

Supernatural and superhuman elements have been prominent in American culture from the time of the New England Puritans' intense emphasis on religion. Superpower surveys the appearance of supernatural and superhuman elements in American culture, focusing on the American fascination with narratives involving supernatural adventure, superhuman heroes, and vast conspiracies driven by supernatural evil. In particular, M. Keith Booker suggests that the popularity of such themes indicates a deep-seated dissatisfaction with the rationalized world of contemporary American society. Booker details the development of the national myths underlying the characters of Superman, Batman, and Spiderman; television hits from Star Trek to Lost; and the franchises of Pirates of the Caribbean and The Lord of the Rings. This culture-spanning investigation begins with a historical survey of supernatural and superhuman themes in American culture and concludes with the recent upsurge that began in the 1990s. It then turns to various works of recent popular culture with supernatural and superhuman themes such as Twin Peaks, The X-Files, and Buffy the Vampire Slayer, organized according to the desires to which these works respond. What do these fantasies reveal about what it means to be American today—and what we want it to mean?

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