



The Antihero in American Television (Routledge Advances in Television Studies)

By Margrethe Bruun Vaage

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The antihero prevails in recent American drama television series. Characters such as mobster kingpin Tony Soprano (*The Sopranos*), meth cook and gangster-in-the-making Walter White (*Breaking Bad*) and serial killer Dexter Morgan (*Dexter*) are not morally good, so how do these television series make us engage in these morally bad main characters? And what does this tell us about our moral psychological make-up, and more specifically, about the moral psychology of fiction?

Vaage argues that the fictional status of these series deactivates rational, deliberate moral evaluation, making the spectator rely on moral emotions and intuitions that are relatively easy to manipulate with narrative strategies. Nevertheless, she also argues that these series regularly encourage reactivation of deliberate, moral evaluation. In so doing, these fictional series can teach us something about ourselves as moral beings?what our moral intuitions and emotions are, and how these might differ from deliberate, moral evaluation.

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The Antihero in American Television (Routledge Advances in Television Studies) By Margrethe Bruun Vaage Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #4427365 in Books
- Published on: 2015-10-27
- Original language: English
- Dimensions: 9.02" h x .56" w x 5.98" l, .0 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 228 pages

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Editorial Review

Review

"Combining an informative survey of salient research in psychology and philosophical aesthetics with careful conceptual analysis and close examinations of well-known television series, Margrethe Bruun Vaage's book offers a fresh perspective on the nature of contemporary American television drama and the ways it engages viewers. Exemplifying the virtues of the best interdisciplinary scholarship in the humanities, this book opens up new avenues of research for television studies scholars, cognitivist theorists, and philosophers of film, and will also appeal to any students or scholars with an interest in the question of what makes characters like Tony Soprano and Walter White so compelling." - **Ted Nannicelli**, *University of Queensland, Australia*

About the Author

Margrethe Bruun Vaage is Lecturer in the Film Department at the University of Kent, UK

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