

Suburban Superheroes: Utopia and Trauma in WandaVision

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Suburban Superheroes: Utopia and Trauma in *WandaVision*

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Suburban Superheroes: Utopia and Trauma in *WandaVision*

Jack Black, Sheffield Hallam University

In Marvel Studios', *WandaVision*, we are transported to a familiar television location: suburbia – in fact, we're almost given a history of suburbia on-screen. In episode one, we watch Wanda (Elizabeth Olsen) and Vision (Paul Bettany) live out a post-war serenity: a 1950's North American suburban town called 'Westview', where, early events see the couple manage nosy neighbours, frustrating bosses and a troublesome 'talent show' performance. However, as soon becomes clear, all is not what it seems.

Indeed, as we travel through a history of sitcom – each episode fast-forwards ten years, with episode two occurring in the 1960s; episode three/four, the 1970s; episode five, the 1980s; and, episode six, the 1990s/2000s – it becomes clear that the everyday concerns of a young suburban family goes far beyond the episodic trials and tribulations that usually impact our television sitcom families. Something's up – and it looks like Wanda has 'taken over' an actual US town, controlling its residents through a form of mind control that keeps them trapped within the sitcom narratives that she seemingly writes and directs. Wanda is the director to her own sitcom, and it's clear that she is doing this to escape from a number of past traumas (the death of her brother, 'Pietro', and Vision).

It is in managing this trauma that I believe the show's suburban location proves notable.

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Author Bio

Jack Black is a Senior Lecturer at Sheffield Hallam University. His research examines the interlinkages between culture and media studies, with particular attention given to cultural representation and ideology. His forthcoming publication *Race, Racism and Political Correctness in Comedy – A Psychoanalytic Exploration* (Routledge, 2021) critically considers the importance of comedy in challenging and redefining our relations to race and racism.