The Representation of Female Characters in the CW's Supernatural

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Sveučilište u Zadru

Odjel za anglistiku
Engleski jezik i književnost (dvopredmetni)

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Zadar, 2019.

Izjava o akademskoj čestitosti

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1. Introduction

The TV series *Supernatural* first aired in 2005 and is an US-american show about the brothers Sam and Dean Winchester who spend their time driving cross-country in their '67 Chevy Impala, hunting demons, monsters and other supernatural entities. While at first glance, the definition of the series seems to tell all about it in a few words, *Supernatural*, like few other TV shows over the years, has already earned a cult status, often being ranked with true classics of the TV horror genre such as *The X Files*, *Twilight Zone*, and *Twin Peaks* (*Rolling Stone*, 2.9.2017). Initially aimed towards a young, male audience demographic, including guns, muscle cars and a soundtrack compiled almost exclusively of classic rock songs alongside their very masculine protagonist, writers mainly introduced female characters to the show in an effort to "sex [it] up" (*Supernatural Audience Demographic*, 17.8.2019). This resulted in an array of one-dimensional, easy to charm and quick to die female characters, serving as devices driving the plot or furthering the male protagonists' story arc, especially throughout the first few seasons of the show.

This paper centering on *Supernatural*'s female characters aims to present an analysis which is founded on various facts and metadata but bound into a comprehensible unit, forming an academic insight into one of today's longest running scripted TV series. What would be interesting to learn is whether the range of female characters differs throughout the seasons and at which point more fully fleshed out women were introduced, if so. The paper will be focusing on *Supernatural'*s most notable female characters who have left their distinctive mark on either, or both, plot and fan culture, and sort them by their overall typology introduced by the horror genre which has been a prevalent influence of the show. These women will be divided into three categories, seemingly based on their ability to fend for themselves, but really playing distinct roles to either service the development of other characters, the plot itself, or the audience watching it unravel. The three archetypes chosen are

the Damsel in Distress, the Female Villain, and the Action Heroine. Though it is important to mention that the oldest character archetype present in the show and analysed in this paper, the Damsel, is deeply rooted in the history of gothic literature, and represents the genre's connection to horror, where she also resides, which is why part of the analysis will include gothic fiction as a point of reference. Furthermore, the analysis presented will take into consideration their first appearance, function in the episode/season, number of episodes and whether she has survived beyond her service to the plot. The sources used will vary from writings in gender theory and theories about feminism and the horror genre in different media, to academic papers specifically about the show, its influences and how they were applied.

2. Women of Horror throughout History

Although perceived differently in the general public's conscience, women have always played a role in the horror genre since its earliest times - be it as tellers of cautionary tales at home, establishers and forerunners of the genre itself (like Mary Shelley or Jane C. Loudon), heroines within the stories who suffer and die, or live and thrive, all the way to women being the source of the horror in the tale being told. The genre has existed for long, and has been popular enough even by modern standards that specific archetypes had time to develop, fully form, be exploited, turned into clichés, be parodied and, eventually, subverted in an attempt to surprise the audience. Harrington (76) names five character archetypes: "the jock, the scholar, the slut, the fool, and the virgin," which have been represented in the postmodern horror movie, two of which are reserved almost exclusively for female characters. Interesting to note is that both "the slut" and "the virgin" are roles defined by the character's relationship to sex, with the virgin more often than not being the designated survivor, which builds on a tradition of gothic narratives setting apart the Mina Harkers from the Lucy Westenras in the story - but

with today's media being more direct than Stoker's Victorian analogies for what is seen as sexual deviancy (Hughes, 199).

It has to be remarked that in the majority of traditional narratives, female characters were most likely to play a passive role in the plot - they were abducted, locked away, and killed in various ways. Female characters have occupied the role of 'Damsel in Distress' for a long time, remaining characters who the plot happens *to*, and with little agency in the universe they live in as spectators and objects. In *Her Body, Himself: Gender in the Slasher Film*, Clover (205) refers back to Poe's formulation that the death of a beautiful woman is "the most poetical topic in the world" and goes on to state that the aesthetic of a woman in peril has always been an appealing motif, but finding its home in the horror genre it has reached its full potential. Furthermore, continuing Poe's formulation, that "the lips best suited for such topic are those of a bereaved lover" (55), the Damsel needs to be worth all the danger and bereavement her hero suffers, and her worth needs to be relatable to the viewer. Therefore, the Damsel needs to be beautiful, the image of perfection, which simultaneously serves the effect that, in her ultimate death, she both represents and defies the mortality of man, reaching her most desirable form (Bronfen, 57-76). We can find many examples of this type of character, ranging from Romantic fiction over slasher films to modern horror movies, featuring a female victim whose fate is the driving force behind the (typically male) hero's actions. The Damsel herself does not get a distinct and independent development arc, or does so extremely rarely, with it almost never turning out as elaborate as her male counterpart's. Her role is solely to drive the plot forward and thus create the struggles and hardships the hero has to master in order to save her, from which he grows as a character. It is considered that the general skeleton for this character archetype had been set by gothic novels in the eighteenth century such as Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764), spilling over the bounds of the genre and influencing almost all written and visual horror to come. Following the formula, there always

is a beautiful female threatened by a powerful man, herself being unable to defeat him and therefore seeking rescue by a (preferably equally beautiful) male hero, who then gains the right to claim her as a willing prize for his heroism. Alternatively, in Shelley's *Modern Prometheus* (1918) Viktor Frankenstein is content to disregard the Creature's warnings, pleading and threats until his beloved Elizabeth is murdered, her death ultimately spurning him into action and painting him as the bereaved avenger at last.

With the rise of the slasher movie in the sixties and seventies, the Damsel in Distress was no longer being saved from the monster, but instead evolved to be the ultimate victim. Female characters in such franchises are regularly "objectified and shown as nothing more than sex objects, (...) taking away the audience's ability to sympathize with them because they are seen as less valuable" (Wickersham 2), meaning they are often simply screaming and clumsy prey adhering to the beauty standard of the time, destined either to be saved by someone else or, which is more likely, to be killed in a horribly bloody manner. However, through movies like *Texas Chainsaw Massacre* (1978) or *Halloween* (1978), something else made its way into popular culture: the concept of the Final Girl.

According to Clover, the Final Girl is the one designated to survive the horror movie. In her book *Men, Women and Chainsaws* (1993) Clover (35) wrote: "The image of the distressed female most likely to linger is the one who did not die: the survivor, or Final Girl. She is the one who encounters the mutilated bodies of her friends and perceives the full extent of the preceding horror and of her own peril; (...). She is abject horror personified." In other words, the Final Girl functions as a substitute for the viewer, harnessing all the emotion and adrenaline to focus on her. She marks the dramatic ending of the movie, her survival being battled out over the last part of the narrative, keeping the tension high until the very end. Ultimately, the Final Girl screams, runs and hides, but she comes out a winner over the horrors she suffered, beating the odds by not much more than having incredibly good luck.

The eighties and nineties seemed a little more forgiving to its female characters in the horror and fantasy genre, bringing forward an archetype which could be called an extension of the Final Girl, only her ability to survive is not a matter of luck but the result of her skills and smarts. She is the aftermath of the Final Girl, someone who has learned to defend herself from the dangers she knows await. Ripley in *Alien* (1979) and Buffy from Whedon's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) both beat the stereotypes that women are either powerless, designated victims, or underlings of male villains doing their evil bidding. Especially *Buffy* has been praised over the years for its feminist message and empowering visuals for female fantasy fans; Buffy herself fits the typical characteristics of a Damsel, being a conventionally beautiful and popular high school student, cheerleader and prom princess (*Buffyverse Wiki*, 18.1.2018). However, instead of falling victim to a powerful supernatural presence or homicidal maniac, she rises to become a powerful slayer, saving the world from evil multiple times. Calling this archetype the Strong Female Character does not name her precisely enough, since there seems not to be clear definition to which everyone agrees, perhaps because she contains characteristics of multiple narrative character shortcuts and combines them in a more or less unique way in each incarnation. She is, however, a result of mass-marketed feminist slogans like “Girls can do anything!” which are removed from the still-prevalent issues of misogyny and violence against women (Brown, 147-148), but still strike a chord with audiences starved for representations of female empowerment.

However, not only have women been an effective medium of horror narratives in terms of telling or living (and dying) in them, they have also been and continue to be effective sources of horror themselves, serving powerful imagery and evoking base responses at odds with the cultural establishment of women as the gentler sex. Being an almost direct opposite of the original Damsel in Distress, the Female Villain is the main source of evil in her respective narrative. She “represented the fears men associated with the female sex, and they

became more terrifying than their male counterparts because of their lack of femininity and their portrayal of normally masculine behaviors." (Wickersham 3), although the "lack of femininity" mentioned could be challenged in certain aspects since the Female Villain often overlaps with the archetypal Femme Fatale. The Female Villain is confident in her abilities, extremely smart and aware of the power of her sexuality, using all of it to her advantage. Such women defy the general norm solely by being as they are, so it is not difficult to make them be perceived not only as intimidating but also as evil and demonic by adding just a small supernatural element. Unfortunately however, and despite their own original wickedness, many female villains are often made only servants of a higher (most likely male) entity, thus discrediting them for any schemes and plans, and making their motivation extremely questionable: famous examples include the vampire brides in Bram Stoker's *Dracula* who are most likely believed to have been under the influence of Dracula's mind control, and Bellatrix Lestrange (*Harry Potter*) who clearly was evil on her own but demonstrated a definite romantic infatuation with the Dark Lord Voldemort, driving her wickedness even further but erasing some of her agency.

It is obvious that the writers of *Supernatural* take note of the classic horror tropes and pay tribute to the genre's rules and traditions throughout the series, incorporating each of the female character archetypes mentioned above. By picking out certain notable female characters from the first few seasons, this paper is interested in determining whether they are represented by strictly following the genre's blueprints and how often they are subverted, or developed further.

3. The Representation of Female Characters in Supernatural

When asked about the show's lack of female representation throughout the seasons, Jared Padalecki, who plays Sam Winchester on the show, answered the reason was that "when Eric Kripke designed the series, he defined the tone where none of us wanted it to be about

sex or to show our physical attributes. There were more important things to tell. We wanted to do a series about problems, dedication, brotherhood and loyalty." (Metro US, 4.10.2019). Yet these characters cannot exist in isolation, and so have encountered, loved, lost and fought a number of female characters throughout the seasons. This section aims to analyze those characters by holding them up to the genre Supernatural has made itself at home in.

3.1.Women who need saving

In its episodes, *Supernatural* often incorporates opening scenes of a crime being committed, mostly from the viewpoint of the victim in order to establish the roles of good and bad right at the beginning and enforce the audience's support of the hunters, and not the monster. Much like in other popular TV crime procedurals, such as *CSI* or *Criminal Minds*, the victims in such opening scenes very often happen to be young and attractive females, defenseless against the supernatural entity preying on them. In *Supernatural* season one, the formula for each episode was nearly identical; a gruesome opening of someone being killed by the supernatural, followed by Sam and Dean Winchester first learning about the "case" and then attempting to solve it which usually involves posing as either priests or FBI agents, jokes and various running gags, and with the episode optionally ending with an emotional conversation in their '67 Chevy Impala. Like in Hollywood's slasher movies, the bloody opening scenes function as an empathic bridge for the audience who will then back up the good guys, in our case the hunters, and lose all concern about the violence on screen for the sake of justice.

But the audience are not the only ones thirsting for a satisfactory revenge act on the monster. Sam and Dean Winchester have since the series' pilot episode operated as hunters across the United States, driven by feelings of revenge and justice, primarily for their mother Mary, but also for Sam's college girlfriend Jessica.

3.1.1. Mary Winchester

Mary Winchester's death is the reason for the way John brought up their sons, Sam and Dean; ranging from their nomadic lifestyle and staying in various motels across the US while John was tracing Mary's demonic yellow-eyed demonic killer Azazel, over their idealized picture of their mother, all the way to their specific skill set of hunting supernatural beings which they were forced to acquire at an extremely young age. She is the first significant female character brought up in the show, and remains constantly present through conversation and association, and through episodes such as "In the Beginning" (4.03.) and "The Song Remains the Same" (5.13.) which involve the Winchesters time travelling into the past, until her resurrection in the eleventh season's finale ("Alpha and Omega" 11.23.) and her involvement in the plot of season twelve. For Sam and Dean, who lost their mother at six months and four years old, she is the picture perfect representative of the normal, domestic life which they both idealize because it was denied to them. The audience gets to meet Mary herself only briefly in the first episode ("Pilot" 1.01.) - other instances of Mary being on screen include various visions, ghost manifestations, demon scams, as well as memories and flashbacks through the eyes of a four year old Dean. In those, specifically, she is represented as the modern day 'Angel in the House'. The term 'Angel in the House' stems from the Victorian era ideal of the perfect housewife and was coined by the title of Coventry Patmore's poem about his wife, Emily (1866). According to the period's ideal, a woman reigns over the domestic space with a gentle hand and an automatic knowledge of her husband's needs, catering to his every wish for the sole purpose to please him, and because it pleases her to do so ("Angel in The House," *Brooklyn University English Department Website*). Dean's memories of his mother convey only this aspect of Mary's character - Mary as a devoted wife and mother, making Dean tomato and rice soup when he was sick, singing 'Hey Jude' to him when he couldn't sleep, cutting off the crust on his peanut butter and jelly sandwiches ("Dark

Side of the Moon" 5.16.). Her physical appearance seems to be chosen deliberately as well; Mary is an attractive, tall and slim woman with long blonde hair which is softly curled at the ends and partially pinned back, with individual strands of hair romantically escaping their intended direction. In the pilot episode, and as various manifestations during seasons one to six, she is seen dressed in either the pure white nightgown she was killed in, or in otherwise light and flowy garments. These images serve to visually affirm her status as the angel in the Winchester men's lives - she was pure and good, she was innocent, and had they been able to save her then life would still be as perfect as they remember it now. Her death is driving all three of them - John, Sam and Dean - to become who they are, to make specific decisions and follow a path that otherwise might not have been theirs. The Winchester's slogan becomes "Saving people. Hunting things. The family business." ("Wendigo" 1.02.) and throughout the show, they put special emphasis on the first part of it, marking a significant element of both Sam and Dean's personality and moral orientation. It almost seems like by 'saving people' from supernatural threats, the Winchesters atone for their inability to save Mary, even though John had practically no hunting experience prior to her death, and Sam and Dean were small children. This sense of responsibility shapes the brothers' view on other women they encounter on their trips.

3.1.2. Jessica Moore

Sam's perception of Mary is created by his father's and Dean's stories of her, since he was only six months old when she died. These stories of the domestic bliss as he came to know it makes him look for exactly that and ultimately finding it in Jessica Moore, his college girlfriend. He even takes it so far as to planning to propose to her after only eighteen months of their relationship. Jessica, or Jess as Sam affectionately calls her, is introduced to the audience in the pilot episode as an uncomplicated, nice and supporting Stanford student in a relationship with Sam Winchester. Visually, Jess resembles Mary a lot: tall and slender figure,

big blue eyes and long blonde hair. In short, she is the epitome of Sam's dream of normality, of a life without hunting. But of course, had Sam's dream fully come true, he would have never taken up hunting again and *Supernatural* would've been one lead character short. Therefore, Jess is conveniently murdered in the last few minutes of the show's pilot, rounding up the episode and setting the plot into motion. Jessica's death mirrors Mary's in many ways: Jess too dies pinned to the ceiling, dressed in a white nightgown, with an equally horrifying bloody gash across her abdomen, her blonde hair framing a frozen expression of pain. However, the audience does get a few more glimpses of Jess alive than they got of Mary: at the beginning, Jess is seen getting ready for a Halloween party, and introduced with the camera swiping upwards; starting at red high heels over white knee socks, up to a short white dress, and finally to her face, complete with a small nurse's cap, ultimately revealing her Halloween costume. Mulvey's analysis of the male gaze as a direct influence of movie camerawork and perspective stated that by breaking down a woman's form into isolated shots of her body, equaling the camera to the male protagonist's gaze to which the audience, in turn, relates, the female character is taken out of the context of "the Renaissance space, the illusion of depth demanded by the narrative" and introduced as an object of desire (33). This particular introduction sets Jess apart from Mary: Jess is introduced as the young, hot girl in the horror story while Mary is first seen with baby Sam in her arms, immediately marking her a mother, and therefore forbidden to call sexy. The white nightgown is very prominent in both cases, but even though it seems appropriate for Mary to wear one (she died at night, on November 2nd, 1983), the nightgown on Jess simply looks over exaggerated. Calvert (4) even points out that Jess previously did not wear a nightgown but simply shorts and a Smurfs t-shirt to sleep, and that the nightgown itself serves as an amplifier of the women's representation earlier in the episode: "(...) the image of the blonde women in white plays on the association of white (and of paleness and blondeness) with purity and goodness." At the

moment of Jessica's death. Sam lives through the same emotions as his father, discovering his murdered partner after drops of blood fall from the ceiling, and watching in agony as the body bursts into flames. Dean also reprises his role as Sam's saviour, following his father's order from twenty two years earlier and "carr[ies his] brother out as fast as [he] can" ("Pilot" 1.01.). Even though Sam's relationship with his father is extremely icy (with John practically exiling him after Sam expressed his wish to leave the hunting life and enrolled into college), he nevertheless follows in his father's footsteps to revenge on the yellow-eyed demon who is clearly responsible for both the death of his mother and of his girlfriend. Once again, it is a woman (or better to say, a woman's *death*, specifically) that motivates the male characters to take action as an emotional response to it. Similar to Mary, from the moment of her death onward, Jess is put on a pedestal as the ultimate victim: she is the standard for other women to be held against, a looming sense of guilt over Sam's head, and next to Mary the ideal of domestic bliss.

But *Supernatural* puts a twist on both the Angel-women in the Winchester's lives. In season five, it is confirmed that Jessica was deliberately brought together with Sam by their Stanford friend Brady who was possessed by a demon to manipulate Sam to take up hunting again after her death ("The Devil You Know" 5.20.), just as was hinted earlier by the yellow-eyed demon Azazel: "The cost of doing business, I'm afraid. I mean, sweet little Jessica – she just had to die. You were all set to marry that little blonde thing, become a tax lawyer with two kids, a beer gut, and a little McMansion in the suburbs. I needed you sharp on the road, honing your skills. Your gifts." ("All Hell Breaks Loose: Part One" 2.21.). This would mean that Sam's short termed domestic bliss he lived with Jess was fabricated in order for him to take a path in his life he would have avoided otherwise. In turn, that makes even the little we know of Jessica not necessarily true; her love and affection for Sam could've also been part of Azazel's manipulation, leaving her character without any definite background since there is

nothing else learned about her and it is not even entirely certain whether she was a Stanford student at all. All that remains is that Jess was a pawn in Azazel's plan to get Sam on the road, the one who had to die, and nothing more.

In 1845, Edgar Allan Poe's "The Raven" was published, in which set the foundation for yet another typisation for female characters, specifically dead love interests. The "Lost Lenore" has to fulfil three requirements to earn her name: she has to be the love interest of a prominent character, she has to be dead (or firmly believed so) before the story begins or die relatively early in the story, and her death has to have a significant and ongoing impact, consequences or relevance for the rest of the story (TV Tropes, 17.9.2017). Both Mary Winchester and Jessica Moore fulfil these requirements, however, since the character is explicitly defined to be a *love interest,* only Jess can be referred to as Sam's "lost Lenore." Jess' death truly had a significant and lasting impact on Sam Winchester's following plot points: by giving up on his "apple pie life" (Dean Winchester, "Pilot" 1.01.) and going for revenge, Sam deepened the bond with his brother Dean, with whom he started and stopped the apocalypse (multiple times), trapped Lucifer in his cage, defeated the leviathan, fought knights of Hell, found God and united him with his sister, to only name some. Still, it takes Sam almost two entire seasons (until he meets Madison in "Heart" 2.17) to want a relationship with someone else.

Unlike Jessica Moore, Mary Winchester gets a second chance: she is resurrected at the end of season eleven as a gift to Dean from the Darkness, after everything he did for her: "You gave me what I needed most. I wanna do the same for you." ("Alpha and Omega" 11.23.). At the same time, the audience (as well as the Winchester brothers themselves) gets a chance to meet Mary as she truly is and not how a grieving husband and father painted her to be. While Mary's hunter upbringing is only sporadically shown in the time travel instances, after her resurrection it becomes clear how talented a hunter she was before she not unlike

Sam decided to give it up and live a normal life with John and their boys. Throughout season twelve, Mary goes from the woman in white to a woman wielding a knife with expertise, and (what might be more significant) from a dreamy, perfect mother figure to a real, adult person dealing with loss and emotional trauma, making bad choices and struggling to correct the consequences. Her appearance changed accordingly; she was resurrected in her white nightgown which she quickly substituted with functional clothing featuring a plaid patterned button-up that seems to be an essential part of the traditional hunter wardrobe, and she also chopped her blonde locks into a long bob, signifying her change from the inside out. Her character development in season twelve reflects *Supernatural*'s trend since season five to show more facettes to its women than being only mothers, villains or femme fatales, even though the women brought forth continue to be handled questionably.

3.2. Women you need saving from

Every season of *Supernatural* has had its 'big bad'[1], be it the yellow-eyed demon Azazel, the Leviathan or Lucifer himself, orchestrating events behind the scenes and antagonizing the Winchesters. However, while the villains are always supernatural beings who can take the shape of any human vessel, it is noticeable that it is mostly male-shaped antagonists trying to destroy the Winchesters, take over the world, or chasing a similar ultimate goal: Azazel, Crowley, Dick Roman, Metatron, as well as Lucifer all took a male human form. Of course, there are female villains in *Supernatural* such as Ruby or Rowena, but they are seldom the primary evil of the entire season, or in the same power league as Crowley and Lucifer, for example. For a show running for currently almost fifteen years, a total number of three season-occupying female villains might be considered misogynistic at least. These three relevant female villains are Lilith (seasons two and three), Abaddon (season

[1] the fandom term for the main antagonist character/forces occupying the plot of an entire season

eight), and the Darkness (season ten and eleven). Since the Darkness ultimately sees the errors of her ways, even apologizes for her actions ("Alpha and Omega" 11.23.), she will be exempt from this analysis.

3.2.1. Lilith

Before Lilith manifests as a Female Villain, *Supernatural* has her fill yet another effective horror character archetype previously unmentioned in this work: the evil child. Flegel and Parks argue that this unsettling character archetype is a result of a new view on children as members of nineteenth century society and future workforce, writing; "Consequently, the health of society became a measure of its ability to conserve its children by nurturing them, educating them, and and encouraging them to invest themselves in capitalist society." (4-5). The problem arose with the clash of the new inclusivity and the old exclusion of the deviant and dangerous, with Flegel and Parks arguing that the evil child has become the most efficient in "frightening a society that (...) is so weak and soft-headed that it it would seek to include that which only seeks to destroy it" (6), effectively creating a conflict in society's very nature. Although she first appears as white smoke escaping from the opened Gates of Hell ("All Hell Breaks Loose: Part Two" 2.22.), Lilith soon possesses a body of a young girl ("Jus in Bello" 3.12.), and continues to seek out similar vessels until the end of season two when she discovers how good it feels to be "all grown-up and pretty" ("No Rest for the Wicked" 3.16.), further possessing the body of a beautiful adult woman. Her origin is rooted in the middle age Jewish mythology about Adam having a wife before Eve, who refused to submit to him and was in turn banished from Eden to roam the wasteland that was Earth, gaining her notorious reputation as "destroyer of children and seducer of men" (*Biblical Archeology,* 16.8.2017). In *Supernatural*, Lilith is the first twisted soul - the first demon - to ever be made by Lucifer, which rendered her more powerful and closer to her

creator than other demons, and she is even considered the Queen of Hell (*Supernatural Wiki*, 16.8.2017), implying a possible amorous connection to the Devil.

Throughout season two and three she is causing destruction and death with her sole presence, torturing people mentally and physically until finally killing them for joy ("No Rest for the Wicked" 3.16), all the while gathering demon forces around her to help her fulfill destiny: have Lucifer rise and start the Apocalypse. Sam and Dean put their efforts into stopping her breaking the sixty six seals that would open the cage in which Lucifer is trapped, but not knowing that sixty five seals are already broken and that Lilith herself is the sixty sixth, the Winchesters kill her in the season four finale ("Lucifer Rising" 4.22.), which frees Lucifer to occupy their attention throughout season five. Considering other villains in *Supernatural*'s history, Lilith has to be one of the cruelest adversaries the Winchesters ever fought, which makes her choosing children as vessels even more disturbing. Her adult vessel is once more a young beautiful blonde woman, but this time 'light' does not equal 'good' but rather serves as a deflection tactic, especially in instances when Lilith is taunting Sam Winchester and offers him to stop realizing her plan to free Lucifer in exchange for him sleeping with her ("The Monster at the End of this Book" 4.18.).

But despite her evil intentions, Lilith dies looking very much like Mary Winchester and Jessica Moore; blonde locks and a long, pure-white dress, defenseless and burning (from the inside out) at the hands of a man using demonic powers. However, Lilith is in no way a completely realized character, regardless of her being an impactful villain - even though she remains the 'big bad' for two whole seasons, what is learned of her remains the bare minimum required for her to be perceived as evil through it all, and leans heavily on preexisting lore and mythology. The purpose of her every action is to bring her beloved Lucifer to power, a purpose for which she is willing to sacrifice herself in the end, which

makes Lilith another female *Supernatural* character to die in order to further a male character's storyline.

3.2.2 Abaddon

The second ever female villain of three occupying a whole season of *Supernatural* is Abaddon, Knight of Hell. Her title is male coded, but since demons on the show like to stress that they are essentially genderless, it is remarkable that Abaddon decides to possess a female vessel. It is also what makes her a classic Female Villain: an attractive woman acting like a male adversary, with supernatural powers adding to the uneasy feeling of watching her act instead of being acted upon. She is considered the most prominent, since she is the most powerful female villain compared to others like the demons Ruby and Lilith (seasons three to five), Meg (seasons one, two, and five to eight), or even the witch Rowena (seasons ten onwards). Stopping her pursuit of ruling Hell instead of Crowley was the Winchesters main goal throughout season eight, which also introduced The Mark of Cain that was transferred onto Dean by Cain himself, eventually leading to Dean becoming a demon at the end of season nine.

Abaddon's origin story is set in 1958, when she infiltrated the Men of Letters' quarters to steal the key to their bunker and where she, after killing everyone in the room, follows Henry Winchester through a portal, bringing them both into the future, into the year 2013 ("As Time Goes By" 8.12.). Abaddon's specific vessel of choice, young soon-to-be member of the Men of Letters Josie Sands, is one of the reasons for Abaddon's success as a villain opposing the Winchesters. As a woman, Josie was most likely an exception in the Men of Letters' ranks, as the name of the organization might suggest, but nevertheless extremely educated in each supernatural field including spells, incantations and rituals known to the organization that could have been used to fight, defeat and exorcise even a powerful demon such as a Knight of Hell like Abaddon - in other words, Josie Sands was on the best way of

becoming a Badass Heroine, in 1958 no less. In choosing Josie as her host, Abaddon gained access to all that knowledge as well as Josie's life experience, making her an even more clever and dangerous opponent than she already was, being able to predict and counteract any strategy that Sam and Dean could possibly try to defeat her (Bowtrunckle, 26.8.2017), especially since the brothers had no access to any information gathered by the Men of Letters prior to the appearance of Henry Winchester in their motel closet ("As Time Goes By" 8.12.). Additionally, it made her war with Sam and Dean a personal one; not only did Josie Sands work closely together with Henry Winchester so she was likely to know much about him and his family, she also had romantic feelings for him, which made killing Henry and opposing his descendants even more of a delight for Abaddon, supposing that Josie was still conscious during Abaddon's possession, or at least up until the point when her head was cut off. Abaddon herself admitted that "once [she]'s on top [she]'ll make you watch" ("Devil May Care" 9.2.), confirming the theory that she kept Josie alive and conscious while committing her deeds. This means that, including the physical torture put upon her physical self, Josie was forced to endure watching both the organization she devoted herself to as well as the man she loved be destroyed (Nielsen 110).

Concerning Josie's body itself, Abaddon's possession is considered the most brutal one to be featured in a show where female bodies are generally treated in a gruesome way (Mary and Jessica's death, Meg's possession and death, Rowena's death, and similar). Nielsen (110) points out that "[N]o other demon, including Azazel, the killer of Mary Winchester, Jessica Moore, and John Winchester, is treated to such an inherently sadistic method of defeat," referring to the fact that the Winchesters shot Abaddon (and Josie) in both head and body, beheaded her and cut her into tiny pieces, after which she was sewn back together, later doused in Holy Oil and set on fire, only to die as the result of a violent stabbing with the First Blade in "King of the Damned" (9.22.). Nielsen (110) also adds that the brutal

treatment of female bodies in gothic fiction is no novelty, hinting at her similarities with classic gothic novel characters such as Lucy Westenra (*Dracula*, 1897) and the female creature in *Frankenstein* (1818), ranking Josie's possession and ultimate passing close to their treatment. Furthermore, it is important to note that all the violence committed over Josie's body is dismissed as a necessary act in order to destroy the demon possessing her, thus continuing to desensitize the audience to reacting to violence over female characters since it is understood that there was no other way for the Winchester men to win the fight and survive. There had been a shift in the series at one point between seasons three and five (probably after acquiring Ruby's demon-killing knife), when the Winchesters stopped trying to save the victims of possession through exorcism and started solving such cases by simply stabbing the victim, killing both the demon and the human vessel in the process and labeling them as someone "they couldn't save" (particularly in the case of Meg Masters, 4.2.). But even this label got used more sparsely in recent seasons, having not been mentioned in reference to Josie Sands at all, which leads to the question if either the writers or the Winchesters have forgotten about the "saving people"-part in their family motto.

Physically, Abaddon fulfills the classic fantasy trope of a redhead with supernatural powers (*TV Tropes*, 28.8.2017). This trope probably has its roots in Europe and the Balkans of the Middle Ages, where people (and especially women) with red hair were marked as witches or vampires - even the Malleus Maleficarum (1487) stated that "those whose hair is red, of a certain peculiar shade, are unmistakably vampires," or in possession of another connection to supernatural powers. Knowing that, it is impossible not to notice the number of redhead female characters, be it sorceresses, mutants, witches or warriors in classic fantasy novels and comics ranging from the 1930s to the 1970s which have left a definite mark on today's visual pop culture, considering that the redheaded population on Earth accounts to a mere one percent. However, despite popular opinion that the reason might have been the

writers preferring redheads over ‘ordinary-haired’ women, or simply being too lazy to make their female character stand out by anything but their hair color, these female characters are actually redheaded because “it was simply easier to make a character’s hair red instead of brown due to the coloring technique used in most Golden and Silver Age Comics” (Hoffer, 29.8.2017). However, as mentioned above, the cultural impact on pop culture was made and fictional content that was published after the seventies kept inserting red-headed women to signify her uniqueness, her special place in the set of characters, yet failing to characterize her any more than the bare minimum, which included her hair color.

. In *Supernatural*, Abaddon joins the rank of red headed women who take a special place in the Winchesters’ lives: Anna Milton (season four and five) was an angel who chose to fall and later tried to prevent Sam and Dean ever being born by killing their parents Mary and John (“The Song Remains The Same” 5.13.), but her most iconic scene includes having sex with Dean Winchester in the Impala (“Heaven And Hell” 4.10.); Charlie Bradbury turned from an insignificant one-time character to a fully fledged hunter and true Winchester, becoming “the little sister [Dean] never wanted” (“The Girl With the Dungeons and Dragons Tattoo” 7.20.); Rowena MacLeod, a natural born Scottish witch and mother of the man who went to become Crowley, King of Hell, spent almost three entire seasons (ten to twelve) dancing on the line between helpful and villainous, until being killed off (“All Along the Watchtower” 12.23.) rather unceremoniously off-screen despite her amusingly dramatic character. None of these women were treated especially kind considering their exit from the show, but they all stood out as well-written and interesting female characters with red hair. Abaddon might have been the mightiest demon the Winchesters had to face, but she has definitely gained significantly more fan following because she chose a female vessel instead of a male one, with countless fans dressing up as Abaddon to prove this.

3.3 Women who don’t need saving… until they do

Considering that its audience is predominantly female, *Supernatural* remains to be a show which is not using its potential considering Strong Female Characters. With the hunter life also being extremely masculine and patriarchal, women seem to be pushed aside and having to let the boys handle it all instead of putting themselves in too great a danger. And this danger is real and proven to be fatal if we consider how female characters have exited the show throughout the seasons; Eileen Leahy was mauled by hellhounds, Alicia and her mother Tasha Banes were stabbed with a witch killing dagger, Ellen Harvelle died in an explosion which stopped hellhounds from getting to Sam and Dean. Coming from the ranks of law enforcement, two characters who have to be mentioned here as well are Sheriffs Jody Milly and Donna Hanscum, who have not devoted their lives to hunting of the supernatural, but are always ready to help in times of need. This list could not be much longer, since these are the best known female hunters which died on the show in recent seasons, leaving out only the two most prominent female hunters of *Supernatural* to be discussed.

3.3.1. Jo Harvelle

Joanna Beth Harvelle grew up surrounded by hunters, with her father Bill being one and her mother Ellen operating the Roadhouse, a bar which also served as a central point for hunters passing by. After her father died while on a hunt, Jo expressed the wish to become a hunter, and trained with the hunters who came to the Roadhouse, even though her mother was strictly against it. Jo is introduced in season two ("Everybody Loves a Clown" 2.2.) and is shown as a tough and capable young woman, able to defend her property against (potential) intruders Sam and Dean, fulfilling every notion of being the perfect Action Girl (*TV Tropes*). Borsellino (113) points out the symbolism she carries in her name; her nickname Jo refers back to Clover's Final Girl (*Men, Women, and Chainsaws*, Preface to the Princeton Classics Edition) with a masculine name, also conveying that Jo might be tougher than she is represented: a petite girl with long blonde hair and doe eyes. Following that, her surname

‘Harvelle’ stems from Old English and stands for ‘warrior woman,’ which would make Jo a female character meant to survive from the moment she was introduced, the Final Girl-Warrior. However, it seems like the writers changed their intentions with her, as was evident to Borsellino in Jo’s blog (which was originally posted on Warner Brother’s Official Website until 2007, and which is now transcribed on the *Supernatural Wiki* webpage). In her blog, Jo documented her life at the Roadhouse, her wish to be a hunter, and Gordon’s tutoring, but also wanting to help create a place for women in the world of hunting, revealing herself to be “a young woman at ease with herself and her place in the world” (Borsellino, 113). Nevertheless, this first version of her writing was soon deleted and replaced by an entry with the same backstory but telling a tragic tale of Jo’s hunting partnership and possible romantic involvement with a young hunter named Rick. While it could have been a simple adjustment of her character backstory, it seems like a drawback from the original plan of introducing a capable and young female hunter in the making. Borsellino (114) even argues that Jo was made into the exact opposite of what she was supposed to be: instead of a tough, trailblazing, female-empowering hunter she was represented as a girl playing with her father’s toys, crying over heartbreak and spiteing her mother by putting herself in danger.

In her first appearance, Jo is visibly marked as part of the Winchester world: her clothing reflects the typical hunter gear; functional, earth colored, durable and including a plaid button up, but it is at the same time softer and more delicate, as if on a threshold between two worlds. A friendship with Sam and Dean is quickly formed, and soon the Winchesters (forcedly) team up with her while trying to exorcise the ghost of H.H. Holmes out of a apartment building in Philadelphia, without Ellen’s knowledge (“No Exit” 2.6.). During the episode, the Winchesters continue to underestimate her abilities, with Dean even commenting: “She put together a good file, but could you see her out here, working one of these things? I don’t think so,” to Sam. While it might be justifiable since Jo was a young and

inexperienced hunter, she did not receive the same kind of treatment as her male counterparts would, the first example being Dean Winchester who was forced to protect his brother against numerous entities and creatures since he was just four years old. Even though it shines through that Dean's problem while working with Jo is in fact hunting with amateurs, Jo herself calls him misogynistic: "You think women can't do the job!" which could be a sign of the writer's self-awareness. Wickersham (146) points out that Dean "even goes so far as to threaten to call her mother, as if Jo were a child, rather than a woman in her twenties," and practically sends her home to her mother after their hunt, only teaming up with her again when it is absolutely inevitable ("Abandon All Hope…" 5.10.). Furthermore, throughout the episode the brothers both try to persuade her not to become a hunter and instead live a normal life, pacifying her and using her as bait on several occasions since she fits the ghost's victim profile. In these instances Jo's performance shifts from a young woman able to defend herself (like in her first appearance) to a slightly clueless girl needing assistance and protection from older male characters, which in turn proves the Winchesters (and the audience) right in their assumptions that Jo has no place in the hunting world, mainly because she is a girl.

Nevertheless, Jo persists in her intention to become a hunter and continues to hunt even after the episode's end, and becomes indispensable enough that the Winchesters ask Jo, Ellen, Bobby and Castiel for help in retrieving the Colt that can allegedly kill Lucifer from a demons and hellhounds infested town ("Abandon All Hope…" 5.10.). The group succeeds in finding the Colt, but in the process Jo saves Dean from a hellhound leaving her with fatal injuries. Knowing that their escape is impossible because Ellen cannot leave her daughter to die alone, the Harvelle women set up hellhound-killing explosives to hinder the beasts from following the rest of the group and sacrifice themselves, dying in the explosion. And the story repeats itself again: Sam and Dean mourn their friends, feel guilty about their deaths while

looking at a photograph they happened to take of everyone right before the fateful mission, and it inspires them to follow through with the plan of defeating the Devil.

Symbolically, Jo seems to be the opposite to Sam Winchester: they share several timeline points such as growing up in the hunter world, losing their father, going to college and ultimately returning to their hunting heritage, but their motivation behind their decision to do so is completely opposite, with Sam seeing it as a temporary situation while Jo hopes it to be permanent. On such occasions, Jo resonates more with Dean, like in their shared passion for hunting and the life on the road. Such parallels with characters like Jo bring out the differences between Sam and Dean, because each of their reactions to her illuminate different aspects of the boys' characters. So instead of valuing Jo's character traits and her whole, unique person, the audience more often values what characters like Jo Harvelle bring out in the Winchesters, such as protectiveness or fondness. According to *Supernatural* creator Eric Kripke, Jo was initially introduced as a love interest for Dean, evident from their interaction during Jo's first appearance, but this plan was abandoned due to poor and partly angry fan reactions, leading Kripke to admit that "we feel we learned from that mistake…[W]e conceived the character wrong," even admitting that the writers will not try to force anything in the future since "[their] fans are notoriously protective of [their] boys." (*TV Guide*, 22.8.) However, this kind of feedback and way of constructing the show might be the reason why only male characters are allowed to have heavily elaborated storylines, while female characters get to be only blips in the show's mythology.

3.3.2. Charlie Bradbury

Significantly more than just a blip in *Supernatural*'s mythology is the character of Charlie Bradbury. About her, Walton (114) writes: "Before Charlie, *Supernatural* had a few strong female recurring characters, but each of them fall into unsophisticated tropes and lack the backstory, personhood and character development of Charlie." Since her introduction in

season seven ("The Girl with the Dungeons and Dragons Tattoo" 7.20.) as the bubbly redhead with a passion for IT technology and nerd pop culture, Charlie quickly became a fan favourite. From the beginning, she had a recognizable one-liner since the end of her first episode (dismissing the Winchesters with "Peace out bitches!" while holding up the Vulcan salute), a distinct personality, and a smile on her face despite the eminent danger she was in. However, as the show progressed, Charlie turned from the adorable sidekick to someone who might be the most self-actualized and content person to ever play a part in the Winchesters' lives, which is impressive considering that she was only supposed to appear in one episode.

Working for season seven's 'big bad' Dick Roman, Charlie agrees to help the Winchesters after she learns of the existence of Leviathans, using her hacking skills to break into Roman's emails from his office. Unlike the washed out color palette and rather rustic aesthetic that *Supernatural*'s audience is used to, Charlie appears wearing clashing colors, headphones, flats and a Star Wars T-shirt, her bright red hair additionally letting her stand out against the dull office surroundings. She is immediately relatable when shown in her office cubicle which is littered with nerd culture items and collectables, and especially when fistbumping a bubble-head figurine of *Harry Potter*'s Hermione Granger. Saylor points out that, along with Garth, Charlie serves like an audience advocate - she is the character to which the show's fans can relate the most: nerdy, a little obsessive, passionate and introverted at the same time, combining brilliance and insecurities into a realistic depiction of a person who grew up outside the hunting universe and found their way into it by accident.

But unlike other female characters that appeared on the show, Charlie defies the norm for *Supernatural*'s women from the first moment on screen: instead of being a gothic heroine who "is smart enough to use her wits to catch a man's attention, but too stupid to protect [herself] from being kidnapped, thus giving their chosen male a chance to save their Damsel-selves" (Saylor), Charlie continues to be written realistically in each episode, saving the

Winchesters often enough to earn her place in their hunting family but also getting trapped often enough for it to be evident that Charlie has no traditional hunter legacy. She not only feels comfortable in a traditionally male dominated 'profession' like hunting, but also in a male dominated space which is fandom. Charlie's passion for pop culture classics such as *Star Wars, Lord of the Rings* and *X Files* is obvious, but she is not the stereotypical, over the top fangirl lacking self-control, nor is she ever accused of being a fake geek girl despite her feminine appearance; Charlie Bradbury is, simply said, a quite realistic representation of women who enjoy and express passion for their hobbies in their everyday lives. Additional to that, Charlie is extraordinarily talented in computer programming - even considered the best there is - which undermines traditional sexist notions about men being better than women at handling any type of technology. Furthermore, she is not shy of stating that she is a lesbian during her first appearance on the show, making her one of the very few characters on *Supernatural* who are openly part of the LGBT community, and breaking the show's expectation of heteronormativity which had been painfully persistent up until season seven. However, her sexuality is at no point made a crucial factor in her character development: Charlie is confident about herself since before her first on-screen appearance, and non-hesitant to flirt with and kiss women in various episodes featuring her character.

Nevertheless, Charlie continues to offer more to the audience, teasing with the reveal that her name is fake and that her past is criminal, which stands in stark contrast with her overall sunny personality. As the Winchesters uncover more about Charlie, like a file stating her real name and history with anti-authority disorder, clinical depression and violent outbursts, and even assist her in overcoming childhood trauma ("Pac-Man Fever" 8.20.), she becomes the most self-actualized person on the entire show, presumably.

That is especially evident in season ten's "There's No Place Like Home" (10.11.) where Charlie is split into a 'good' and a 'bad' version of herself. Good Charlie looks for the

Winchesters for help while Dark Charlie tracks down the driver who is responsible for her parents' death and kills him. By the end of the episode, Charlie is once again complete and, considering that Dark Charlie beat up Sam and Dean, and committed a murder, speaks the moral of the episode out loud: "I just got to keep moving forward. We all do." She even goes so far as to call out the Winchesters, but especially Dean, for their tendency to let guilt be their motivator for isolation, self-hatred and suicide missions, which is in fact a great part of their respective personalities ever since *Supernatural*'s pilot episode. Walton (122) describes the brothers as "easily distraught and self-flagellating when faced with personal dilemma because for them there are only two options, and if they're doing one thing that may be incidentally evil, then they must be personally evil," meaning that the reason why Sam and Dean often cannot cope with the morally gray areas they encounter in life is because their world has been strictly divided into 'good' and 'evil' since they were children. Especially Dean is significantly disadvantaged, preferring his emotional conflicts and doubts to remain "bottled," blatantly refusing to talk about his issues or to participate in Sam's so-called "chick flick moments," which might be a remnant of John's militaristic methods of upbringing. Charlie here serves as an example, openly accepting every aspect of herself because she knows that it is her only chance if she wants to keep on moving.

However, being a character in a show like *Supernatural*, there is no guarantee of survival for any character, including one of its most complex written female characters and fan favorites. This is why Charlie Bradbury, the best computer programmer, IT genius and fully fledged hunter ends up 'stuffed into the fridge' (Gail Simone, *Women in Refrigerators*, 12.03.2019), meaning killed offscreen and left for the Winchesters to find placed in a bloody bathtub in a destroyed motel room ("Dark Dynasty" 10.21). There might be no death on *Supernatural* that has sparked as much outrage as Charlie Bradbury's death, with fans demanding reasons why during the Supernatural ComicCon Panel in 2015 from showrunner

Jeremy Carver (who completely failed to answer the question). Once again a woman's death is the motivator behind the Winchesters' following actions, driven by anger and guilt, to take vengeance on the ones responsible for Charlie's murder. The Styne family appeared only episodes before murdering her and were afterwards destroyed by the Winchesters with relative ease, making many consider the possibility that they were created solely to showcase another gruesome murder of a beloved character which would signify the emotional peak of season ten and set the tone between the brothers for the following season.

4. Conclusion

Eric Kripke's *Supernatural* is a show about two brothers travelling through the United States hunting monsters and supernatural entities of all kinds, and was originally created and marketed to appeal to a male audience. Over the years however, the fan population has become predominantly female, without the show straying from its original pitch as an action, horror and road movie genre hybrid. But despite its number of female fans, and the fact that *Supernatural* draws inspiration from genres with a great number of female parts, the representation of women in the show have barely evolved over the course of its currently fourteen aired seasons, with female roles mostly limited to three major archetype. Almost as if mirroring the development of the genre's characters, *Supernatural*'s Damsels and Angels of the House stand at the beginning of the show's journey, occupying the first few seasons and remaining either as specters of their former selves like Jessica Moore, or returning to be turned into a modern action heroine like Mary Winchester has been. Wanting to create a story centered on brotherhood and not relationships, as well as taking into account negative fan reactions when introducing potential love interests for Sam and Dean, female characters were introduced as threats to the show's plot, and not to the availability of its main characters; both Lilith and Abaddon were effective driving forces of their respective seasons, creating conflicts

and drawing out the brothers' issues and differences, but were killed off as soon as their function was fulfilled. And even their deaths served a higher purpose, Lilith's in unleashing Lucifer and ushering in the literal Apocalypse, and Abaddon's in highlighting Dean's violent loss of control after carrying the Mark of Cain. The hunter universe is a male-dominated space, and women are rarely seen as competent enough for the job, and like in Jo Harvelle's case they have to put up with prejudice, an unwillingness to educate, and outright misogyny. Charlie Bradbury is one of the few successful female hunters, and one without a family heritage bond to the hunting life, which marks her an exception - until it does not. Both Jo and Charlie are disposed of in favor of furthering the plot and its' male protagonists. Especially Charlie's death sparked outrage, as the fanbase found that the death of the fan-favourite lesbian success story was pointless and needlessly cruel.

The writers of *Supernatural* have made an effort of being more inclusive considering the progression of its introduced female characters, going from weekly unnamed victim to strong and capable women with lives outside of the Winchesters' plotline who reprise their roles every now and then, like Sheriff Jody Mills. But even with her and the return of Mary Winchester taken into account, the show has kept up another tradition of the horror genre, namely in its dismissiveness of female bodies; be it stabbing, gutting, smiting, or otherwise, women have been violently dying on *Supernatural* since episode one. With only one more season to go, it remains unlikely that there will be any new, significant characters introduced, leaving the show with a fifteen year run fairly empty of female characters that could hold their own against Sam and Dean Winchester, making the ones that were lost stand out even more, and the ones that remain be held even closer to the fans' hearts.

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5. THE REPRESENTATION OF FEMALE CHARACTERS IN THE CW'S SUPERNATURAL

The handling of female characters in Eric Kripke's *Supernatural* has long been a questionable one. In its fifteen-year air time, *Supernatural* has not wavered far from its two-men core cast but has introduced many side characters that accompanied the Winchester brothers along their way of fighting the supernatural across the US. Considering the essential role women have played in establishing and creating for the gothic and horror genre, from which *Supernatural* draws inspiration and pays homage to, this work aims to present an analysis of the role women played in this TV series concerning their roles in the plot, possible character development, longevity, visual and first appearance. In its main part, the paper takes six of the most notable female characters featured and categorizes them into three character archetypes most commonly represented in gothic and horror literature and media: Damsels (Mary Winchester and Jessica Moore), Villains (Lilith and Abaddon) and Heroines (Jo Harvelle and Charlie Bradbury). The paper also references heavily works concerned with traditions of horror, female representation within the genre, works written specifically about the show, and the show itself as source material for the arguments presented. What is gained from this analysis is that often enough, the show follows the simplistic blueprint of writing women without providing enough to make them fully formed characters, more often than not using them to drive forward either plot or main (male) character development and getting violently rid of them as soon as their purpose is served. The instances of subverting what is expected of the characters are few and non-satisfying, leaving a show with a predominantly female fanbase devoid of relatable female characters.

KEY WORDS: popular culture, gothic, horror, gender, feminism, supernatural, archetype.

6. REPREZENTACIJA ŽENSKIH LIKOVA U CW SERIJI SUPERNATURAL (LOVCI NA NATPRIRODNO)

Način obrade ženskih likova u seriji Erica Kripkea Supernatural (Lovci na natprirodno) već se poduže smatra upitnim. Tijekom svog petnaestogodišnjeg emitiranja, serija Supernatural nije puno proširivala svoju središnju postavu od dva glavna lika, ali je uvedeno mnoštvo sporednih likova koji su pratili put braće Winchester u njihovom lovu na natprirodno po SAD-u.

Uzimajući u obzir veliku ulogu žena u utvrđivanju i stvaranju za horor žanr, iz kojeg Supernatural vuče inspiraciju i kojem odaje počast, cilj ovog rada je predstaviti analizu ženskih uloga u ovoj seriji, primarno njihovih uloga u radnji, mogućnost razvitka lika, dugovječnost, izgled i način kako su prvi put prikazane. U glavnom dijelu, ovaj rad uzima za analizu šest najupečatljivih ženskih likova iz serije i analizira ih unutar tri arhetipa koji su zastupljeni u gotičkoj i horor literaturi i medijima: damu u nevolji (Mary Winchester i Jessica Moore), ženskog negativca (Lilith i Abaddon), te heroinu (Jo Harvelle i Charlie Bradbury). Ovaj rad se također poziva na radove pisane na temu tradicije horor žanra, reprezentaciju ženskih likova u žanru, radove pisane specifično o seriji Supernatural, te samu seriju kao izvorni materijal za predstavljene argumente. Zaključak ove analize je da serija često samo prati jednostavne predloške za stvaranje ženskih likova, bez dovoljno informacija da bi lik bio potpun i trodimenzionalan, da su ženski likovi najčešće samo način da se pokrene radnja ili dodatno okarakterizira glavni (muški) lik, i da nestanu s ekrana čim ispune svoju svrhu. Primjeri svrgavanja onog što se očekuje od likova su rijetki i ne zadovoljavaju, što ostavlja seriju s većim dijelom ženskih obožavatelja bez ženskih likova s kojima bi se mogle poistovjetiti.

KLJUČNE RIJEČI: popularna kultura, gotika, horor, rod, feminizam, natprirodno, arhetip.