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Queer Representation in *Supernatural*
Anna Štrofová

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Jméno a příjmení: **Anna Štrofová**
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Zásady pro vypracování

Cílem této práce je zmapovat a zanalyzovat queer reprezentaci v populárním televizním seriálu *Lovci duchů* (2005-2020). Především pak půjde o zachycení genderové a sexuální identity postav lidí, andělů a démonů. Studentka nejen nadefinuje základní pojmy genderové a queer teorie, se kterými bude pracovat, ale také nastíní queer reprezentaci v populární kultuře druhé poloviny 20. století a začátku 21. století (vč. obvyklých tropů spojených s queer komunitou). Autorka také nastíní vhodnou mytologii andělů a démonů a porovná ji s obrazem ve zmíněném tel. seriálu. Své analýzy bude autorka vhodně opírat o sekundární zdroje a dialogy ze seriálu.

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Mgr. Petra Kohlová

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doc. Mgr. Jiří Kubeš, Ph.D. v.r.
děkan

Mgr. Olga Roebuck, Ph.D. v.r.
vedoucí katedry

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ANNOTATION

This bachelor thesis focuses on queer representation in the television series *Supernatural* created by Eric Kripke. It describes queer theory together with gender identity and discusses their meaning. The thesis also introduces the series and the tropes used, such as queerbaiting and Bury Your Gays. Additionally, it analyzes the show's main characters and deals with their gender and sexuality relevant to the theoretical concepts.

KEY WORDS

Queer representation, queer theory, gender identity, sexuality, Eric Kripke, *Supernatural*

NÁZEV

Queer reprezentace v televizním seriálu *Lovci duchů*

ANOTACE

Tato bakalářská práce se zaměřuje na queer reprezentaci v televizním seriálu *Lovci duchů* od Erica Kripke. Práce popisuje queer teorii spolu s genderovou identitou a vyjasňuje jejich význam. Práce také představuje tento seriál a tropy použité v tomto seriálu, jako je queerbaiting a Bury Your Gays. Kromě toho analyzuje hlavní postavy seriálu a zabývá se jejich pohlavím a sexualitou, které jsou vloženy do kontextu s teoretickými pojmy.

KLÍČOVÁ SLOVA

Queer reprezentace, queer teorie, gender identita, sexualita, Eric Kripke, *Lovci duchů*

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INTRODUCTION

This bachelor thesis deals with the queer representation shown in the television series *Supernatural* (The WB/The CW, 2005-2020) created by Eric Kripke. More importantly, it describes theoretical concepts, such as queer theory and gender identity, and their historical beginnings. It also analyzes the show's two main characters, Dean Winchester and the angel Castiel, and tropes which were deliberately used to appeal to the growing audience of queer viewers. Lastly, it gives evidence to Dean's bisexual struggles and the sexual transformations of celestial beings.

The first chapter describes queer theory. It is a practice that challenges the understandings of gender and sexual identities which developed from heterosexual ideas. It is believed that it is more focused on gender performance rather than sexuality itself. That is what makes this theory confusing as it still looking for answers. Jagose claims that it developed from controversial queer studies and aims to understand sexual self-identifications or repressed youth communities.¹ However, queer thoughts are yet be stabilized due to their ambiguous nature. Queer theory emerged in the 1990s from both academic and non-academic backgrounds, but provoked the scholastic field of queer studies. The main definition of queer, according to Jagose, is that it consists of acts and approaches which highlight disagreements in relations of gender and sexual desires.² Queer perceptions question the simple terminology of heterosexual relationships and the inability to lead a heterosexual partnership. Nowadays, McCann states that the queer theory moved from identity solutions and sexual attraction to various new issues outside sexuality.³

The second chapter offers gender identity together with a close analysis from the television series regarding supernatural beings and their gender specified in biblical scriptures. Butler battles with the meaning of gender and puts it in context with biological sex. They continue to define feminism and the struggles women experience contrary to their opposite sex. Philosophers, such as Simone de Beauvoir, upholds that sex is only an object in contrast to gender, and that it continues to be governed by standards of the society.⁴ People give sex compelling attention by associating it with cultural obligations. However, according to Butler, gender and sex being social factors means that people have inaccurate views of their gender

¹ Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 2.

² Jagose, *Queer Theory*, 2-3.

³ Hannah McCann and Whitney Monaghan, *Queer Theory Now: From Foundations to Futures* (United Kingdom: Red Globe Press, 2019), 4.

⁴ Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (December 1988): 521.

and oppose its forced aspect.⁵ The chapter also adds biblical interpretations of gender of celestial entities. It includes examples of analysis from the series and its supernatural characters.

The third chapter gives the history of queer representation on television from the second half of the 20th century until the 1990s. As marriage was only established as a communion of a man and a woman, queer partnerships were not common in general public or on broadcast television. In 1996, Massachusetts Supreme Court urged to give equal marriage laws to homosexuals, and San Francisco authorities allowed granting marriage permits to queer people even if it was in contradiction with the law. LGBTQ+ communities have been welcomed over the past two decades which researchers linked to the growth of popular media. However, tolerance towards homosexuality brought its issues in society. Broadcasting agencies practically ignored the existence of homosexuality and television streaming companies were banned from depicting this new wave of queer representation. If homosexual characters appeared on television, they were only showed as abusers, victims or drag queens, states Raley and Lucas.⁶ Only 1970s and 1980s brought a subtly positive LGBTQ+ portrayals, but the characters did not have a recurring status. They were only a one-episode deal. The 1990s, however, brought a new wave of tolerance and openness. Gay characters started to be depicted more often and were advanced to a series regular. Even with the new century and more open society, there were still strong heterosexual leads which resulted in various practices to be born. One of them is *queerbaiting* which this chapter also discusses. In short, queerbaiting trope is purposeful luring of viewers into engaging with something under the incorrect presumption. According to Nordin, queerbaiting is a sort of exploitation of queer interpretations but omission of them.⁷ Furthermore, this chapter offers multiple examples of the practice of queerbaiting shown in selected pieces of scripts from *Supernatural*. The scenes include Dean Winchester and Castiel who are canonically only friends until Castiel confesses his homosexual love to Dean before he dies. These transcripts propose that these two characters are indeed being queerbaited for the purpose of viewers' attention. Moreover, the chapter explains a second trope, *Bury Your Gays*, and shows its use on more excerpts from the show, together with the authors' and the actors' own opinions and views on these problematic topics.

⁵ "Feminist and queer studies: Judith Butler's conceptualisation of gender," La Clé des Langues, last modified October 2, 2020. <https://cle.ens-lyon.fr/anglais/civilisation/domaine-americain/feminist-and-queer-studies-judith-butlers-conceptualisation-of-gender>.

⁶ Amber B. Raley and Jennifer L. Lucas, "Stereotype or Success?" *Journal of Homosexuality* 51, no. 2 (2006): 23.

⁷ Emma Nordin, "From Queer Reading to Queerbaiting: the battle over the polysemic text and the power of hermeneutics" (Unpublished MA Thesis, Stockholm University, 2015), 1.

The last fourth chapter introduces the series *Supernatural* and its success within popular television. It studies the sexual transformations of Dean Winchester and tries to prove that his character is canonically a closeted bisexual male in contradictions to the writers' makings. More analysis from the series is made to put Dean's inner turmoil in context to theoretical factors of this thesis. The fourth chapter also mentions sexual identifications of celestial creatures portrayed in the show.

1 QUEER THEORY

This first chapter introduces the concept of queer theory as it is sometimes difficult to describe, since it can have numerous meanings which can vary according to its use. Michael Warner debates that it has generally been linked to the research and understanding of gender and sexual behaviors that occur outside of heterosexuality and reflect on the idea that heterosexual need is in accordance with the nature and natural order of things.⁸ This form of thought challenges notions of gender and sexual orientation, and seeks to question conventional academic perspectives and address social injustices.⁹ Hannah McCann says that queer theory is closely tied to issues about gender experiences and representations rather than being specifically focused on sexuality.¹⁰

As it is illustrated by McCann, the notion of queer theory was first acknowledged in the 1990s, though it is still moving forward to new objectives and discussions.¹¹ The expression *queer* was used more frequently as a result of the quick growth and concentration of lesbian and gay studies in higher education.¹² According to David M. Halperin, the word queer was used to label “what was odd, strange, abnormal or sick, and along these lines employed as a colloquial slur for homosexuality.”¹³ However, as McCann writes, the LGBTQ+ community adopted the terminology in the 1980s to express non-normative sexuality that was free of the biases developing around gay and lesbian identities.¹⁴

In recent years, the title queer has come to be used in a variety of ways. Annamarie Jagose declares that sometimes it is used to describe a group of culturally oppressed sexual self-identifications, and other times it is used to describe a developing theoretical basis that emerged from more conventional lesbian and gay studies. Even from such an initial and incomplete overview of its modern application, it is obvious that the category of queer is very much still being formed. Queer’s definitional ambiguity is one of its defining traits, rather than just the fact that it has not yet stabilized and assumed a more consistent profile.¹⁵

⁸ Michael Warner, *Fear of a Queer Planet: Queer Politics and Social Theory* (Minneapolis, Minnesota: University of Minnesota Press, 1993), x.

⁹ “Introduction to Queer Theory,” Indiana University Bloomington, accessed November 8, 2022, <https://guides.libraries.indiana.edu/c.php?g=995240&p=8361766>.

¹⁰ Hannah McCann and Whitney Monaghan, *Queer Theory Now: From Foundations to Futures* (United Kingdom: Red Globe Press, 2019), 153.

¹¹ McCann et al., *Queer Theory Now*, 2.

¹² Annamarie Jagose, *Queer Theory: An Introduction* (New York: New York University Press, 1996), 2.

¹³ David M. Halperin, “The Normalization of Queer Theory,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 45, no. 2-4 (February 2003): 339.

¹⁴ McCann et al., *Queer Theory Now*, 2.

¹⁵ Jagose, *Queer Theory*, 1.

To start with, McCann claims that the early activism uses of the usage queer significantly influenced how the theory would develop. Since the 1990s, it started to be used explicitly in relation to theory. Teresa de Lauretis first used the phrase *queer theory* in 1990 at a symposium at the University of California, Santa Cruz. She claimed the title was meant to be provocative. She aimed to stir up the negativity of lesbian and gay studies, which insinuated that the connection of lesbian to gay male topics in this developing field was equal, balanced, and understood.¹⁶ David M. Halperin described the use of this phrase as “scandalously offensive” and “deliberately disruptive,” because it questioned what was accepted as theory in the academic field and pushed the limits of lesbian and gay studies.¹⁷

Later, Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner joined their research where they rejected the idea of reducing queer theory to a single interpretation and claimed that “[q]ueer commentary takes on many shapes, risks, goals, and ambivalences in various context.”¹⁸ According to McCann, queer theory emerged from a variety of academic and non-academic backgrounds and is motivated by a desire to build communities that are aware of distinctions in power and hardship.¹⁹ Berlant and Warner warn against including this queerness into the term queer theory, arguing that doing so “makes [...] queer and nonqueer audiences forget these differences and imagine a context (theory) in which queer has a stable referential content and pragmatic force.”²⁰ McCann demonstrates how queer has operated as a dream and an aspiration in alternative ways of thinking about and engaging with issues relating to sexuality, gender, identity, power, and the politics of oppression since its early use in academic terms.²¹

As Jagose presents, homosexual theory courses are now being offered at universities, and many of them are structured around queer ideas. There has been a considerable amount of heated discussions about the LGBT studies. It has been contended that it significantly weakens the final remnants of a repressive gender coherence, while others denounce its pansexuality as unfeminist and/or regressive. Despite the lack of scholarly agreement on the conceptual ideas of queer, its broad boundaries are regularly outlined and discussed. In general, queer refers to

¹⁶ Teresa de Lauretis, “Queer Theory: Lesbian and Gay Sexualities,” *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 3, no. 2 (January 1991): iii.

¹⁷ David M. Halperin, “The Normalization of Queer Theory,” *Journal of Homosexuality* 45, no. 2-4 (February 2003): 340.

¹⁸ Lauren Berlant and Michael Warner, “What Does Queer Theory Teach Us About X?” *PMLA* 110, no. 3 (May 1995): 344.

¹⁹ McCann et al., *Queer Theory Now*, 3.

²⁰ Berlant and Warner, “What Does Queer Theory Teach Us About X?” 344.

²¹ McCann et al., *Queer Theory Now*, 3.

actions or theoretical concepts that emphasize inconsistencies in the supposedly stable relationships between chromosomal sex, gender, and sexual desire.²²

According to Jagose, the focus of queerness is on distinctions of sex, gender, and desire. Institutionally, the caption queer has been most frequently connected with lesbian and gay issues, although its analytical framework also covers issues like cross-dressing, hermaphroditism, gender ambiguity, and gender-corrective surgery. Queer identifies and capitalizes on the contradictions in those three categories that stabilize heterosexuality, whether through transvestite performance or scholastic transformation. It throws into question even seemingly unproblematic terminology such as “man” and “woman,” illustrating the inability of any sexuality that is not led in the heterosexual way. Nevertheless, the inclusion of the controversial word queer in much more respectable academic conversations implies that conventional norms have disappeared.²³

Deborah P. Britzman presents that the principles of sexual identity are questioned by queer theory.²⁴ Since the essential assumption of queer theory is that it defies classification, it will continue to have aspects that go well beyond those related to sexuality, as McCann presents. Applying the concept of queerness to matters other than sexuality, or pushing past the identification question itself may seem intimidating to those discovering queer theory for the first time. Nowadays, the queer theory goes well away from the idea of identity itself and an emphasis on “same-sex” attraction.²⁵ In the chapter “Queers ___ This.,” Heather Love says:

These days, queer is not only also about race, class, gender, ethnicity, and nation, but is also about affect, citizenship, the death drive, diaspora, digitality, disability, empire, friendship, globalization, the impersonal, indirection, kinship, living underground, loss, marginality, melancholia, migration, neoliberalism, pedagogy, performativity, publicity, self-shattering, shame, shyness, sovereignty, subversion, temporality, and terrorism.²⁶

However, as Love also notes, there are hazards to embracing the wide-ranging potential of queer theory, such as losing focus on how distinct identities can aid in collective resistance and cooperation rather than hinder it.²⁷

McCann theorizes that queer thinkers have opened queer theory to a variety of new issues outside sexuality by applying the idea of intersectionality which Kimberlé Crenshaw first

²² Jagose, *Queer Theory*, 2-3.

²³ Jagose, *Queer Theory*, 3.

²⁴ Deborah P. Britzman, “Is There a Queer Pedagogy? Or, Stop Reading Straight,” *Educational Theory* 45, no. 2 (Spring 1995): 153.

²⁵ McCann et al., *Queer Theory Now*, 4.

²⁶ Heather Love, “Queers ___ This.,” in *After Sex? On Writing Since Queer Theory*, ed. Janet Halley and Andrew Parker (Durham, NC, and London: Duke University Press, 2011), 180.

²⁷ Love, “Queers ___ This.,” 184.

stated in 1989. Crenshaw attempted to view identity along a single scale, such as race or gender, and the concept of intersectionality served to comprehend how sexual oppression of women happens where several forms of oppression overlap. Furthermore, the notion of intersectionality can be used to better comprehend the relations of many forms of identity differences, such as race, gender, sexuality, ethnicity, nationality, age, ability, or other elements of identity. However, she initially concentrated on the intersection of race and gender. As a result, it provides a significant way to expand the field of queer theory by overstepping boundaries of sexuality and the more general boundaries of identity.²⁸

In an interview, Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick stated that identifying as queer “dramatises the difference between what you call yourself and what other people call you. There is a sense in which queer can only be used in the first person.”²⁹ Sedgwick’s intriguing claim that the word queer can only be used to describe oneself emphasizes how much queer relates to self-identification instead of to objective evaluations of other people’s traits.³⁰

As Jagose argues, other times, the terminology is used to imply a significant separation from the politics of identity that traditionally clarify perceptions of the lesbian and homosexual community. Queer signifies a postponement of identification as something fixed and coherent. It can also refer to a distinct identity that is constant and self-identical. Alternatively, queer can be used to indicate a broad category of people who share an antinormative perspective on sexuality rather than their identification. This allows for the inclusion of all those whose sexual identifications are not accepted as normal or approved while excluding lesbians and gay men whose identification with community and identity marks a contemporary validity.³¹ It is obvious that there is no single, accepted definition of what it means to be queer; in fact, many of these definitions fundamentally conflict with one another. Nevertheless, the queer inflection that challenges social structures of sex, gender, and sexuality has proven to be the most disruptive to conventional understandings of identity, community, and politics.³²

McCann adds that identity politics, seen generally as politics organized around distinct identity formations, is viewed as being incompatible with the deconstructive goals of queer theory.³³ Sherry Wolf draws attention to the risk that queer theory criticisms of identity politics pose the danger of being too judgmental of all kinds of group dynamics. Instead, we can try to

²⁸ McCann et al., *Queer Theory Now*, 4-5.

²⁹ Lucy Hodges, “Queen of ‘Queer’ Courts Controversy,” *Australian*, (June 1994): 27.

³⁰ Jagose, *Queer Theory*, 97.

³¹ Jagose, *Queer Theory*, 98.

³² Jagose, *Queer Theory*, 99.

³³ McCann et al., *Queer Theory Now*, 153.

figure out what unites specific groups of individuals, such as similar oppression experiences.

She claims:

While identity politics tends to strengthen the divisions between oppressed groups, queer theory unwittingly lends itself to disavowing the validity of oppression entirely by denying the common points of identity between members of subjugated groups.³⁴

As shown by Wolf, this means that if there is a continuation of giving justice to discrimination issues, it should proceed cautiously while considering queer theory criticisms of identity politics.³⁵

McCann debates that the system by which norms, normalization, and the normative are naturalized and made to appear ideal is referred to as normativity. Michel Foucault used the title *normalization* to describe how standards serve as means of social control in contemporary society. It is vital to distinguish between the terms *norm* and *normative* even if they are connected to the concept of norms. A dominant rule, standard, or expectation is simply described as a norm, whereas the name normative refers to the framework in which these things are developed, maintained, and frequently ethically approved.³⁶

Joshua Gamson and Dr. Dawne Moon explain that queer theory has positioned itself for the majority of its history as opposing normativity in society, notably heteronormativity, which defines the heterosexual norms that form the foundation of society.³⁷ When traditional family units are depicted as consisting of a mother and a father, other family structures are either not shown at all or are shown as a departure from this standard, which is an example of heteronormativity in action, according to McCann.³⁸

Adrienne Rich firmly believes that lesbian identity is viewed as a departure from the standard norm of heterosexuality because of the way society is established.³⁹ Rich provides an understanding of heteronormativity that, as Stevi Jackson points out, serves as a reminder that everyone is negatively affected by the regulation of sexuality and gender, not just those who identify as homosexual.⁴⁰ Brandon A. Robinson focuses on the LGBTIQ community today and comments that there is a trend to defend homosexuality as being the same as

³⁴ Sherry, Wolf, *Sexuality and Socialism: History, Politics, and Theory of LGBT Liberation*, (Chicago: Haymarket Books, 2009), 195.

³⁵ McCann et al., *Queer Theory Now*, 157.

³⁶ McCann et al., *Queer Theory Now*, 13.

³⁷ Joshua Gamson and Dawne Moon, "The Sociology of Sexualities: Queer and Beyond," *Annual Review of Sociology* 30, no. 1 (2004): 49.

³⁸ McCann et al., *Queer Theory Now*, 11.

³⁹ Adrienne Rich, "Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence," *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society* 5, no. 4 (Summer 1980): 632.

⁴⁰ Stevi Jackson, "Gender, Sexuality and Heterosexuality: The Complexity (And Limits) of Heteronormativity," *Feminist Theory* 7, no. 1 (2006): 105.

heterosexuality, which is referred to as homonormativity.⁴¹ David M. Halperin closely adds that homonormativity is the privilege given to LGBT culture and identity in the form of heteronormative standards and constructions. It is based on the idea that homosexual individuals should resemble and maintain the heterosexual community's principles and rules.⁴² While many queer theory methods may place a strong emphasis on opposing heteronormativity and homonormativity, there should never be recommendations that anti-normativity, an opposition to normativity, is an answer, claims McCann.⁴³

In addition, McCann believes that marriage equality, or the legal right of LGBTQ people to marry, is one of the most difficult problems concerning themes of domestic life and homonormativity. This is also frequently referred to as a gay marriage or a same-sex marriage.⁴⁴ For instance, Judith Butler advocates against putting too much value in the traditional definition of marriage, which they claim negates other, more radical options for sexual life and creating kinship, denying the non-biological links that connect many members of the queer community.⁴⁵ Butler makes the following additional point:

Variations on kinship that depart from normative, dyadic hetero-sexually based family forms secured through the marriage vow are figured not only as dangerous for the child, but perilous to the putative natural and cultural laws said to sustain human intelligibility.⁴⁶

Butler insists that heteronormative foundation of marriage reinforces the concept that any family forms that do not follow this logic are problematic, and that marriage equality therefore serves to further strengthen this reasoning.⁴⁷ This criticism is expanded upon by Amy Brandzel, who makes the claim that the standards established by marriage are also linked to ideas of who is a member of the country based on race and class, exposing "the state's interest in promoting the reproduction of certain kinds of citizens."⁴⁸

⁴¹ Brandon Andrew Robinson, "Heteronormativity and Homonormativity," in *The Wiley Blackwell Encyclopedia of Gender and Sexuality Studies*, ed. Nancy A. Naples (Chichester: John Wiley & Sons, 2016), 1.

⁴² David M. Halperin, *How to Be Gay* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 2012), 441.

⁴³ McCann et al., *Queer Theory Now*, 16.

⁴⁴ McCann et al., *Queer Theory Now*, 160.

⁴⁵ Judith Butler, "Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?" *Differences: A Journal of Feminist Cultural Studies* 13, no. 1 (January 2002): 14-15.

⁴⁶ Butler, "Is Kinship Always Already Heterosexual?" 16.

⁴⁷ McCann et al., *Queer Theory Now*, 161.

⁴⁸ A. L. Brandzel, "Queering Citizenship?: Same-Sex Marriage and the State," *GLQ: A Journal of Lesbian and Gay Studies* 11, no. 2 (April 2005): 195-196.

2 GENDER IDENTITY

This chapter focuses on the gender identity, which is often connected to our biological sex and thus it is difficult to define and understand. Furthermore, there is an explanation of gender of divine beings, such as angels and demons, supported by analysis from the television series *Supernatural*. As Marilou Niedda debates, people's interactions with others and their habits have an impact on how gender is historically and politically constituted.⁴⁹ Judith Butler emphasizes that sex is publicly formed, which may be puzzling considering that it has traditionally been perceived as ordinary, organic, and unaffected by culture, in contrast to feminist theorists who considered gender to be a general fabrication, in other words, a social construct. Instead, gender is constructed on the basis of sex.⁵⁰

Niedda claims that it is crucial to understand a few fundamental aspects of feminist philosophy.⁵¹ Feminism is defined as "the belief in social, economic, and political equality of the sexes" by the *Encyclopaedia Britannica*.⁵² In every community, women endure more physical and psychological aggression than men do, and they also hold less authority. To illustrate, according to an article published by *The Guardian*, women receive £260,000 less over the course of their full employment globally and are considerably more likely to suffer major injuries and recurring harassment than their opposite sex.⁵³

According to Niedda, regardless of a field of study that is structured in a way that favors men, philosophy plays a critical role in helping people comprehend why women are sometimes given less credit.⁵⁴ Being a philosopher, Judith Butler developed innovative thinking to comprehend all the complex issues that women experience in their life. Certain feminist philosophers of the 20th century, including the French existentialist Simone de Beauvoir, advocated the notion that sex is a biological subject as opposed to gender, which is determined by social standards developing within society.⁵⁵ Niedda confirms that rather than being intelligent individuals with free choice, women are taught that they are sensitive and must become submissive, as well as limited to the roles of spouses, mothers, daughters, or sisters.

⁴⁹ "Feminist and queer studies: Judith Butler's conceptualisation of gender," La Clé des Langues, last modified October 2, 2020. <https://cle.ens-lyon.fr/anglais/civilisation/domaine-americain/feminist-and-queer-studies-judith-butlers-conceptualisation-of-gender>.

⁵⁰ Judith Butler, *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity* (New York and London: Routledge, 1990), 12.

⁵¹ La Clé des Langues, "Feminist and queer studies: Judith Butler's conceptualisation of gender."

⁵² "Feminism," Britannica, accessed February 2, 2023, <https://www.britannica.com/topic/feminism>.

⁵³ Patrick Collinson, "Women paid £260,000 less than men over their careers – report," *The Guardian*, October 28, 2019.

⁵⁴ La Clé des Langues, "Feminist and queer studies: Judith Butler's conceptualisation of gender."

⁵⁵ Judith Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," *Theatre Journal* 40, no. 4 (December 1988): 521.

Women must obey the gender expectations that are expected of them. Nevertheless, sex is thought to be an unchangeable factor because every human is born with reproductive organs.⁵⁶

Butler claims that people give sex a great deal of significance by stating that there are cultural conventions associated with it. There must be an unusual continuum between sex and gender if sex is not simply the scientific interpretation of gender. Butler rejects the notion that there is a fundamental aspect to humans by asserting that both gender and sex are social. In their view, there is no fixed principle of women to be discovered. People frequently behave as if their gender is factual and true, but gender appears to be questionable due to its forced character.⁵⁷

Butler's argument of gender is that it is a characteristic which people have to the degree that they lack internal concepts. It involves a set of acts that are performed repeatedly on a constant schedule;⁵⁸ for some women, applying cosmetics first thing each morning is one such act. They often believe that this behavior, which they see as necessary for them to seem like women, is what makes up a portion of their character. Niedda adds that anything performative might bring damaging prejudices and restrictive social practices. This refers to the situation when preconceptions held by both men and other women lead women to struggle. The contradiction, in Butler's view, is that people are inevitably controlled. They believe in being free since they accept particular rules as legitimate, but they are controlled due to depending on subtle routines to define who they are. There are differences between someone's will and society's demands because one must regularly present a gender through a sequence of events.⁵⁹ As a result of these performances, Butler makes people assume that their gender is instinctive. Gender is a concept that is repeatedly learned; what people believe to be a certainty is actually an ongoing, unspoken gendered act. These acts imply an audience, which (in)validates the behaviors of the performers.⁶⁰ An example given by Niedda explains that a man who has prejudices against women who do not wear cosmetics and tells his partner to wear any, implying that if she does not, she is not performing as anticipated, is undermining her womanhood.⁶¹ Thus, Butler comments, it appears that there is a specific code to obey which is rooted in societal standards, and any behavior that deviates from this code needs to be addressed. Given that gender must be reinforced and learned throughout a person's whole life,

⁵⁶ La Clé des Langues, "Feminist and queer studies: Judith Butler's conceptualisation of gender."

⁵⁷ La Clé des Langues, "Feminist and queer studies: Judith Butler's conceptualisation of gender."

⁵⁸ Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," 521.

⁵⁹ La Clé des Langues, "Feminist and queer studies: Judith Butler's conceptualisation of gender."

⁶⁰ Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," 526.

⁶¹ La Clé des Langues, "Feminist and queer studies: Judith Butler's conceptualisation of gender."

it suggests that gender is transitory.⁶² Although, gender is not defined, so performances can be incorrect, and if someone deviates from the standard, they risk experiencing psychological and physical abuse. Butler sees cross-dressers, or those who occasionally dress in attire connected to the other sex, as an example of how gender may be acted, ridiculed, and challenged all at once. The border between masculinity and femininity is unclear, yet in dire circumstances, failing to respect this boundary can be fatal.⁶³

The performance analogy not only works well as a parody of gender and sex but also aids in understanding it properly. Butler interprets a caricature in this context as a gendered behavior that is amplified. Such a caricature is drag, in which a person purposefully assumes the identity of a performer from a different gender than their own. Butler views it as the pinnacle of gender parody. They describe drag imitation to be more than a satire and refer to it as a destruction of gender identity because it challenges traditional notions of what makes a woman and a man. One might look to the film *Brokeback Mountain* (2005) to comprehend the parodic quality of a gendered action. The leading actors, Jake Gyllenhaal and Heath Ledger, playing gay characters while not being gay in real life, demonstrate that the performance analogy could be transitory without truly affecting gender.⁶⁴ Similarly, in the television series *Supernatural* (The WB/The CW, 2005-2020), there are characters who identify as lesbian, gay, bisexual or pansexual, but their actors identify as straight or heterosexual, or their sexuality is not explicitly known. Characters of angels and demons often possess humans and they do not make gendered differences between their vessels⁶⁵. Though this does feature a binary and cis concept of gender, the writers' intention seemed to be to depict angels and devils having vessels of various genders. The series often does not specify the pronouns used in sequences where angels are in vessels of a different gender than their original ones. In season 6 episode 22 "The Man Who Knew Too Much," demon Crowley addresses similar dilemma regarding angel Raphael, who is presently in a female vessel. Crowley switches from pronoun "he" to "she" repeatedly, but does not seem to be fazed by any of them. Raphael does not elaborate on the situation, but later pleads for their survival alongside angel Castiel and adds: "[...] your own brother."⁶⁶ Although being in a female vessel, archangel Michael from the Apocalypse World is only ever spoken to as a man in season 14 episode 9 "The Spear." Similar to this, in season 12 episode 6 "Celebrating the

⁶² Butler, "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in Phenomenology and Feminist Theory," 528.

⁶³ La Clé des Langues, "Feminist and queer studies: Judith Butler's conceptualisation of gender."

⁶⁴ La Clé des Langues, "Feminist and queer studies: Judith Butler's conceptualisation of gender."

⁶⁵ In the series, the human bodies that can be possessed are called vessels.

⁶⁶ *Supernatural*, season 6, episode 22, "The Man Who Knew Too Much," directed by Robert Singer, written by Eric Kripke, featuring Jared Padalecki, Jensen Ackles and Misha Collins, aired May 20, 2011, in broadcast syndication, Warner Bros. Television, 2011, DVD, 00:38:35.

Life of Asa Fox,” demon Jael is referred to as “he” even when possessing numerous female vessels.⁶⁷ These examples fully describe what performing a gendered act means. Characters of celestial beings do not care for their physical forms, and do not make differences between female and male biological bodies nor gender. For them, human social standards are something unknown and unfathomable.

Butler believes that “nobody really is a gender from the start,” but by forced social standards, individuals are persuaded their gender is genuine or biological, and extends further than a performance.⁶⁸ Butler distinguishes between performative and performance in their perception of gender. As gender creates a certain environment that individuals are conforming to, social expectations might occasionally seem instinctive. In that, it produces societal standards that seem intuitive but may be oppressive.⁶⁹ Among a performance and something that is performative, there is a division of a caricature of fact (acting as a queer person when the performer is not one) and of what others take for granted, wrote Niedda. Thus, gendered behaviors influence others and form social interaction, particularly adolescents who are affected from the moment they are born. Whether gender is performative rather than merely acted, then gendered behaviors create societal expectations and have a significant influence on the real world. British philosopher John Austin claimed that communication has an influence on reality and is not purely factual. For example, whenever somebody commits to another person, that commitment ought to be kept, and it may encourage a physical action to preserve the arrangement. Butler claims that gender operates in a similar manner as it is implemented through a sequence of repetitive practices that are based on evolutionary theory, and so these practices create a socially defined reality.⁷⁰

Niedda also presents individuals who identify as non-binary may represent a combination of the two genders, a mixture of the two, or none, therefore their gender identification is not constrained by a binary system. Established gender standards are negative in the eyes of non-binary individuals, yet rather than deleting them, which is highly unlikely, they increase their gender expressions. Non-binary people use the pronoun “they,” which is deemed appropriate since it suggests that there is a gender plurality.⁷¹

⁶⁷ “Queer and Gender Diverse Characters,” SupernaturalWiki, accessed January 15, 2023, http://www.supernaturalwiki.com/Queer_and_Gender_Diverse_Characters.

⁶⁸ Big Think, “Judith Butler: Your Behavior Creates Your Gender | Big Think,” posted June 6, 2011, YouTube video, 1:27, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Bo7o2LYATDc>.

⁶⁹ La Clé des Langues, “Feminist and queer studies: Judith Butler’s conceptualisation of gender.”

⁷⁰ La Clé des Langues, “Feminist and queer studies: Judith Butler’s conceptualisation of gender.”

⁷¹ La Clé des Langues, “Feminist and queer studies: Judith Butler’s conceptualisation of gender.”

Additionally, Olojede comments that it is intriguing that examinations of celestial entities in the Bible do not make an effort to investigate their gender, probably as a result of Jesus' claim in Matthew 22:30:⁷² "For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven."⁷³ As a result, the gender of angels is rarely discussed in the Bible. Since angels frequently pose as men, there is an inclination to speak about them as men, both in the original scriptural tongues, and in translations. As Olojede highlights, Jesus stated in Matthew 22:30 and Mark 12:25 that the potential resurrection contestants would be as heavenly angels of God who never marry or be given in marriage. Most exegetes and orthodox church readings draw the conclusion that angels are asexual or sexless based on this fact.⁷⁴ According to Arnold, Genesis 6:1-4 and 6:5-8, which act as the climax of the story of Adam, give a confusing description of how humans and celestial beings crossbred.⁷⁵ Olojede's interpretation of the story is that our planet at the time had an expansion in population, which was met with a rise in the number of women, whom the sons of God were interested in. The sons, who were thought to be celestial creatures, started to wed these women, and the coupling gave birth to creatures known as Nephilim, which corrupted the world and its population.⁷⁶ The idea of population growth is instinctive, according to Arnold, but "[w]hat is entirely unnatural is the attraction these fair creatures held for the sons of God and the resultant marriages and births of superhuman warriors, the Nephilim."⁷⁷ History also demonstrates that stories about celestial creatures having sex with humans or becoming married to them are found in numerous indigenous civilizations.⁷⁸ This shows that angels or other celestial beings were not asexual or sexless, as church readings claim. Several popular culture manifests were inspired by these stories to the extent of recreating them. For example, in the television series *Supernatural*, in season 12 episode 8 "Lotus" archangel Lucifer assumed the male form of the US president and had sexual intercourse with a human woman, which resulted in a birth of a Nephilim in the season's finale. The Nephilim claimed a male form to protect himself while his human mother died after giving birth.⁷⁹ This is another illustration of a celestial being choosing a male

⁷² Funlola Olojede, "Angelo o Angela? Issues of degenderization in the depictions of angelic beings in the Bible," *OTE* 29, no. 3 (2016): 537.

⁷³ Matthew 22:30 (English Standard Version)

⁷⁴ Funlola Olojede, "Angelo o Angela? Issues of degenderization in the depictions of angelic beings in the Bible," *OTE* 29, no. 3 (2016): 540.

⁷⁵ Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis* (NCB, New York: CUP, 2009), 89.

⁷⁶ Funlola Olojede, "Angelo o Angela? Issues of degenderization in the depictions of angelic beings in the Bible," *OTE* 29, no. 3 (2016): 540.

⁷⁷ Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis*, 89.

⁷⁸ Bill T. Arnold, *Genesis*, 90.

⁷⁹ "Kelly Kline," SupernaturalWiki, accessed January 28, 2023, http://www.supernaturalwiki.com/Kelly_Kline.

biological form to join in on human sexual intercourse, even though not making a difference between genders in other situations.

As already mentioned, when angelic creatures took on human form, they typically appeared as males. Although, as Olojede claims, in Zechariah 5:9, there is a rare instance where female angels are pictured.⁸⁰ To illustrate the issue: “Then I lifted my eyes and saw, and behold, two women coming forward! The wind was in their wings. They had wings like the wings of a stork, and they lifted up the basket between earth and heaven.”⁸¹ Those two women are assumed to be celestial creatures sent to Babylon on a mission. According to Zechariah 5:5–6, they are carrying another woman, who stands for “wickedness”, to Babylon in an ephah.⁸² Despite the fact that there are far more documented examples of male sightings than of female ones, if the interpretations were to be accepted, it would mean that angelic beings which adopted the shape of humans in the Scriptures genuinely performed so with either male or female forms even if their own original shape was genderless.⁸³ An example of this is again shown in *Supernatural* with an angel, Hannah, who possessed a female vessel in the beginning, but then leaves this form and returns to heaven. In later seasons, she appears again, but as a male.⁸⁴ This shows that the angel did not care for human shapes and forms, and possessed human vessels as needed. It is similar to the demon Crowley, who died as a man and went to Hell assuming the vessel or “meatsuit”, as some characters called humans, of a male. However, in season 11 episode 1 “Out of the Darkness, Into the Fire” Crowley escapes into a female vessel of a suburban housewife before returning to his first male vessel later.⁸⁵ Again, not minding for the biological anatomy of human bodies. Though, it is different in the case of Crowley, as he was born a man and identified as a man, therefore his first demon vessel was male, however, he did not care for human genders or even sexualities as written above, so he could be considered as genderless in a way.

⁸⁰ Funlola Olojede, “Angelo o Angela? Issues of degenderization in the depictions of angelic beings in the Bible,” *OTE* 29, no. 3 (2016): 543.

⁸¹ Zechariah 5:9 (English Standard Version)

⁸² Funlola Olojede, “Angelo o Angela? Issues of degenderization in the depictions of angelic beings in the Bible,” *OTE* 29, no. 3 (2016): 544.

⁸³ Funlola Olojede, “Angelo o Angela? Issues of degenderization in the depictions of angelic beings in the Bible,” *OTE* 29, no. 3 (2016): 545.

⁸⁴ “Hannah,” *SupernaturalWiki*, accessed February 18, 2023, <http://www.supernaturalwiki.com/Hannah>.

⁸⁵ “Crowley,” *SupernaturalWiki*, accessed February 18, 2023, <http://www.supernaturalwiki.com/Crowley>.

3 HISTORY OF QUEER REPRESENTATION ON TELEVISION

This chapter deals with the history of queer representation on television from the second half of the 20th century until the 1990s, as well as with the usual tropes that are connected to queer representation, such as *Queerbaiting* and *Bury Your Gays*. Firstly, it is important to understand how queerness as such was understood among society. As Cook introduces, the Defense of Marriage Act, passed by the U.S. Congress in 1996, established marriage as a relationship between a man and a woman.⁸⁶ Becker continues that pictures of gay and lesbian couples, who pretended to be married, increased in 2004 as the discussion over same-sex unions grew increasingly heated. By February, it seemed evident that same-sex couples could get legally wed in Massachusetts after the Massachusetts Supreme Court determined that the proposed law demanded complete and equal marriage rights for homosexuals and lesbians. During that month, San Francisco city authorities started granting marriage permits to gay and lesbian couples in direct contradiction of California state law.⁸⁷ Unquestionably, over the past 20 years, the queer population in America has made significant progress toward tolerance, adds Cook. In comparison to past civil rights campaigns, people have attempted to comprehend and describe how LGBT rights were embraced so quickly. Others have blamed the media for this. Studies point to a link between the approval of same-sex unions and LGBT visibility in popular television. According to researchers, media depiction of the queer community can benefit its members by giving them mentors and a sense of belonging, especially among young people.⁸⁸

Raley and Lucas wrote that the Code of Practices for Television Broadcasters, in use from 1952 to 1983, and the Hollywood Production Code, working from 1930 to 1968, implicitly banned depictions of homosexuality. In the past, gays were typically portrayed as child abusers, fatalities of abuse, or drag queens.⁸⁹ According to Netzley, several shows started to portray LGBT characters in the 1970s and 1980s in a rather favorable way, although only for one occurrence and never as a series regular.⁹⁰ Dow adds that the plot was framed mainly around heterosexual protagonists, where the character's sexuality was represented as the dilemma instead of a feature of that character.⁹¹ Becker shows that gay content had already

⁸⁶ Carson Cook, "A content analysis of LGBT representation on broadcast and streaming television" (Honors Thesis, University of Tennessee at Chattanooga, 2018), 4.

⁸⁷ Ron Becker, *Gay TV and straight America* (New Brunswick, N.J.: Rutgers University Press, 2006), 2.

⁸⁸ Carson Cook, "A content analysis of LGBT representation on broadcast and streaming television," 4.

⁸⁹ Amber B. Raley and Jennifer L. Lucas, "Stereotype or Success?" *Journal of Homosexuality* 51, no. 2 (2006): 23.

⁹⁰ Sara Baker Netzley, "Visibility That Demystifies: Gays, Gender, and Sex on Television," *Journal of Homosexuality* 57, no. 8 (September 2010): 969.

⁹¹ Bonnie Dow, "Ellen, Television, and the Politics of Gay and Lesbian Visibility," *Critical Studies in Media Communication* 18, no. 2 (2001): 129.

established itself as a noteworthy television trend before shows such as *Queer Eye for the Straight Guy*, *Queer as Folk*, and *Will & Grace* contributed so significantly to raising awareness of the presence of homosexuals and lesbians on American television. Broadcasting essentially ignored the reality of homosexuality during the first 40 years that it existed. The majority of streaming networks featured only heterosexual households, companies, and neighborhoods. Only small number of watchers were able to find scarcely any openly queer individuals in a full year of broadcast television in early 1990s. And yet, after just a couple seasons, gay-themed shows and references to homosexuality were common, so that even an average viewer might catch openly gay and lesbian characters in a single episode. Between 1994 and 1997, more than 40% of all broadcast series created a minimum of one episode with a gay theme, several channels introduced recurring queer people, and a successful series like *Friends* incorporated jokes and references about homosexuality on a weekly basis.⁹²

Becker gives example of a *Newsweek*'s cover article from March 1990, which attempted to foresee "The Future of Gay America". Apparently, not even *Newsweek*'s editors were able to predict what the next ten years would bring for Gay America or how significantly its development might influence Straight America. For illustration, the *Nation*'s cover declared that "The Gay Moment" had arrived in America three years later. At that time, the politics of sexual identity became heavily debated in society, and gays and lesbians were not the only ones who felt a strange mixture of feelings. The term *straight panic* most clearly describes the rising concern of a heterosexual society and straight people coping with this changing social environment in which classifications of sexual identity were continually questioned and conventional moral structures governing sexuality were contested. The lines between being straight and being queer were reinforced and distorted in this process, creating an unsettling discomfort. Although the security of straight identification and domination was being threatened, straight America, which had previously been mostly unaware of its heteronormativity and ignorant of the benefits that were offered with it, was obliged to recognize a new system. Yet, diversity contributed to the escalation of concerns that these changes were weakening belief in the worth and viability of a single American identity in the early 1990s. In a broader sense, straight panic describes the fear that numerous Americans experience when confronted with a social environment where diversity is valued and monoculturalism is disrespected. It became more challenging for consumers of an ignorant mass to maintain their valid perspective (which ignored what it meant being white, male,

⁹² Ron Becker, *Gay TV and straight America*, 3.

heterosexual, et.). They fought to understand their recently discovered social stances and tried to survive in a society where sexual orientation, race, and gender all had significance.⁹³ The emergence of gay-themed television content was intertwined within this intricate web of sociocultural transformations, business trends, and new worries. The 1990s saw a rise in recognition of homosexual and lesbian figures and topics on broadcast television, but this did not mean that prejudice or advantage for the heterosexual community had ended.⁹⁴

Since we have already discussed how the society was introduced to queer characters on television, it is important to show that it did not come without its issues. According to Emma Nordin, the manner in which people consume, evaluate, and review television shows and movies have evolved as a result of social networking sites. This has impacted the ideas and concepts that were made about the influence of viewers over the products and their creators. Queerbaiting is one instance of fans disagreeing with creators about the product and its implications. Fans and web forums have created this word and are debating its meaning, stating that writers are deliberately luring viewers into watching something under the wrong presumption – that it would contain queer material. In queerbaiting, the crowd asserts that they are aware of the creators’ chosen interpretation and accuses them of misleading the audience. Not only creators can construct meaning, consequently, the fact that this poses as a problem for viewers shows that they have been granted the authority to reject and criticize incorrect or inaccurate interpretations. Based on such a perspective, queerbaiting could be viewed as an exploration or exploitation of the written word and of the omitted content.⁹⁵ The term queerbaiting has been used in fan conversations and LGBT campaigns; however, it has different meanings to different people. There is virtually limited academic discourse on the meaning of queerbaiting because only few academics have examined the issue.⁹⁶ Judith Fathallah’s understanding of the term is that queerbaiting is:

a strategy by which writers and networks attempt to gain the attention of queer viewers via hints, jokes, gestures, and symbolism suggesting a queer relationship between two characters, and then emphatically denying and laughing off the possibility.⁹⁷

As Nordin adds, the terminology is often associated with poor behavior, including homophobic language and harassment. As a result, when an act is called queerbaiting, it is accused of

⁹³ Ron Becker, *Gay TV and straight America*, 4.

⁹⁴ Ron Becker, *Gay TV and straight America*, 5.

⁹⁵ Emma Nordin, “From Queer Reading to Queerbaiting: the battle over the polysemic text and the power of hermeneutics” (Unpublished MA Thesis, Stockholm University, 2015), 1.

⁹⁶ Emma Nordin, “From Queer Reading to Queerbaiting,” 2.

⁹⁷ Judith Fathallah, “Moriarty’s Ghost: Or the Queer Disruption of the BBC’s Sherlock,” *Television New Media* 16, no. 5 (July 2014): 2.

undesirable or unfavorable activity.⁹⁸ The discussion typically focuses on the genuine existence of queerbaiting or if it is just pure fantasy and a tactic used to attack television series producers for not offering the audience what they wish for in a show. Viewers explore their queerbaiting experiences in other media besides television series, such as in art, literature and cinema. While, for example, *Supernatural*, *Sherlock* (BBC, 2010-2017), *Merlin* (BBC, 2008-2012), *Once Upon a Time* (ABC, 2011-2018), *Teen Wolf* (MTV, 2011-2017) are all mentioned, they receive a lot of attention regarding the use of queerbaiting.⁹⁹ Thus, it appears to be not a custom that is exclusive to a certain network or studio, but rather a current and persistent trend in western broadcasting television.¹⁰⁰ When discussing queer depiction in the television series *The L Word* (Showtime, 2004-2009), Marnie Pratt does not describe queer characteristics, although it is obvious that, in her perspective, being queer is important and characterizing, hence she refrains from using the term in any way.¹⁰¹ As Nordin suggests, Pratt believes that portrayal of the hidden queer is impossible without its acceptance as a necessary component, especially in a heteronormative setting. Therefore, making the logical case that sexuality is not necessary would only eliminate homosexual behavior in a heteronormative situation because no behavior would be deemed as queer.¹⁰²

This is a transcript from the series *Supernatural*, which has been accused of queerbaiting on numerous occasions. In this scene Angel Castiel is being mind controlled by another angel, Naomi, in order to get the angel tablet because it has the means to eliminate their kind. Castiel needs to get the tablet at any cost, even if he harms the people he loves. Naomi is trying to make him hurt Dean, his human friend who first feared him and did not trust his agenda, but over the course of many years of their friendship, he has accepted him as his best friend and even as a family member.

[DEAN, seriously beaten and bloody, now has one eye swollen shut.]
Cas. Cas. I know you're in there. I know you can hear me. Cas... It's me.

[CASTIEL stands there, blade at the ready, light glints off the blade.]
We're family. We need you. I need you.¹⁰³

⁹⁸ Emma Nordin, "From Queer Reading to Queerbaiting," 4.

⁹⁹ Emma Nordin, "From Queer Reading to Queerbaiting," 10.

¹⁰⁰ Emma Nordin, "From Queer Reading to Queerbaiting," 11.

¹⁰¹ Marnie Pratt, "Somewhere between Love and Hate: Disidentification and The L Word," in *Televising Queer Women: A Reader*, ed. Rebecca Beirne (New York/Hampshire: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 135.

¹⁰² Emma Nordin, "From Queer Reading to Queerbaiting," 13.

¹⁰³ *Supernatural*, season 8, episode 17, "Goodbye Stranger," directed by Thomas J. Wright, written by Robbie Thompson, featuring Jared Padalecki, Jensen Ackles and Misha Collins, aired March 20, 2013, in broadcast syndication, Warner Bros. Television, 2013, DVD, 00:33:08.

In this excerpt, Dean calls Castiel family, but then proceeds to beg him for getting out of Naomi's influence. This might not be what the producers meant in this scene, but for many viewers it might be a direct example of queerbaiting. Writers might have written this scene as Castiel being recognized as Dean's family, but it could also mean that Dean needs Castiel to understand that he is more than a family member to him, hence the line "I need you" coming from Dean meaning he feels something for his friend. It becomes more personal and shows that Dean cares for Castiel on a deeper level. Castiel obviously does not wish to harm Dean and rejects Naomi's control to save him.

In another transcript, Castiel is stabbed with the spear of the archangel Michael and is unable to heal himself. He thinks he will die so he says his last goodbyes. To illustrate the situation:

CASTIEL

No, you listen to me. You – Look, thank you. Thank you. Knowing you, it... it's been the best part of my life. And the things that... [inhales sharply] the things we've shared together, they have changed me. You're my family. I love you. I love all of you. Just please... please, don't make my last moments be spent watching you die. Just run. Save yourselves. And I will hold Ramiel off as long as I can.

DEAN

Cas, no.

CASTIEL

Yes. You need to keep fighting.

SAM

We are fighting. We're fighting for you, Cas.

DEAN

And like you said, you're family. And we don't leave family behind.¹⁰⁴

Another example of Castiel being perceived as family, however, when he thinks he is dying, he expresses his love to his friends. In the scene, he looks at Dean while saying: "I love you," but looks away to say: "I love all of you." The writers decided for the "I love you" expression to be aimed at Dean and his brother Sam and it could mean only a polite and friendly goodbye given the choice of the last line "[...] you're family." However, Misha Collins, playing Castiel, instinctively chose to act this piece towards Jensen Ackles' character Dean. This could then be a further case of queerbaiting in various perspectives.

¹⁰⁴ *Supernatural*, season 12, episode 12, "Stuck in the Middle (With You)," directed by Richard Speight, Jr., written by Davy Perez, featuring Jared Padalecki, Jensen Ackles and Misha Collins, aired February 16, 2017, in broadcast syndication, Warner Bros. Television, 2017, DVD, 00:30:36.

In addition, in this next script piece, Dean and Castiel are in Purgatory in order to find a flower which will help them stop God who is trying to kill them. They had an argument before, but after Castiel gets lost, Dean prays to him to find him.

DEAN

No, no, no.

[Dean looks around and then speaks quietly in prayer]

Cas? Cas, I hope you can hear me... that wherever you are, it's not too late. I should've stopped you [from leaving]. You're my best friend, but I just let you go. 'Cause it was easier than admitting I was wrong.

[Dean breaks down, snuffles, and then kneels at the base of the tree]

I – Oh. I don't know why I get so angry. I just know – I know that it's – it's just always been there. And when things go bad, it just – it comes out. And I can't – I can't stop it. No matter how – how bad I want to, I just can't stop it. And – And I – I forgive you. Of course, I forgive you. I'm sorry it took me so long – I'm sorry it took me till now to say it. Cas, I'm – I'm so sorry. Man, I hope you can hear me. I hope you can hear me. Okay.

CAS

Dean.

DEAN

Cas?

CAS

You made it.

DEAN

I made it?

[Cas gets to his feet and they hug]

DEAN

Okay, Cas, I need to say something.

CAS

You don't have to say it. I heard your prayer.¹⁰⁵

The usage of queerbaiting might not be as clear in this scene as in the previous ones, however, many fans argue Dean's prayer was sort of a romantic confession only Castiel would understand, given all they went through together. Dean's speech might be a moment of truth and growth for him as he finally recognizes and admits his feelings which he is used to hold inside at all times.

According to Nordin, queerbaiting is believed to be a deliberate activity, based on the idea of close and frequent interaction between authors, networks, and their audience. Yet, in

¹⁰⁵ *Supernatural*, season 15, episode 9, "The Trap," directed by Robert Singer, written by Robert Berens, featuring Jared Padalecki, Jensen Ackles and Misha Collins, aired January 16, 2020, in broadcast syndication, Warner Bros. Television, 2020, DVD, 00:22:56.

the discourse, what is pledged and gained for commitments to be honored is never expressly stated, but rather taunted and baited. The frustration with queerbaiting stems from the observation that there is a lack of queer protagonists and from the expectation that queerbaiting will become a regular and common practice. The creators frequently view heterosexuality as a kind of compensation and regularly justify it.¹⁰⁶

Misha Collins, the protagonist of the television series, sparked debate at the 2013 Emerald City Comic Con with a remark he made about the homosexual behaviors present in his work.¹⁰⁷ When asked if there might be an attraction between his character, Castiel, and Dean, played by Jensen Ackles, he replied that there were no indications of any relationship towards these two characters which the writers wanted to present.¹⁰⁸ They were aware of the fans' wishes and demands to make their characters queer, but they did not support or approve of the notion. Nevertheless, this means that they made multiple scenes with ambiguous meanings, although later on decided not to keep the scenes in the final cut. Collins expressed that he understands why fans are, so-called, shipping his character with the character of Dean and he agrees that there is an example of queerbaiting from the authors. They decided for Dean to say "I love you" to Castiel, however, they did not pursue it and deleted the scene. Nevertheless, Collins mentioned it and somewhat agreed that Castiel and Dean should be presented with a romantic relationship. Fans, nonetheless, considered the comment to be a confession of queerbaiting. Joseph Brennan suggested that the other parts of his comment are also under debate, including the implication that he might be "lying" about the existence of the incident in which Dean informs Castiel about his feelings. Over the course of the show's fifteen-year run, both the actors' inputs and the series as such have featured multiple instances where the potential queer identity of the male protagonists has been implied but not provided.¹⁰⁹ Collins was also asked about his own personal opinion and opted for a rather entertaining outlook on this topic. He mentioned the word Destiel¹¹⁰ in such a manner which clearly means he understands the fans' point of view to show he is open to it, yet makes fun of it to not anger the part of the fandom which is opposed to the idea.¹¹¹ This could mean he and the authors had a meeting about his public expressions and might have prohibited him, and the other cast

¹⁰⁶ Emma Nordin, "From Queer Reading to Queerbaiting," 17.

¹⁰⁷ Sizzlebutt, "Misha on Destiel at ECCC," posted March 3, 2013, YouTube video, 3:12, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DGkWkBwqXhs>.

¹⁰⁸ Sizzlebutt, "Misha on Destiel at ECCC."

¹⁰⁹ Joseph Brennan, "Introduction: A History of Queerbaiting," in *Queerbaiting and Fandom: Teasing Fans through Homoerotic Possibilities (Fandom & Culture)*, ed. Joseph Brennan (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2019), 1.

¹¹⁰ Destiel is the name expressing fictional relationship between Dean Winchester and Castiel.

¹¹¹ Sizzlebutt, "Misha on Destiel at ECCC."

members, not to speak on this topic in case they would accidentally confirm or indicate the idea of queerbaiting as they wanted to avoid and suppress discussions about it. At another convention, the writer Ben Edlund himself reacted to the Destiel pairing as being only a fan made notion.¹¹² This demonstrates that the cast of the show and the writers themselves did not want to introduce queer sexuality to their characters Dean and Castiel and only made fun of fans who insisted that some specific scenes show the usage of queerbaiting.

Although, in the antepenultimate episode of the last season, when Dean and Castiel are trying to hide from Billie, the current Death. To save Dean, Castiel canonically confesses his romantic love to him before being taken by the Entity to another dimension, The Empty, and thus, to his death. He made a deal with the Entity in the season before to save his friend, also Nephilim and Lucifer's son, Jack. His deal included saving Jack under the condition that when Castiel finally lets himself be happy, the Entity will come for him and drag him to The Empty for waking it from its sleep. Castiel finally explains it to Dean and voices his sexual identity as they are about to die.

CASTIEL

[tearfully] I always wondered, ever since I took that burden, that curse, I wondered what it could be? What my true happiness could even look like. I never found an answer because the one thing I want... It's something I know I can't have. But I think I know... I think I know now. Happiness isn't in the having, it's in just being. It's in just saying it.

[...]

You know, ever since we met, ever since I pulled you out of Hell... Knowing you has changed me. Because you cared, I cared. I cared about you. I cared about Sam, I cared about Jack... I cared about the whole world because of you. You changed me, Dean.

DEAN

Why does this sound like a goodbye?

CASTIEL

Because it is. I love you.¹¹³

As The Empty takes Castiel and Billie away, Dean only watches in shock. He is left alone, panting, and stunned from what he has just witnessed. The writer Robert Berens chose to make Castiel confess his feelings for Dean before he died, however, there rises the question of why the authors claimed they do not support any romantic relationship between Dean and Castiel and then decided to change their views on Castiel's sexuality. He specifically says "I never

¹¹² Christinelive, "Supernatural Cast Learning about Destiel at SDCC," posted July 19, 2012, YouTube video, 1:20, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=o7U0-U0UYYg>.

¹¹³ *Supernatural*, season 15, episode 18, "Despair," directed by Richard Speight, Jr., written by Robert Berens, featuring Jared Padalecki, Jensen Ackles and Misha Collins, aired November 5, 2020, in broadcast syndication, Warner Bros. Television, 2020, DVD, 00:35:45.

found an answer because the one thing I want... It's something I know I can't have," meaning he wants Dean. He wants to be romantically involved with him, but Dean's sexual identity and inner turmoil does not let him return his feelings. The writers wrote Dean as a clear heterosexual, so they did not want to destroy that by allowing him to indicate his feelings to Castiel. So, Dean only saw Castiel as his friend or brother, and certainly not as a possible love interest. Castiel makes peace with it though and finds happiness in speaking his truth. In the last two episodes of the last 15th season, Castiel is mentioned only a little and his sacrifice is talked about as being meaningless, even though, it saved Dean's life. Dean does not reciprocate his feelings to Castiel, perhaps from the lack of time and his confusion. Still, he spends multiple hours sitting on the ground in the room where he lost Castiel and silently cries into his hands. It is understandable, seeing Castiel was his friend, but perhaps he was more than that to Dean. Still, the authors did not pursue that way in order to keep their reputation, because if they wanted to make Dean and Castiel's relationship queer, they would receive a great amount of negative feedback from the majority of their audience which does not wish for homosexual pairing. Thus, in the next, and the penultimate, episode in which his brother Sam asks where Castiel is, Dean answers: "He saved me. Billie was coming after us, and Cas summoned the Empty. It took her. And it took him. Cas is gone."¹¹⁴ Both Sam and Dean look sad but continue in their mission as if nothing happened.

This previous excerpt is further a direct example of the trope Bury Your Gays. Haley Hulan explains that it is a form of storytelling that has been used in a variety of genre-based media towards the final decades of the 19th century. The same-gender couple is depicted with one of them dying and the other understanding they were never homosexual and frequently fleeing into the embrace of a heterosexual partner. The original purpose of this trope was to allow gay writers to produce works about gay protagonists without risking criticism for violating social and legal prohibitions regarding the rivalry of homosexuality. Although it is no longer required for writers to provide queer characters and narratives an unhappy end in order to be released, Bury Your Gays continues to be included in several works. This trope regularly links the pair's declaration of love, their first hug, and their first intimate encounter to the character's demise; they frequently pass away just a few lines or pages after their affection for each other becomes clear to the reader. The remaining partner will then undergo a period of readjusting during which they come to terms with the fact that their desire was only a test or

¹¹⁴ *Supernatural*, season 15, episode 19, "Inherit the Earth," directed by John F. Showalter, written by Eugenie Ross-Leming and Brad Buckner, featuring Jared Padalecki and Jensen Ackles, aired November 12, 2020, in broadcast syndication, Warner Bros. Television, 2020, DVD, 00:01:53.

momentary misstep in judgment. They eventually discover themselves falling into the embrace of a heterosexual partner to enjoy and lead their happy, ordinary, heterosexual life.¹¹⁵ Castiel declared his romantic feelings to Dean, which he did not even recognize years ago, and it cost him his life. Dean, as the rules of the trope say, should get his happy ending in a heterosexual relationship, and he perhaps would have gotten it since he had had many straight romances during the show's seasons, however, in the last episode of the series, he was unfortunately killed and went to Heaven. Though, his end is also tragic and somewhat follows this trope. His friend confessed to him, he does not know what to do now, and when he thinks he understands what he feels, he is killed. Thus, according to the guideline of Bury Your Gays, both Dean and Castiel are victims of this trope.

Additionally, regarding the last transcript, at the 2021 Momento Con, Collins mentioned that he and the writers were in denial about Castiel's last scene. He says that they purposefully left Castiel's confession open to interpretation rather than directly label it as a homosexual statement. He confirms that he was quite surprised by their decision to write Castiel this way, and that he would be satisfied if there was only a possibility of it.¹¹⁶ This further supports that the authors of the show did not specifically wish for queer representation and even Collins was surprised when they decided to make Castiel come out of the closet. And after the entire scene of Castiel expressing his sexual feelings, they still argue that it is open to interpretation, so they would avoid talking about their writers' choices of making Castiel queer. Collins adds that he is happy with his character's arc and where it ended because it felt meaningful to fight for it.¹¹⁷ He clarifies that he is proud of his work and what it meant, even if his character and the character's relationship was queerbaited and, at last, ended disturbingly. He tries to make peace with his ending, as well as hoping that the fans appreciate how he influenced Castiel's decision to confess. Notwithstanding, Collins himself states: "Castiel made this homosexual declaration of love, and then... which is, you know, amazing that that happened, and then dies right after which plays into, like, a timeless Hollywood trope of kill your gays."¹¹⁸ He confirms that this trope was actually used for his and Dean's end. His clarification of his character's unfortunate ending is a direct evidence of both tropes.

¹¹⁵ Haley Hulan, "Bury Your Gays: History, Usage, and Context," *McNair Scholars Journal* 21, no. 1 (2017): 17.

¹¹⁶ Assett Promotions, "Misha Collins talks openly about Destiel at Momento Con," posted November 19, 2021, YouTube video, 4:31, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=HVsnVUL-X0w>.

¹¹⁷ Assett Promotions, "Misha Collins talks openly about Destiel at Momento Con."

¹¹⁸ Hasnaa, "Misha and the cast of SPN talking about destiel going canon," posted December 6, 2020, YouTube video, 8:36, <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xdPzG1yqjEU>.

4 ISSUES OF SEXUALITY AND GENDER IN SUPERNATURAL

This last chapter presents the television series *Supernatural* and some of its characters who are analyzed according to the previous chapters dealing with queer theory and gender identity. It examines their transformations of sexuality and gender, and the attitudes toward these issues. The show was already mentioned multiple times throughout this thesis, thus it is only understandable to introduce it for further context. Eric Kripke is the founder of the American dark fantasy drama network show *Supernatural*. As SupernaturalWiki states, it debuted on The WB in 2005, and afterwards joined The CW's schedule as its replacement. On November 19, 2020, the series ended with 327 episodes broadcasted. As *Supernatural* introduced its 11th season, it triumphed as the longest-running live-action fantasy television program in America. The series centers on brothers Sam and Dean Winchester, played by Jared Padalecki and Jensen Ackles, as they cruise in their 1967 Chevy Impala across the U.S. in search of various supernatural phenomena, which they later battle to save lives. Many of these paranormal creatures have roots in the American mythology and lore as well as traditional mythical beings, such as ghosts, witches, werewolves, and vampires.¹¹⁹ In the next seasons, more celestial and fictional entities enter the show, for instance angels, demons, and even gods. This series was given 18 Constellation Awards, which are awards for best science fiction or fantasy works. Overall, it won 46 different prizes, for example for the Best Science Fiction Television Series or Best Male Performance. Within these trophies are also the famous Critics' Choice Super Awards and People's Choice Awards.¹²⁰

Firstly, this chapter focuses on the character of Dean and his journey of discovering his sexuality. Emily E. Roach suggests that the relationship between Sam and Dean, with the depth and undertone of homoeroticism, provided the groundwork for gay subtextual interpretations of Dean.¹²¹ It is important to mention that Sam and Dean have traveled across the country and spent almost every day together, thus it is no surprise to find that there are notions of incest – in this case *Wincest*, made from their last name “Winchester” – present in the popular media. Roach argues that more people than just the viewers notice the homoerotic friction of the siblings, the series itself included a number of characters who formed misconceptions about the dynamics of the connection between Sam and Dean. The idea that older brother Dean might be

¹¹⁹“Supernatural,” *SupernaturalWiki*, accessed April 15, 2023, <https://supernatural.fandom.com/wiki/Supernatural>.

¹²⁰ “List of awards and nominations received by Supernatural,” *Wikipedia*, accessed April 15, 2023, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/List_of_awards_and_nominations_received_by_Supernatural.

¹²¹ Emily E. Roach, “Supernatural Wincest and Dean Winchester’s Bisexual Panic,” in *Queerbaiting and Fandom: Teasing Fans through Homoerotic Possibilities (Fandom & Culture)*, ed. Joseph Brennan (Iowa City: University of Iowa Press, 2019), 65.

intimately engaged with his younger brother is obviously upsetting to Dean within the context of the show. Wincest shippers use queer approaches to reading, where academics see rebellious queer passion in close, same-sex relationships and erotic potential in forbidden romance.¹²² Nevertheless, this thesis does not focus on the relationship of Sam and Dean, but rather aims to prove that these gay interpretations of Dean cast him as a person experiencing intense inner struggle. Roach's understanding is that the groundwork was already laid for what she refers to as Dean Winchester's "bisexual panic," capturing Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's ideas about queer panic and the closeted homosexual male – making Dean a closeted bisexual male – who faces the challenging extend of the current homosexual society and is constantly obligated to address the danger of homosexual possibility. It is believed that Dean's bisexuality has the potential to be officially recognized by the series' end because of Dean's submission to and parallel rejection of normative forms of masculinity as well as initial indications of an internal battle. By adding an additional bond between Dean and Castiel, the series treads an appealing balance between providing space for deliberately delightful queer interpretations via Sam and Dean, and queerbaiting.¹²³ In season 6 episode 3 "The Third Man," Sam and Dean are wondering about Sam's mysterious return from Hell's prison which cages the archangel Lucifer himself. They decide to pray to Castiel to ask him questions, but when Sam calls him, he does not appear as usual even after Sam's multiple tries. However, when Dean makes a prayer to him once, Castiel suddenly appears in the room.

SAM

I spent all that time trying to get through to you. Dean calls once, and now it's – [imitating Castiel] Hello?

CASTIEL

Yes.

SAM

So, what, you – you like him better or something?

CASTIEL

Dean and I do share a more profound bond. I wasn't gonna mention it.¹²⁴

This is the first mention of Dean and Castiel's connection, but it becomes more important in later episodes as their friendship grows into a platonic and then romantic relationship, as the

¹²² Roach, "Supernatural Wincest and Dean Winchester's Bisexual Panic," 67.

¹²³ Roach, "Supernatural Wincest and Dean Winchester's Bisexual Panic," 65.

¹²⁴ *Supernatural*, season 6, episode 3, "The Third Man," directed by Robert Singer, written by Ben Edlund, featuring Jared Padalecki, Jensen Ackles and Misha Collins, aired October 8, 2010, in broadcast syndication, Warner Bros. Television, 2010, DVD, 00:15:18.

previous chapter shows. This bond started when Castiel saved Dean from Hell at the beginning of the fourth season, because he was ordered to, so Dean could be a vessel for the archangel Michael. Castiel was only a soldier of Heaven by that time, but slowly became Dean's friend until he expressed his love to him before he died. Dean, at that moment, did not know how to feel and only mourned his potential lover. This is an example of Dean's inner turmoil since he started to question his identity.

Nevertheless, Dean was always portrayed as having an interest in the opposite gender. When he is presented to the other, he vividly seems to have trouble expressing himself. Roach confirms that whenever Dean experiences same-sex attraction and learns that other people perceive him to be non-heterosexual, he displays a variety of reactions, such as unease, anxiety or worry, amusement, and occasionally curiosity.¹²⁵ As shown in the next transcript, Dean is suspicious of a man looking at him several times in a pub when Dean is pretending to be a federal agent to gain information about the case he and his brother are investigating. He goes and introduces himself to the man and asks why he is following him.

BEARDED YOUNG MAN

I'm sorry, man. I – I thought – I thought we had a thing back at the quad, you know – a little "eye magic" moment, and I saw you here and I figured I'd wait until you were done with your meeting and then maybe we might, uh...

DEAN

Yeah. Uh, okay, but no – uh, no moment. This is a... federal investigation.

BEARDED YOUNG MAN

Is that supposed to make you less interesting? No. I – I'm sorry, man. I hope – I hope I didn't freak you out or anything.

DEAN

No. No. I – I'm not freaked out. It's just a, you know... a federal thing. It's, uh... Okay... citizen. As you were.

BEARDED YOUNG MAN

You have a good night.

DEAN

You – you... [he turns back to the BEARDED YOUNG MAN and bumps into a table, causing glasses to knock against each other] have a – okay.¹²⁶

¹²⁵ Roach, "Supernatural Wincest and Dean Winchester's Bisexual Panic," 70.

¹²⁶ *Supernatural*, season 8, episode 13, "Everybody Hates Hitler," directed by Phil Sgriccia, written by Ben Edlund, featuring Jared Padalecki, Jensen Ackles and Misha Collins, aired February 6, 2013, in broadcast syndication, Warner Bros. Television, 2013, DVD, 00:15:43.

This is the first time a man shows interest in Dean and Dean does not know what to do. He was never involved in a homosexual relationship, perhaps for the confusion of his own feelings, because he was raised to be a soldier and never had the chance to explore his sexual identity, so this scene is a direct example of his bisexual panic. He pauses and stutters at the interaction and seems subtly uncomfortable to be put in the center of attention by this man, though his body language makes it seem as if he is curious about him. Roach's opinion is that Dean's attitude to the idea that he could be queer is obviously out of line with the harmless presumption which is presented. Dean appears to consider the issues affecting his heteromascularity to be particularly upsetting.¹²⁷ These are the first signs of Dean's internal battle with his understanding of himself and the value he takes on how others view him.

Nonetheless, in season 10 episode 5 "Fan Fiction," which directly breaks the fourth wall¹²⁸, a group of theater kids make a play on the Winchester family according to the *Supernatural* books that appeared in early seasons, and which were written by the actual God who goes by the name of Chuck. This play is an exact reenactment of Sam and Dean's lives from the early seasons, with some other characters showing up, including Castiel. Dean is confused about this whole part, but does not seem to comment on the subtle usage of his and Castiel's relationship in this scene:

[Dean sees Siobhan and Kristen, still in their Dean and Cas costumes, kissing.]

DEAN
What are they doing?

MARIE
Kids, these days, call it hugging.

DEAN
Is that in the show?

MARIE
Oh, no. Siobhan and Kristen are a couple in real life. Although, we do explore the nature of Destiel in act two.

DEAN
Sorry, what?

¹²⁷ Roach, "Supernatural Wincest and Dean Winchester's Bisexual Panic," 76.

¹²⁸ An imaginary wall that separates the audience from the action of a stage play or film, which is said to be broken when an actor talks directly to the audience or starts talking as themselves rather than as their character.

MARIE

Oh, it's just subtext! But, then again, you know, you can't spell subtext¹²⁹ without s-e-x.¹³⁰

Dean learns about the shipping name Destiel and later explains it to Sam who makes fun of it and Dean makes him stop, yet he does not specifically admit his feelings on this term. This could mean he thought about his connection to Castiel and is not puzzled when others notice their relationship. In the third chapter of this dissertation, there are several examples of Dean's struggle to understand his relation to his friend, at the end possibly his lover. As opposed to subtextual Wincest, Roach claims that the homoerotic undertone between Dean and Castiel feels closer to a desperate effort to maintain public interest in queer possibilities without providing real LGBTQ+ portrayal. In contrast to Wincest, certain viewers would argue that Destiel is the affection that deserves recognition in a time when LGBTQ+ presence and inclusion are celebrated, and gay protagonists are more frequent than ever. Homoerotic subtext is inadequate substitute for a significant portrayal in the absence of hierarchical behavior, family ties, alternative interactions between people, or anything else which deems Destiel highly forbidden.¹³¹ Despite of that, the presumptions become more undoubtedly romantic in the matter of Dean and Castiel. Angel Balthazar's remark to Dean in season 6 episode 17 "My Heart Will Go On" is: "You have me confused with the other angel. You know, the one in the dirty trench coat who's in love with you,"¹³² directly targeting Castiel. Balthazar meant it in a more entertaining manner, but it is clear that other characters are aware of the connection between these two characters even if Dean does not want to admit it to himself.

In this last piece, Sam and Dean, pretending to be FBI agents again, are investigating strange deaths of several men and finally find out that they have encountered a siren.

DEAN

So whatever floats the guy's boat, that's what they look like?

SAM

Yeah. You see, sirens can read minds. They see what you want most and then they can kinda, like, cloak themselves. You know, like an illusion.¹³³

¹²⁹ A hidden or less obvious meaning.

¹³⁰ *Supernatural*, season 10, episode 5, "Fan Fiction," directed by Phil Sgriccia, written by Robbie Thompson, featuring Jared Padalecki and Jensen Ackles, aired November 11, 2014, in broadcast syndication, Warner Bros. Television, 2014, DVD, 00:13:22.

¹³¹ Roach, "Supernatural Wincest and Dean Winchester's Bisexual Panic," 66.

¹³² *Supernatural*, season 6, episode 17, "My Heart Will Go On," directed by Phil Sgriccia, written by Eric Charmelo and Nicole Snyder, featuring Jared Padalecki, Jensen Ackles and Misha Collins, aired April 15, 2011, in broadcast syndication, Warner Bros. Television, 2011, DVD, 00:18:49.

¹³³ *Supernatural*, season 4, episode 14, "Sex and Violence," directed by Charles Beeson, written by Cathryn Humphris, featuring Jared Padalecki and Jensen Ackles, aired February 5, 2009, in broadcast syndication, Warner Bros. Television, 2009, DVD, 00:13:00.

The climax of the episode is when the other fake FBI agent they met earlier, who assumed to work the case with them, reveals himself to be the siren they are hunting. This man lures the unknowing Dean to work with him alone to get him away from Sam and then proceeds to get him under his control in order to kill his brother. Sam's explanation of the siren kind is clear – they take form of who the other person wants most. Dean's siren is a man, which makes Dean appear as a bisexual male. Roach insists that there is little space for same-sex interest in his unrestrained performance when it comes to his sexual interest in women. His bisexual panic is heightened by this hyperheterosexual display, which is most obvious when Dean rushes to declare his "straightness." Though the phrase should be viewed as equivalent to Sedgwick's concept of homosexual panic, she refers to Dean as a closeted bisexual rather than a closeted homosexual. She wants to confront the bisexual suppression that takes place when Dean's on-screen interactions with females are given as unquestionable evidence of his heterosexuality.¹³⁴

The second chapter of this dissertation talks about gender identity and mentions some celestial characters from the show, especially angels. The third chapter regarding queerbaiting already proved that the angel Castiel declared his homosexual love to Dean, which makes him a queer character. And even the trope Bury Your Gays confirms his sexuality in more detail. However, in the beginning when Castiel first appears in the show, he declares that he is "utterly indifferent to sexual orientation"¹³⁵ during his brief time as a spiritual being. His journey accepting his sexuality was queerbaited, yet he was given his freedom at the end before he died in a form of expressing his emotions. As stated in the second chapter, the gender of supernatural beings is not directly discussed in Bible, but suggestions are that the entities do not care for the gender of their human vessels, therefore they do not care for their own gender. It is similar with their sexual identity. Castiel, the angel of the Lord, is not interested in romantic interactions which the humans crave. Still, after spending time on Earth, and most importantly with Dean, he develops feelings which he does not understand at first, but in the time of danger and need, he allows himself to interpret them as queer and in the end accepts himself. He confirms that angels are capable of intimacy and developing opinions and attitudes toward their sexual orientation.

In regard to demonic deity, Crowley also does not care for his gender, but his case is distinct from angels as the second chapter discusses. His sexual experiences are various and

¹³⁴ Roach, "Supernatural Wincest and Dean Winchester's Bisexual Panic," 71.

¹³⁵ "Queer and Gender Diverse Characters," SupernaturalWiki, accessed May 15, 2023, http://www.supernaturalwiki.com/Queer_and_Gender_Diverse_Characters.

prove that Crowley feels more pansexual than any other character.¹³⁶ He does not consider his gender or sexuality as well as his lovers'. In fact, he enjoys his sexual freedom and exploration. Therefore, he crosses the given biblical interpretations of gender and sexual identity of celestial beings.

¹³⁶ "Crowley," SupernaturalWiki, accessed May 15, 2023, <http://www.supernaturalwiki.com/Crowley>.

5 CONCLUSION

This bachelor thesis explores theoretical factors that follow queer aspects and queer representation. It offers analysis on the gender identification of humans and supernatural creatures, such as angels and demons, and includes the biblical interpretations as well as interpretations from the television series *Supernatural*. The thesis works with the concept of queer theory and puts it in context with queer representation on television in the second half of the 20th century until the 1990s. Furthermore, it presents the tropes, like queerbaiting and Bury Your Gays, and provides the examples of their usage with the help of the series' scripts' analyses.

The work explained the historical context behind the creation of the word "queer." Although, queer theory was recognized in the 1990s, the ideas behind it and the terminology were adopted throughout the early 1980s when the first queer studies started to be taught at universities. It supports the claim that homosexual practices became tolerated only at the end of the previous century, as heterosexual methods strongly ruled the society. It has been proven that queerness confronts structures created by society which deal with gender and sexuality, and that this queerness is dissolving controversial identity beliefs, community perceptions and politics concerning distant identity formations. The thesis defined terminology surrounding normalization, which describes the use of moral ideals in order to control nowadays society; norm, which means a standard or rule; and normative, which considers how these norms are expanded, established, and morally accepted. Queer theory continuously provokes this terminology and opposes the heterosexual norms that form the pillars of society.

Regarding gender identity, this thesis firstly aimed at feminism and how women are only ruled by the societal standards and values, giving an example of how unfair the financial and ethical situations of the female sex are in contrast to their opposite sex. The ideals women must endure force them to be submissive and emotional, along with being restricted to the roles of mothers, sisters, daughters, or partners. It has been stated that gender is rather a performative act every person supersedes. These acts, though, resulted in the belief that gender is somewhat a natural-born instinct, rather than being an ongoing show. The problem is that it created an audience which does not agree with the attitudes of these performers. The analysis presented characters from the television series who identify differently than their actors. Supernatural beings portrayed in this show do not make a gendered difference between human bodies and follow biblical interpretations of scriptures. They do not care for the human anatomy nor gender, and these human standards are very unknown to them. Gender then works through repetitive practices which are based on evolution, and so these processes define social reality.

As mentioned, celestial entities do not fathom gender and Bible does not differentiate their gender. As a result of the lack of discussion surrounding this topic, it is assumed that angels are sexless and asexual. Nonetheless, the theory brought information on a rare celestial creature called Nephilim, who was created by the sexual act of angelic being and a human. This is supported by the analysis which introduces a character of Jack, who was born to a human woman after she performed an intimate activity with the archangel Lucifer. In fact, there is evidence in history which proves that angelic, or rather celestial, creatures have had interactions with humans on multiple occasions. This work informed that angels are depicted as having male vessels, as female angels became rare sightings. But this only confirmed that angels are genderless. Another analysis from the series supported this claim with the angel Hannah who appeared in a female vessel for most of her debut, yet used a male body for a few instances. She did not comment on this or the change of her gender demonstrating the disregard for the situation. It also introduced the character of the demon Crowley, having similar thoughts on this matter.

The thesis outlined the historical context for the rise of queer identity throughout the second half of the 20th century following the Defense of Marriage Act in 1996. It explained the changes happening in society when homosexuality was started to be tolerated and marriage licenses were allowed to be distributed to queer people as well as heterosexuals. The biggest wave came with the growth of popular media and especially after broadcasting streaming agencies started to include gay or lesbian characters on their shows after banning this move for several years due to Hollywood Production Code. Heterosexual ethics were opposing this new phenomenon and it resulted in methods, like queerbaiting or Bury Your Gays, which were both analyzed in this thesis. Queerbaiting was born from the disagreement between fans and the creators' product and its implications. This trope concerns the viewers who declare that they are more than aware of the authors' clarification, and they blame them for misleading. The multiple analyses including Dean Winchester and Castiel clarified this method. Dean is canonically written as a heterosexual character, while Castiel is an angel, thus according to the theory and his own explanation, he is indifferent to sexual identity. However, numerous transcripts provided examples of queerbaiting these two characters. They were written as friends or even family members, still there are moments which the audience has depicted as having queer aspects. For instance, Castiel cares for Dean more deeply than for any other character because he shares a more profound bond with him. Dean as well shows his anxiety toward losing Castiel in dangerous situations. This distress is also portrayed as if Dean cherishes Castiel on a more personal level than he demonstrates. The work also mentioned the creators'

comments on this problematic and showed that they were deliberately creating ambiguous scenes only to taunt queer audience into watching their show. However, the actor Misha Collins, who portrayed Castiel, subtly confirmed this trope being used in the series, which is another testimony supporting this allegation. Additionally, one more practice was presented to be used in the case of the two main characters, Bury Your Gays, which is a form of storytelling when in the same-sex couple one of them dies and the other character realizes they were never queer and give in to their heterosexual lifestyle. The analysis provided the death of Castiel after he expressed his homosexual love to Dean. Castiel finally understands his feelings and accepts himself before he is killed for the trope to be complete. Dean is conflicted in his feelings and maybe even starts to question his and Castiel's relationship if it would not be for the lack of screen time. Castiel's brave behavior and death is only seen as a manipulation and in the end, his sacrifice is only perceived as saving Dean from certain death, rather than being celebrated. Collins, however, fully confirmed the usage of this practice, meaning that the creators not only clarified that angels are capable of sexual identification, but also that the use of anti-queer tropes is still in use even in the 21st century when there is no need for it anymore as the popular media is much more tolerant towards the queer representation on television.

Lastly, this dissertation focused on Dean's inner turmoil concerning his sexuality. It has been established that when Dean experiences a same-sex interest, he is confused but curious. According to theory, Dean shows signs of being a closeted bisexual male even if it was never canonically proven. The series made ambiguous scenes which more than subtly confirm Dean's struggle to express himself when surrounded by gay characters who pay attention to him. The work showed that Dean's bisexual suppression is more vivid when he is written as heterosexual. In addition, celestial beings, like Castiel or Crowley, were illustrated as queer and genderless.

RESUMÉ

Tato bakalářská práce se zabývá queer reprezentací, která je zobrazena v televizním seriálu *Lovci duchů* (The WB/The CW, 2005-2020) od tvůrce Erica Kripke. Práce nejdříve definuje teoretické koncepty, jako je queer teorie a genderová identita, a uvádí jejich historické počátky. Práce pracuje s pojmem queer teorie a dává jej do kontextu s queer reprezentací v televizi v druhé polovině 20. století až do 90. let 20. století. Poté nabízí analýzu této genderové identifikace lidí a nadpřirozených tvorů, jako jsou andělé a démoni, a zahrnuje biblické výklady a interpretace ze seriálu. Analýza práce se soustředí na dvě hlavní postavy seriálu, a to na Deana Winchestera a anděla Castiela, a tropy, které byly záměrně použity, aby oslovily rostoucí publikum diváků identifikujících se jako queer. Dále jsou představeny tropy, jako je queerbaiting a Bury Your Gays, a jsou poskytnuty příklady jejich použití s pomocí analýz scénářů seriálu. Nakonec jsou podány důkazy o Deanových bisexuálních rozpacích a sexuálních proměnách nebeských bytostí.

První kapitola se věnuje popisu queer teorie, přestože je toto pojetí často těžko uchopitelné. Tento pojem zpochybňuje přístup k genderovým a sexuálním identitám, které se vyvinuly z ideologie heterosexuality. Předpokladem je, že se queer teorie zaměřuje převážně na pohlaví než sexualitu. Každopádně studie ukazují, že odpovědi na tuto problematiku stále nejsou dokončené. Teorie má kořeny v queer studiích minulého století a cílem je pochopit sexuální sebeidentifikaci potlačované queer mládeže. Práce ukazuje, že hlavní definicí queer teorie je, že se skládá z činů a přístupů, které zdůrazňují neshody ve vztazích mezi pohlavími a sexuálními touhami. Také podporuje tvrzení, že homosexuální praktiky byly tolerovány až na konci minulého století, protože heterosexuální metody silně ovládaly společnost. Ukázalo se, že toto queer hledisko konfrontuje sociální struktury zabývající se pohlavím a sexualitou, a stejně tak odmítá kontroverzní názory na identitu a politiku týkající se formování identity. Nakonec je uvedeno, že queer teorie neustále provokuje terminologii normalizace a staví se proti heterosexuálním normám, které tvoří základy společnosti.

Druhá kapitola nabízí genderovou identitu spolu s podrobnou analýzou z televizního seriálu o nadpřirozených bytostech a jejich pohlaví, které je specifikováno v biblických textech. Význam genderu, a tedy pohlaví, se staví do kontextu s biologickým pohlavím. Kapitola se zaměřuje i na feminismus a na to, jak jsou ženy podřízené společenským standardům a hodnotám. Za příklad se uvádí, jak nespravedlivá je finanční a etická situace ženského pohlaví na rozdíl od jejich opačného pohlaví. Lidé spojují pohlaví s kulturními povinnostmi, avšak gender a pohlaví, jakožto sociální faktory, znamenají, že lidé mají nepřesné názory na své vlastní pohlaví a staví se proti jeho vynuceným aspektům. Gender je spíše představení, které

každý člověk provádí. Z toho ale vzniklo publikum, které nesouhlasí s těmito postoji. Práce nadále přidává biblické výklady pohlaví nebeských entit a obsahuje příklady analýzy ze seriálu a jeho nadpřirozených postav andělů a démonů. Postavy zobrazené v této show nerozlišují gender či biologické pohlaví lidí a řídí se biblickými výklady. Nestarají se o lidskou anatomii a tyto lidské normy jsou pro ně velmi neznámé. Gender pak funguje prostřednictvím opakujících se praktik, které jsou založeny na evoluci, a tak tyto procesy definují sociální realitu. V důsledku nedostatku diskuse na toto téma se předpokládá, že andělé jsou bezpohlavní a asexuální. Teorie nicméně přinesla informace o vzácném nebeském tvorovi jménem Nephilim, který byl stvořen sexuálním aktem mezi andělskou bytostí a člověkem. Toto tvrzení je podpořeno analýzou, která představuje postavu Jacka, který se narodil lidské ženě poté, co měla intimní styk s archandělem Luciferem. Bible i historické důkazy přinesly, že situace, kdy nadpřirozené bytosti měli styky s lidmi. Práce také mluví o zobrazení andělů převážně v mužské podobě, neboť andělé v ženských tělech jsou vzácným pozorováním. I k tomuto názoru se analýza staví negativně, protože informuje o andělovi Hannah, která se objevuje v obou formách, tedy v ženské i mužské. Anděl tuto změnu pohlaví nijak nekomentuje, což nadále podporuje tvrzení, že andělé tuto oblast ignorují.

Třetí kapitola podává historii queer reprezentace v televizi od druhé poloviny 20. století až do 90. let 20. století a těsně po začátek 21. století. Nejdříve se zabývá právními vztahy ovlivňující manželství, které až do konce minulého století bylo pouze společenstvím muže a ženy. Tato problematika stále není vyřešena, avšak tolerance vůči queer partnerství pomalu vzrůstá. LGBTQ+ komunita se stává mnohem více viditelná a vítání této skupiny je spojeno s populárními médii. Respektování homosexuality však přineslo negativní vlivy. Vysílací agentury předtím prakticky ignorovaly existenci homosexuality a televizním společnostem bylo zakázáno zobrazovat tuto novou vlnu queer reprezentace. V 90. letech se ale homosexuální postavy začaly zobrazovat častěji a byly povýšeny i na vedlejší či dokonce hlavní postavy. Tato nová otevřenost vyústila v různé praktiky, jako je queerbaiting, kterému se tato kapitola také věnuje. Stručně řečeno, queerbaiting znamená lákání diváků za účelem sledování něčeho pod nesprávným předpokladem. Tato tropa využívá queer reprezentaci, ale ve stejnou dobu ji vynechává a staví se k teorii otevřené interpretace. Analýza nabízí příklady této praxe ve scénách zahrnujících Deana a Castiela, kteří jsou vyobrazeni pouze jako přátelé, dokud Castiel nevyzná svou lásku Deanovi předtím, než zemře. Toto přímo dokazuje, že tyto dvě postavy jsou skutečně užity za účelem pozornosti diváků. Navíc je představena další praxe, která je použita v případě těchto dvou hlavních postav, a to je takzvaně Bury Your Gays. Je to forma vyprávění, kdy v stejnopohlavním páru jeden z nich zemře a druhá postava si uvědomí, že nikdy nebyla

queer a podlehne heterosexuálnímu způsobu života. Jak zmíněno, analýza poskytla Castielovu smrt poté, co vyjádřil svou homosexuální lásku Deanovi. Castiel konečně pochopí své pocity a přijme sám sebe, než je zabit, aby byla tato praktika kompletní. Herec Castiela, Misha Collins, plně potvrdil používání této praxe, a to objasňuje, že andělé jsou schopni sexuální identifikace, ale také to, že používání těchto metod se stále používá i ve 21. století.

Nakonec je představen seriál *Lovci duchů* a poslední kapitola studuje sexuální proměny Deana Winchestera a snaží se dokázat, že se jeho postava kanonicky identifikuje jako bisexuální, což je v rozporu s výtvary autorů. Je provedena další analýza ze série, která zakládá Deanovu vnitřní úzkost ohledně své sexuality do kontextu s teoretickými faktory této práce. Seriál vytvořil nejednoznačné scény, které lehce potvrzují Deanův vnitřní boj, když je obklopen gay postavami, které mu věnují pozornost. Poté je předložena sexuální identifikace nebeských bytostí, které se identifikují bezpohlavně.

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