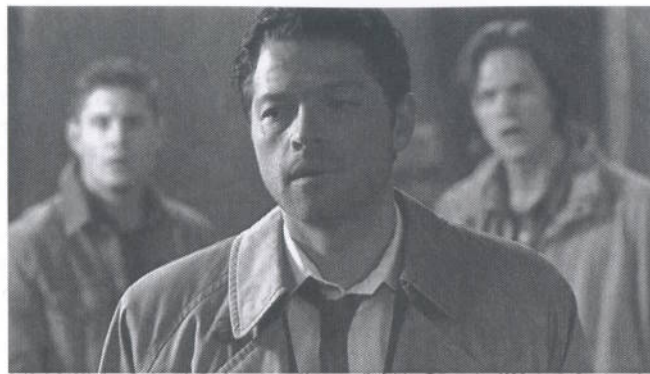


Figure 5.1 As “The French Mistake” closes, Team Free Will has become anything but.

act like “Sam and Dean,” rather than to be them. In the episode’s signature sequence, the boys attempt to perform themselves through the lenses of Jared Padalecki and Jensen Ackles, the two “douchy” actors who play Sam and Dean. Despite Dean’s efforts to ape Collins-as-Castiel’s growl and Sam’s desperate attempts to avoid looking at the camera, the brothers are unable to convincingly play themselves, to perform the characters of “Sam and Dean” as defined by the show’s writers and producers. Like the fierce-looking knife that Dean finds on set, only to discover that it is made of rubber, in this TV reality, the Winchesters are “fake. Everything’s fake” (“The French Mistake”).

At first glance, this ultimate narrative objectification of Sam and Dean appears to stand in stark contrast to the kind of autonomy that the boys believe they possess in their real lives. However, as “The Man Who Would Be King” reveals, “The French Mistake” instead offers an exaggerated take on the kind of behind-the-scenes manipulation Castiel engages in throughout season six. The makeup of Bizzaro Earth exposes the destructive potential of Castiel’s decision to write his own story, one in which the Winchesters cannot possess free will. Unbeknownst to the brothers, the lack of autonomy they experience in “The French Mistake” parallels their stealthy objectification within their own reality. Reduced to mere characters in TV’s *Supernatural*, Sam and Dean have become the empty vessels that the archangels so desperately desired; they say other people’s lines, stand where they are told, and keep their mouths shut. As Sam observes, “we just don’t mean the same thing here,” and, ill-equipped to negotiate both the demands of acting on camera and the everyday lives of Padalecki and

Ackles, the brothers lack the narrative agency they need to transform the meaning of “Sam and Dean” within that “unmagicked” reality (“The French Mistake”). Although neither the brothers nor the audience realize it, the Winchesters’ lack of agency in this episode is ultimately a repetition of, rather than a variation from, the narrative objectification that now marks their everyday lives. In this way, “The French Mistake” serves to highlight the totality of Castiel’s authorial control and hints at the potentially destructive consequences of the choices that the angel has made.

At its core, the story of season six is Castiel’s own. The angel concedes this reality when, at the beginning of “The Man Who Would Be King,” he looks into the camera and begs the audience, “Let me tell you my story. Let me tell you everything.” Here, Castiel acknowledges both the terrible burden he has borne since he lifted Sam’s body from Hell and the ramifications of his subsequent, repeated exercise of narrative power over his friends’ lives. As Chan’s discussion of “It’s a Terrible Life” suggests, Zachariah’s “intervention . . . succeeds [only] until Dean looks past the metaphorical curtain” and sees the angel “operating the controls” (Chan, par. 2.5). That moment, she argues, illustrates Foucault’s assertion that “power is tolerable only on condition that it mask a substantial part of its self. Its success is proportional to its ability to hide its own mechanisms” (qtd. in Chan, par. 2.5). For much of season six, Castiel manages to keep his exercises of power—narrative agency—behind the “metaphorical curtain” of his familiar identity as rebel, as the Winchesters’ most loyal ally. However, the fiction of this narrative, this story that Castiel chooses to tell about himself, begins to crack, what Crowley characterizes as “The big lie,” that of “The good Cas. The righteous Cas”; Not only must he lie repeatedly to keep the facade intact, but he must kill, cheat, and, in the end, even murder one of his comrades, Balthazar (“The Man Who Would Be King”).

Castiel’s story, then, mirrors what Foucault describes later in the same passage from which Chan draws; the idea that individuals accept power because they “see it as a mere limit placed on their desire, leaving a measure of freedom—however slight—intact,” a fiction which power’s relative invisibility makes possible (*History* 86). Once he is forced to admit his duplicity to the Winchesters, Castiel’s carefully constructed narrative falls in ashes, forcing him to let go of the fiction of the “measure of freedom” that has driven his decision making for almost two years. In its absence, Castiel’s subsequent actions in “The Man Who Knew Too Much” (6.22) serve to make manifest the identity he has been practicing all season. After cracking Purgatory open



and absorbing the power of the millions of souls within it, Castiel looks into the faces of the Winchesters, his “pets,” and declares: “I’m not an angel anymore. I’m your new God. A better one. So you will bow down and profess your love unto me...or I shall destroy you” (“The Man Who Knew Too Much”).

In effect, the angel has been acting as the Winchesters’ God ever since he lifted Sam’s body from Hell; absorbing the souls of Purgatory, and the power that they possess allows him to become the new God in name as well as deed. In this moment, Castiel stakes rhetorical claim to his position within the dynamistic system of heavenly power, erasing any notion that his exercise of power leaves open any “measure of freedom” (Foucault, *History* 86). He gives up the identity of rebel to which he has so studiously clung, and chooses instead to reperform himself as the new head of Heaven, a foundationalist who will rule through domination, through “the privileging of a universal truth,” and through the objectification of Sam and Dean (Muckelbauer 7).

Ultimately, the events of season six prove cruelly ironic for both the Winchesters and Castiel. After all of the sacrifices that have marked their struggle to disrupt destiny and gain authorial control over their own lives, Sam and Dean find themselves betrayed by the one angel whose loyalty to their cause was without question, the one angel whom they called friend. Indeed, from his perch at their side, Castiel is able to achieve what the archangels could not: the transformation of the Winchesters into narrative objects, characters in a tale that Castiel alone controls. That said, Castiel’s reign as the new God proves quite brief, coming to an abrupt end in “Hello Cruel World” (7.2) when the power of the Leviathan dissolves both the angel’s vessel and his grace.

However, it is in season eight that the ramifications of Castiel’s actions in season six become particularly disastrous. First, against his will, Castiel is raised from Purgatory by Naomi (Amanda Tapping), an angel working to lead some of Heaven’s remaining forces. Naomi then sends the newly resurrected Castiel back to the Winchesters as a spy—no longer a master of his own story, but as a narrative object of Naomi’s own. In this way, Castiel is made to repeat the same fate he imposed upon Sam and Dean. With his own agency removed and his free will disrupted, Castiel is made a pawn in the same play of “unceasing manipulation” that marked the Winchesters’ lives before Team Free Will halted the Apocalypse (Gray, par. 6). In the end, then, the story of Castiel, the rebel who reached for the crown, is a pantomime of freedom and choice, one that underscores how much of an illusion free will in *Supernatural*—in our own “unmagicked” reality—can be.

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