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‘Crazy Man-Killing Monsters’

The Inimical Portrayal of the Amazons in *Supernatural*’s ‘Slice Girls’

Abstract The Amazons have a long legacy in literature and the visual arts, extending from antiquity to the present day. Prior scholarship tends to treat the Amazons as hostile ‘Other’ figures, embodying the antithesis of Greco-Roman cultural norms. Recently, scholars have begun to examine positive portrayals of Amazons in contemporary media, as role models and heroic figures. However, there is a dearth of scholarship examining the Amazons’ inherently multifaceted nature, and their subsequent polarised reception in popular media.

This article builds upon the large body of scholarship on contemporary Amazon narratives, in which the figures of Wonder Woman and Xena, Warrior Princess dominate scholarly discourse. These ‘modern Amazon’ figures epitomise the dominant contemporary trend of portraying Amazons as strong female role models and feminist icons. To highlight the complexity of the Amazon image in contemporary media, this article examines the representation of the Amazons in the *Supernatural* episode ‘Slice Girls’ (S7 E13, 2012), where their portrayal as hostile, monstrous figures diverges greatly from the positive characterisation of Wonder Woman and Xena. I also consider the show’s engagement with ancient written sources, to examine how the writers draw upon the motifs of ancient Amazon narratives when crafting their unique Amazon characters. By contrasting the Amazons of ‘Slice Girls’ to contemporary figures and ancient narratives, this article examines how factors such as feminist ideology, narrative story arcs, characters’/audience’s perspectives and male bias shape the representation of Amazons post-antiquity.

Keywords Amazons, Warrior women, Classical reception, *Supernatural*, Monsters

INTRODUCTION

Stories of the Amazons – an all-female tribe of formidable warrior women – have been told for millenia, from pre-Homeric times to the modern day.¹ Though they are featured only briefly in the *Iliad*, the Homeric epithet ἀντιάνειραι (‘equal-to-men’)² captures the ancient audience’s interest in the Amazons as transgressive figures, challenging the expected behaviour of ancient women. Not only were the Amazons of Greco-Roman myth highly skilled fighters, but their military proficiency rivalled that of the Greeks, and they fought fiercely with the renowned heroes, Heracles, Theseus and Achilles.³ As well as excelling in the traditionally masculine realm of warfare, Amazons challenged patriarchal norms by operating as a ‘nation ruled by women’, a female-only society capable of conquering neighbouring territory and founding colonies in distant lands.⁴ Their military prowess and exclusively female society represented the antithesis of the Greco-Roman patriarchal system and is a key reason for the widespread interest in the Amazon image throughout antiquity.⁵

Diodorus’ account of the Amazons in his *Bibliotheca Historica*,⁶ composed in the 1st century BCE, provides the most comprehensive written account of the Amazons’ legacy throughout antiquity, describing multiple generations of Amazon queens. Diodorus’ account of the Amazons is teleological in nature, presenting a narrative of their decline from greatness into obscurity. He begins with a preamble on two generations of unnamed Amazon queens, whom he

1 This research was generously funded by the Australasian Women in Ancient World Studies (AWAWS) Research Grant. All translations are my own.

2 Hom. *Il.* 3.189 and 6.186 See Mayor (2014: 23) on the possible alternative translations of ἀντιάνειραι as ‘opposites of men’, ‘against men’, ‘opposing men’, ‘antagonistic to men’ and ‘man-hating’. I adopt Mayor’s premise that the term is best translated as meaning ‘equals of men’ with the *anti* prefix denoting ‘equivalent’ or ‘matching’.

3 See Mayor (2014) for her comprehensive analysis of a wide range of written and visual representations of hero quests featuring Amazons, including: Hippolyta and Heracles (249–59); Antiope and Theseus (259–87) and Penthesilea and Achilles (287–305).

4 Diod. 2.45.1.

5 See Merck (1978) and Tyrrell (1984).

6 Diod. 2.45.1–46.6.

praises for their 'prowess', 'bodily strength', 'excellence' and 'popular repute'.⁷ Diodorus elaborates on the queens' military and imperialistic feats, noting that the first queen subdued the neighbouring peoples and founded the 'great city' of Themiscyra, while the second extended Amazonian territory by conquering Thracian lands, subduing the majority of Asia, and extending into Syria.⁸ Notably, Diodorus includes reference to the Amazon queens' heroic deaths in battle, foreshadowing later narratives in which Amazon queens are consistently killed in one-on-one combat with a renowned Greek hero. Diodorus' account then skips forwards several generations to the reign of Hippolyta, where he describes her battle against Heracles, resulting in the Amazons' defeat and the destruction of their homeland.⁹ Diodorus marks this as the turning point in the Amazons' legacy, from which their reputation for 'excellence' became one of 'weakness'.¹⁰ Diodorus closes his account by describing Penthesilea's feats in the Trojan War, specifically her success against the Greeks prior to her heroic death at Achilles' hands.¹¹ Penthesilea is presented as 'the last of the Amazons to win distinction for bravery', since 'in the future the race diminished more and more and then lost all its strength'.¹² Diodorus' final comment – 'thus in later times, whenever any writers recount their prowess, men consider the ancient stories of the Amazons to be fictitious tales'¹³ – indicates the Amazons' continued legacy as well-known mythic figures, whose once great civilisation continued to inspire storytelling among his contemporaries. The Amazons' legacy continued further beyond Diodorus' time, as Penthesilea features in Quintus Smyrnaeus' *Posthomerica* dated to the late 4th century CE. While Diodorus' account is pessimistic in its outlook – as it attempts to account for the Amazons' decline from real historical warrior women to mythical fictional characters – it nonetheless indicates that the Amazons' legacy throughout antiquity was inex-

7 Diod. 2.45.1–46.2.

8 Diod. 2.45.1–46.1.

9 Diod. 2.46.3–4.

10 Diod. 2.46.4.

11 Diod. 2.46.5.

12 Diod. 2.46.6.

13 Diod. 2.46.6.

trically connected to their feats in battle, particularly their combat with Greek male warriors.¹⁴

Tales of the Amazons continue to be a popular subject for contemporary storytelling, as Amazons and Amazon-like figures have a long tradition in contemporary comics, film and television. As symbols of self-sufficiency and female autonomy who transgress the patriarchal status quo, the ancient Amazons have become recontextualised as feminist icons, exemplified through the figures of Wonder Woman and Xena, Warrior Princess. Much scholarship on the Amazons in contemporary film and television examines these case studies exclusively, concluding that the 'modern Amazon' figure serves as an aspirational role model for women and girls.¹⁵

While this trend of positive representation dominates scholarly discourse on the 'modern Amazon' image, it is not the sole trajectory in the reconfiguration of ancient Amazons in contemporary media. A notably different mode of representation is evident in the television series, *Supernatural*, a series that loosely adheres to a monster-of-the-week format where the heroic male protagonists, Sam and Dean Winchester defeat supernatural threats over the span of 40-minute-long episodes. Adhering to the show's overarching premise, 'Slice Girls' (7.13, 2012) portrays the Amazons not as feminist icons, but as supernatural monsters who pose a direct threat to society and must be destroyed to protect the innocent.¹⁶ Since *Supernatural* is a cult classic, with season 7 grossing an average viewership of 1.7 million, the representation of the Amazons in 'Slice Girls' is worth considering when discussing the modern Amazon image, as it shapes viewers' responses to the ancient Amazons and their contemporary counterparts. Overtly challenging the mode of representation typified by Wonder Woman and Xena, the Amazons in 'Slice Girls' form a distinct category in the modern reception of ancient Amazon mythology, highlighting that the modern Amazon figure is more complex and multifaceted than traditionally assumed.

¹⁴ Though Diodorus presents tales of the Amazons as 'fictitious tales' (ἄρχειολογία), it is worth noting that not all ancient authors perceived the Amazons in this way. For instance, Strabo's account (11.5.3) makes a case for the Amazons' historicity, acknowledging a balance between 'the mythical and the historical' (τὸ μυθῶδες καὶ τὸ ἱστορικόν) elements in ancient sources.

¹⁵ See, for example, Whalley (2010) and Potter (2018).

¹⁶ The team behind the creation of 'Slice Girls' includes Eric Kripke (creator), Eugene Ross-Leming and Brad Buckner (writers) and Robbie Thompson (executive story editor).

THE AMAZONS IN POPULAR MEDIA

Amazon warrior women have a long legacy in popular media, with the most well-known and influential early example being William Moulton Marston's re-fashioning of the Amazon image through the figure of Wonder Woman. Since Wonder Woman's debut in *All Star Comics #8* (1941), Amazons have been featured in many comics, television shows and movies, culminating in the widespread dissemination of Amazon mythology and the creation and perpetuation of the 'modern Amazon' archetype.¹⁷ Much scholarship on the Amazons in contemporary media is rooted in the paradigms and modes of representation embodied by the Wonder Woman franchise and *Xena: Warrior Princess* (1995–2001), which have shaped scholarly discourse on the transmission of Amazon iconography from antiquity to the present day. A cursory summary of scholarship on Wonder Woman and Xena is a necessary starting point for examining the representation of the Amazons in 'Slice Girls', since these earlier portrayals of Amazons in film and television form part of the matrix of texts within which the *Supernatural* episode operates.¹⁸

Jo Whalley's (2010) study of Amazons in contemporary media attests to the enduring fascination with the Amazon image in 20th and 21st century television and film, examining the portrayal of Amazons in the television series, *Wonder Woman* (1975–79) and *Xena: Warrior Princess* (1995–2001) and how these characters are paradigmatic examples of the Amazon archetype employed in films such as *Alien* (1979), *The Terminator* (1984) and *Kill Bill* (2003). Whalley's overarching argument is that the contemporary Amazons serve as an 'affirmative model of female heroism', embodying feminist ideals and challenging the male bias and patriarchal gaze underlying ancient accounts of the Amazons.¹⁹ As Whalley notes, the ancient Amazons – despite putting up formidable fights against legendary Greek heroes – are ultimately defeated by the male hero. By contrast, Wonder Woman's success against her male and female opponents sub-

¹⁷ For scholarship on Amazons in contemporary comics, television and film, see Passman (1991); Connock (1999); Early and Kennedy (2003); Blondell (2005); Mainon and Ursini (2006); Stuller (2010); Whalley (2010); Spieldenner (2012); Frankel (2018); Potter (2018); Scherzinger (2019); and Poorman (2021).

¹⁸ On the network of textual relations surrounding individual texts, a key premise in Reception Theory, see Allen (2001); Frow (2008) and Willis (2018: 39–42).

¹⁹ Whalley (2010) 2.

verts 'the ancient idea that Amazons are never victors, and that they must be vanquished in order to maintain the status quo and reinforce patriarchal norms.'²⁰ Whalley also considers the portrayal of the Amazons in *Xena: Warrior Princess* and Xena's role as a quasi-Amazon figure, arguing that the Xenaverse Amazons serve as a 'positive exemplar of the independent, strong warrior woman', in large part due to show's rejection of heteronormative paradigms demonstrated through Xena's bond with the Amazon Gabrielle.²¹

Other scholars likewise treat contemporary Amazons as positive female role models and LGBTQIA+ icons. Amanda Potter's article (2018) on the Amazons in contemporary film and television provides detailed insight into the feminist underpinnings of Xena and Wonder Woman, illustrating the significance of ideology on the refashioning of the Amazon image in reception texts. Potter situates the Xenaverse Amazons within the context of third-wave feminism, as their portrayal as empowered and self-reliant women reflects the growing focus on individuality and sex-positivity in the 1990s.²² Potter likewise situates the figure of Wonder Woman from the 2017 film within a feminist framework, viewing her as 'a feminist role model for the present day [...] who can love a man, but her power is not reduced nor is she defined by her relationship with him'.²³ As well as being feminist icons, the Amazons of the Wonder Woman and Xena franchises serve as icons for the LGBTQIA+ community. In his (2012) study on Wonder Woman's large gay male fanbase, Andrew Spieldenner argues that the Amazons' same-sex society, as well as the focus on 'fighting intolerance, finding one's place and thriving in transformation' resonates positively with many members of the LGBTQIA+ community.²⁴ Similarly, the close relationship between Xena and her Amazon companion, Gabrielle 'transmitted some message of self-worth, deservedness, and honour to people who felt very marginalized', promoting LGBTQIA+ representation on screen and providing a safe community of support and acceptance.²⁵ Actresses Lynda Carter (star of *Wonder Woman* 1975–1979) and Lucy Lawless (star of *Xena: Warrior Princess* 1995–2001) also cel-

20 Whalley (2010) 145.

21 Whalley (2010) 184.

22 Potter (2018) 44.

23 Potter (2018) 49.

24 Spieldenner (2012) 2.

25 Randell-Moon (2019) 6.

celebrate their characters' status as 'queer rights icons', publicly calling out homophobic readings of Wonder Woman and Xena, while promoting the messages of tolerance and acceptance that they deem as key facets of their characters' representation.²⁶

James William Poorman's (2021) study on the Amazons in popular culture provides additional insight into the dominant 'modern Amazon' image, through recourse to the superhero genre. Poorman's central thesis is that the ancient Amazons were constructed as antagonists and threats to Greek societal norms, a stark contrast to Wonder Woman's construction as 'a just hero(ine) in a society that was rife with male driven conflict, war, and injustice'.²⁷ Xena also has an interesting connection with warfare and justice, as a former warlord on a search for redemption. She consistently chooses to fight for justice, standing up for those suffering injustices at the hands of male feudal warlords, including but not limited to the Amazon communities she encounters during her travels.²⁸ Elaborating on Wonder Woman's affinity with justice, fairness and honesty as well as her driving desire to 'protect those who cannot protect themselves', Poorman interprets Wonder Woman as 'a heroine in modern American society [...] a positive symbol, or protagonist, for the equality of women within 20th and 21st century America'.²⁹ The same can be said of Xena, who is likewise a feminine counterpart of the masculine American superhero, reclaiming the ancient Amazon image and transforming her from the object of a male hero quest to a victorious hero in her own right. According to this dominant scholarly framework on the Amazons in contemporary media, self-reliance, independence and victory against male opponents form the quintessential hallmarks of the modern Amazon image.

The *Supernatural* episode, 'Slice Girls' acknowledges these positive associations surrounding the Amazon figure in contemporary media, consciously sit-

²⁶ See, for example, the June 2nd 2022 variety.com article on Lynda Carter's perspective on Wonder Woman (Sharf (2022)) and the March 20th 2021 collider.com article on Lucy Lawless' view on Xena as a queer rights icon (Nemiroff (2021)).

²⁷ Poorman (2021) 92.

²⁸ See, for example, 'Hooves and Harlots' (1.10, 1995) where Xena liberates the innocent Centaur Phantes (framed for the murder of the Amazon Queen Terreis), outing the warlord Celano as Terreis' murderer. See also 'Endgame' (4.20, 1999) where Xena helps the Telaquire Amazons fight against the Romans, after Pompey kidnaps Amazon women to sell them into slavery.

²⁹ Poorman (2021) 68 and 111.

uating its own portrayal of Amazons within a broader textual network. When protagonists Sam and Dean Winchester discover that they are pursuing Amazons, Dean comments 'what, like Wonder Woman?' in a highly dismissive manner. Professor Morrison (whose role in the episode is examined shortly) matches Dean's tone of contempt when he replies: 'no, like, a tribe of warriors. They actually existed. The comic books, they're just silly perversions.' This exchange acknowledges and undermines the positive portrayal of the Amazons as feminist icons in popular culture, signalling that the episode will follow a starkly different trajectory of representation. With the Wonder Woman archetype being dismissed as a 'silly perversion' of ancient Amazon lore, the Amazons of 'Slice Girls' are set up as her antithesis. Rather than embodiments of peace and justice, these Amazons are constructed as brutal, bloodthirsty warriors operating within a male-dominated narrative. Accordingly, I posit that the Amazons in 'Slice Girls' deliberately subvert the modern Amazon image typified by Wonder Woman, as the *Supernatural* episode explicitly challenges the dominant contemporary trend in which Amazons are role models and aspirational figures.

As explored further throughout this article, the episode's deliberate departure from the contemporary trope of aspirational Amazons aligns with the overarching premise and narrative constraints of the *Supernatural* series, where folkloric and supernatural creatures function as antagonists for the male protagonists to defeat. Within this framework, the Amazons cannot take on the role of victorious female lead, as Wonder Woman and Xena do, thereby necessitating a radically different construction of the Amazon image that has more in common with ancient sources than contemporary media.

THE AMAZONS, ACCORDING TO *SUPERNATURAL*

In 'Slice Girls', the writers explicitly draw upon the image of the Amazon in Greco-Roman myth, both aligning with and diverging from ancient material to construct unique Amazon characters who subvert the dominant 'modern Amazon' archetype. The episode's direct, explicit engagement with ancient written sources is a useful starting point for analysing how the Amazons are initially constructed as hostile, inimical figures in 'Slice Girls'. Following the conventional plot structure of a *Supernatural* episode, the pre-credits scene depicts a gruesome death inflicted by an unidentified supernatural adversary, with the episode itself centred around the Winchester brothers' attempts to track down

and defeat the monster. This process typically involves Sam and Dean enlisting the help of mythology and folklore professors or experts of local lore, who use the fragmented information provided by the brothers to identify the relevant supernatural being. From there, the Winchesters conduct their own independent research (usually by reading their deceased monster-hunting father's journal, consulting their esoteric library, or researching online) to learn more about the monsters' strengths and weaknesses, using this information to protect themselves and defeat the supernatural threat. Scenes where the enlisted expert explains the ancient origins of the supernatural antagonist provide vital insight into the dynamics of reception and transmission at the heart of the episode.

In the 'Slice Girls' pre-credits scene, a man is fatally stabbed by an unseen attacker, who carves a symbol into his chest, resembling a cave painting or crude rendering of hieroglyphic script. In a close-up shot, the glyph appears to depict the outline of a woman, as the inverted triangle at the figure's base evokes both womb and external genitalia. Under the correct assumption that the symbol can provide insight into the killer's identity, the Winchester brothers visit Professor Morrison from the local university's Department of Anthropology to see if he can shed light on its origins.

After conducting extensive research, Professor Morrison identifies the glyph as 'a variation of a symbol associated with the Temple of the Goddess Harmonia'. He then posits that the symbol originated with the Amazons, speculating that they used it as an 'occult talisman' to worship Harmonia. Professor Morrison's identification of the Amazons' lineage aligns with the extant ancient material, as the Amazons were believed to be the semidivine offspring of Harmonia and Ares.³⁰ However, there is a substantial difference in emphasis between Professor Morrison's account and the extant ancient sources. While the former focuses on the Amazons' matrilineal descent, the latter prioritise their paternal line.³¹ The focus on Harmonia activates a relatively marginal aspect of the Amazon narrative, compared to their more mainstream connection with Ares, who appears as a key figure in the Wonder Woman franchise and the Xenaverse.³² It

³⁰ Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 2.987–91

³¹ Lys. 2.4; Quint. 1.55; 1.461; 1.640.

³² It is worth noting that Ares is not depicted as the father of the Amazons in these contemporary adaptations. In *Wonder Woman* (2017) he takes the role of antagonist, and throughout *Xena: Warrior Princess* (1995–2001) he is an antagonist turned love-interest. Nonetheless, the association between Amazons and Ares is maintained throughout popular culture.

also satisfies the narrative constraint of brevity by making the Amazons immediately identifiable, since Ares fathered several deities and demigods, while Harmonia is associated with the Amazons only.

Foregrounding Harmonia and backgrounding Ares also has implications for the show's portrayal of the Amazons. The emphasis on femininity and motherhood foreshadows the episode's engagement with the 'monstrous feminine' trope (a point I return to later when examining the Amazons' worship of Harmonia through their initial rituals).³³ Moreover, by backgrounding their descent from Ares, the show de-emphasises their connection to warfare. While the ancient Amazons were renowned for their bellicosity and military prowess,³⁴ 'Slice Girls' retains their preoccupation with violence but focuses predominantly on a different aspect of their characterisation, namely, their matriarchal social structure.

When explaining the Amazons' key traits, Professor Morrison describes them as members of 'an exclusively female culture [with] no need for men, except procreation'. Though this description is brief, it provides information on the episode's engagement with ancient sources, as well as the functional differences and similarities between the ancient Amazons and those in *Supernatural*. Professor Morrison's statement succinctly paraphrases Strabo's account of the logistics of the Amazons' all-female society, which states that the Amazons and the neighbouring all-male Gargarean tribe meet on an annual basis 'for the purpose of begetting, unseen and in darkness, with whoever happens to be there'.³⁵

While there is a superficially strong parallel between Strabo's account and Professor Morrison's, the divergences between the two provide a useful frame of reference for understanding the episode's use of Amazon mythology more generally. Strabo goes on to explain that the Amazons raise their female offspring and give any male infants to the Gargareans,³⁶ thus allowing the all-female Amazons and all-male Gargareans to sustain their demographics. This explanation provides a rationalisation for the Amazons' unique societal makeup, in line with Strabo's purpose of uncovering how 'an army of women, or a city, or

33 See Creed (1993) *The Monstrous Feminine: Film, Feminism and Psychoanalysis* on the representation of monstrous women in horror films.

34 Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 2.987–91; Lys. 2.4; Hdt. 4.114.3; Mel. 3.34.

35 Strab 11.5.1.

36 Strab. 11.5.1.

a nation, could exist without men'.³⁷ Professor Morrison makes no reference to the Amazons raising or nurturing future generations of women, instead claiming that they kill the father of their children after impregnation. There are no extant ancient sources attesting to Amazons killing their sexual partners, and this divergence from antiquity encapsulates the show's portrayal of the Amazons as hostile, inimical figures.

Professor Morrison's focus on the Amazons' all-female society and intercourse rites illuminates the gendered Othering underlying the portrayal of the Amazons in 'Slice Girls'. Here we can see a functional similarity between the role of the Amazons in *Supernatural* and the function of Amazons in ancient Greek mythmaking. The scholarly consensus, first proposed by Mandy Merck, is that the Amazons' all-female society was constructed to represent the 'catastrophic alternative' to the Greek patriarchal system, hence justifying the subordination of women in antiquity.³⁸ From this, Merck concludes that Amazon narratives encapsulate male anxieties regarding female power, and that this tension is resolved when Amazons are defeated at the hands of Greek male warriors.³⁹ William Blake Tyrrell likewise interprets the Greeks' construction of the matriarchal Amazonian society as a tool for justifying patriarchal practices, thus treating the Amazons as a 'foundation myth [that] explains patriarchal marriage as the optimal means for controlling female sexuality and rashness'.⁴⁰ Building upon the significance of the Amazons' rejection of patriarchal marriage customs, DuBois argues that the Amazons' society represents a 'distorted alternative to the culture of the Greeks', since 'ideas of marriage and endogamy were crucial in defining the limits of the *polis*'.⁴¹ Clearly, in antiquity, the Amazons' all-female society stood as a subversion of Greek patriarchal norms, threatening the conceptual order of the male-headed state and presenting the Amazons as Other figures operating outside of Greek society and culture.

By drawing attention to the Amazons' exclusively female society as their defining characteristic, 'Slice Girls' likewise constructs the Amazons as transgres-

37 Strab. 11.5.3.

38 Merck (1978) 108.

39 Merck (1978) 110.

40 Tyrrell (1984) 125.

41 DuBois (1982) 39–41.

sive figures threatening the patriarchal status quo.⁴² This is brought to the fore when Sam Winchester momentarily interrupts Professor Morrison's explanation to note that all the victims in the case are male. The episode's depiction of the Amazons as man-hating man-killers takes the gendered Othering to the extreme, presenting them as not only a subversion of patriarchal norms (as they were in antiquity), but as an active threat to men, making them direct antagonists for the Winchester brothers.

AMAZONS AND THE SUPERNATURAL

While Professor Morrison's summary of ancient Amazon lore largely aligns with the extant ancient material, the episode's construction of Amazons as monstrous supernatural adversaries necessitates substantial deviation from ancient sources. Though the Amazons in antiquity are formidable opponents capable of causing great destruction in battle, their proficiency in combat is a result of their dedication to hunting and war training, not any superhuman characteristics. By contrast, the Amazons in 'Slice Girls' perform feats that are not humanly possible, and their supernatural status is well-established from the very beginning of the episode, long before it is revealed that the man-killers are Amazons.

In the pre-credits scene, we see a man lifted and thrown to the other side of the room, demonstrating the Amazons' superhuman strength. This is not merely a careless scene designed to create intrigue and enhance the intensity of combat scenes, but a core aspect of the Amazons' supernatural construction in the episode. It is the strength with which the male victim's body is thrown, rather than the corpse mutilation, which initially prompts the Winchester brothers to investigate the case. When Sam describes the unfolding case to Dean, attempting to justify a supernatural connection to necessitate their involvement, he points out that 'four men [were] thrown so hard they went through walls'. This sufficiently persuades Dean to look further into the case, establishing a tangible link between the Amazons and the realm of the supernatural, manifested by their superhuman strength. The Amazons' association with the supernatural is further reinforced when the Winchester brothers meet the forensic pathologist in

42 See Merck (1978), Tyrrell (1984), Keuls (1985) and Roque (2017) on the Amazons as subversions of the ancient Greek patriarchal norms and threats to the male-headed state.

the morgue, attempting to find any clues as to the killer's identity. The Amazons' strength is reiterated, with the pathologist noting that the corpse was 'thrown against the wall so hard it buckled'. When one of the brothers asks if any DNA was left at the crime scene, it is revealed that the victim bit the attacker, but the genetic markers 'don't match anything human'. While the Amazons' identity and backstory is yet to be explored, these early scenes clearly portray them not only as figures whose strength surpasses that of ordinary humans, but as genetically non-human. This satisfies the narrative constraints of the show as a whole, since the Winchester brothers only investigate violent crimes committed by supernatural or folkloric entities, so the emphasis on the Amazons' superhuman nature justifies their inclusion in the episode.

The Amazons' supernatural characteristics are outlined and explained after Professor Morrison's initial overview of Amazon lore, when Sam conducts his own independent research. Sam first uncovers the cause of the Amazons' supernatural abilities:

'Apparently, there was this long, bloody war. The Amazon population was decimated so they made a bargain with Harmonia to replenish their ranks and make them stronger. Well basically, they became more than human. Harmonia turned them into monsters.'

Sam's words provide a direct link between the Amazons' superhuman strength and their monstrous nature, by presenting Harmonia as an active progenitor of monsters. Moreover, the teleological nature of Sam's description accounts for the shift in portrayal from Amazons as warrior women to supernatural monsters, thus acknowledging their legacy in antiquity while simultaneously highlighting the new trajectory established in the episode. Sam's teleological account also calls to mind Diodorus' account of the Amazons' decline, though while Diodorus' Amazons merely faded into obscurity, the *Supernatural* Amazons are transformed into monsters to remain powerful. While there are no extant ancient accounts of Harmonia intervening in the Amazons' affairs and transforming them into superhuman figures, this addition furthers the gendered Othering employed throughout 'Slice Girls' by presenting Harmonia as a 'monstrous mother' figure, one of the 'monstrous feminine' tropes embedded in the horror genre.⁴³

⁴³ See Creed (1993: 16–31 and 139–51) for analyses of monstrous mothers in the horror film genre. See also Goc (2007: 149–65) for an in-depth analysis of the 'monstrous mother' trope in contemporary media.

In his research, Sam also discovers an additional facet of the Amazons' supernatural abilities, separate from their superstrength. He explains that they 'reproduce quickly [...] after mating they give birth within 36 hours. The babies grow incredibly fast, then the aging process becomes normal.' As well as serving as a marker of the Amazons' supernatural mode of being, the rapid aging is indicative of the show's preoccupation with the Amazons' procreation customs, reinforcing the transgressive nature of the Amazons' non-traditional child-rearing practices. The Amazons' accelerated aging is unique to *Supernatural* and exemplifies the effects of narrative constraints on the show's refashioning of the ancient Amazon image. Early in the episode, Dean is seduced by a woman named Lydia, unaware that she is an Amazon using him for the purposes of procreation. The next day, Lydia gives birth to their daughter Emma, who quickly reaches adolescence, at which point she is inducted into the cult of Harmonia and instructed to kill her father, putting Dean's life in direct danger. This plot – which relies on Emma being old enough to seek out and attack Dean – necessitates the inclusion of accelerated aging, as otherwise the events of the singular episode would span several years, substantially altering the narrative timeline of season 7.

Clearly, the monstrous construction of the Amazons in 'Slice Girls' hinges on the supernatural elements that are incorporated throughout the episode. Within this overarching framework, there are two core facets of the Amazons' inimical portrayal, which I now consider in turn: their role as seductive temptresses, and their association with the occult.

MONSTROUS AMAZONS: MAN-EATING MOTHERS AND MAN-KILLING DAUGHTERS

Supernatural 'Slice Girls' draws upon contemporary tropes from the detective fiction and horror genres to portray the Amazons as destructive, monstrous antagonists for the show's male protagonists. This is apparent in the portrayal of both Lydia and the Amazon youth, presented as *femme fatales*/maneaters and occult worshippers respectively. By examining these two modes of representation in turn, this section examines how genre conventions, narrative story arcs, characters' perspectives and male bias shape the 'modern Amazon' image as constructed in *Supernatural*.

Given that Lydia's primary role in the plot is to seduce Dean and carry a child destined to kill him, her portrayal calls to mind the *femme fatale* trope, epitom-

mised by the portrayal of dangerous and sexually alluring women in the *film noir* detective fiction genre.⁴⁴ The *femme fatale* figure – also referred to as ‘man-eater’ or ‘spider woman’ for her propensity to seduce, use and discard men by catering to their sexual fantasies – ultimately embodies both seduction and destruction.⁴⁵ Elisabeth Bronfen’s study of the *femme fatale* trope provides a useful framework for situating the Amazon Lydia within the broader context of textual representations of seductive, dangerous women. As Bronfen notes, the *femme fatale* is not a passive recipient subjected to the male gaze, but rather she is the active agent ‘who manipulates the outcome of their fatal meeting’.⁴⁶ In this way, a *femme fatale* is characterised by her uninhibited sexuality, independence and ruthless ambition, and her ‘ability to dupe the men who fall for her [...] merciless in manipulating them for her own ends’.⁴⁷ Accordingly, in Bronfen’s model, such women function as ‘figure[s] of male fantasy, articulating both a fascination for sexually aggressive women, as well as anxieties about feminine domination’.⁴⁸

From Lydia’s first on-screen appearance (mid-way in conversation with Dean in a bar), she appears confident, mysterious and seductive, as is typical of the *femme fatale* figure. Though it is unclear who initiated the conversation, Lydia’s agency is demonstrated throughout the conversation, which she manipulates for the sole purpose of seducing Dean. Lydia establishes a connection with Dean over their shared disinterest in ‘settling down’, and Dean is pleasantly surprised with her preference for non-exclusive, non-committed flings. Lydia then praises Dean’s suit and asks him about his work, with Dean lying and pretending to be a wealthy investment banker to impress her. Both Lydia and Dean flirt with the intention of seducing the other, though Lydia is more calculating and deliberate in her approach. Although her interest in Dean’s career first appears as innocent flattery, we find out over the course of the episode that all the male victims of the case have been wealthy businessmen she met at the same bar – as Sam and Dean later realise, Amazons ‘hook up with decent looking, successful guys’ be-

44 For the *femme fatale* figure in detective fiction, see Doane (1991), Stables (1998), Grossman (2003), Bronfen (2004) and Dennon (2017). For cross-cultural and transnational analyses of the *femme fatale* trope in contemporary media outside of traditional detective fiction, see Hanson and O’Rawe (2010) and Lindpop (2016).

45 See, for example, Place (1998) 47–9, Grossman (2003) 41–4 and Lindpop (2016) 322–31.

46 Bronfen (2004) 106.

47 Bronfen (2004) 106.

48 Bronfen (2004) 107.

cause they are 'picky about the gene pool'. Once she is satisfied that Dean is a suitable partner with which to procreate, she initiates casual sex by inviting him to her place. She is sexually dominant, including throwing Dean against a wall with superhuman fervour while kissing him, but he is too caught up in the heat of the moment to properly register what happened. Overall, Lydia's deliberate orchestration of her initial encounter with Dean, as she had presumably done previously with the other male victims, fits the model of the *femme fatale* manipulating her male partner for her own ends. By catering to Dean's male fantasy but ultimately putting his life in direct danger as a result of their sexual union, Lydia's narrative arc encompasses Dean's fascination for sexually liberated and uninhibited women, as well as an underlying anxiety about powerful women.

By presenting Lydia in this mode, *Supernatural* reconfigures the ancient Amazon warrior women into seductresses, in line with the episode's backgrounding of the Amazons' martial prowess. Nonetheless, this mode of representation aligns with the Amazons' overarching portrayal as powerful women in both antiquity and contemporary media, although in 'Slice Girls' their power derives from the leveraging of sexuality rather than military strength. The Amazons' portrayal as seductive temptresses is not attested in antiquity, despite the ancient audiences' interest in their sexual customs. The hypersexualised portrayal of the Amazons in 'Slice Girls' calls to mind the dangerous, sexually alluring women of Greco-Roman mythology such as Circe, Medusa, and the Sirens, identified by scholars as ancient examples of the *femme fatale* figure.⁴⁹ In this way, it appears that 'Slice Girls' conflates other female threats from antiquity when constructing their image of the Amazon, further demonstrating how *Supernatural* presents the Amazons as a threat to the patriarchal status quo.

This pejorative treatment of Amazon women as dangerous *femme fatales* is indicative of the show's treatment of women characters more generally. As Susan Cosby Ronnenberg notes in her study of gender representation in *Supernatural*, the show tends to 'present women as dichotomous props: damsel in distress or dangerous seductress'.⁵⁰ Though there are some notable exceptions of women who break this dichotomy, the representation of Lydia clearly fits within the model of dangerous seductress.⁵¹ Elaborating on her claim that women char-

49 See, for example, Pollock (2010: 9–31) and Johnston (2017: 1–8).

50 Ronnenberg (2019) 132.

51 Notable positively portrayed women who challenge traditional gender roles throughout the show include Jody Mills, Donna Hanscum, Charlie Bradbury and Jo and Ellen Harvelle, all

acters function as props within the narrative, Ronnenberg states that 'the focus is never on the female characters' depth or development, but that of the male leads.'⁵² This is true of the portrayal of Lydia, as she is not granted any character development, and the limited insight into her emotions and personal plight results in an absence of depth and complexity. Lydia serves the sole narrative purpose of birthing Emma, and the Emma sub-narrative ultimately centres around Dean and the threat that she poses to him, aligning with Ronnenberg's premise that women characters typically serve subsidiary roles where the focus lies on the Winchester brothers.

A similar sentiment is echoed in Jacob Clifton's article on gender in the *Supernatural* universe, which he views as 'a universe of Otherised and fetishised femininity that surrounds the narrative's all-male viewpoint'.⁵³ Lydia is fetishised through Dean's male gaze, shown literally through the extreme closeups capturing Dean's lingering and flirtatious gaze, and also captured in dialogue when Dean expresses approval and surprise at Lydia's preference for non-monogamy. As an Amazon, Lydia is also Otherised by nature, as her superstrength and ability to give birth within 36 hours of procreation mark her as distinctly non-human. As Lydia can be neatly situated within the wider paradigm of gendered representation throughout the *Supernatural* series, it is apparent that 'Slice Girls' does not provide a mere retelling of the ancient Amazon tales, but rather, the show embeds Amazon characters within the show's overarching framework and narrative constraints.

The role of genre and narrative arc in shaping the portrayal of Amazons can also be seen when examining the show's representation of Amazon daughters, specifically their association with occult practices. The *Supernatural* series is predicated on an 'occult world view' comprising demons, witches and various other supernatural monsters, where 'occultism formulates the aesthetics of the other world with which the Winchester brothers communicate.'⁵⁴ A key way that occultism is expressed throughout the show is the use of sigils and other pictorial symbols used for ritual purposes, such as protection against dangerous

of whom assist the Winchester brothers in defeating supernatural adversaries. For scholarship on the representation of these empowered female characters, see Borsellino (2009), Clifton (2009) and Calvert (2011).

52 Ronnenberg (2019) 132.

53 Clifton (2009) 139.

54 Nosachev (2020) 3.

supernatural forces.⁵⁵ In ‘Slice Girls’, Professor Morrison identifies the symbols carved into the victims’ chests as ‘pictographs meant to pay homage to Harmonia – occult talismans, if you will’, establishing an initial connection between the Amazons, their worship of Harmonia, and the realm of the occult. This initial association with occult practices is brought to the fore when the adolescent Emma is abducted by Amazon elders and taken to an abandoned building with other Amazon youth, where they are initiated into Amazonian society.

The Amazons’ talismanic imagery is apparent during this scene, as the Amazon elders wear a necklace in the shape of the symbol. Their worship of Harmonia is also made explicit at the beginning of the initiation, when the lead elder explains the purpose of the rituals that will take place:

‘On this special night you join an exceptional family [...] This is a tribute to the one who created and protects us. We hunt for her. We kill for her.’

Towards the end of the initiation ceremony, the Amazon youth are branded with the talisman, permanently marking them as devoted followers of Harmonia. This practice is presented as an act of courage exemplifying the Amazons’ determination and aptitude for physical combat, as the overseer explains that a true Amazon must know ‘how to endure pain and how to inflict it’.

As well as presenting the Amazons as occult worshippers, the initiation scene reinforces their portrayal as monstrous man-killers. The first rite that the initiates participate in involves ritual cannibalism. The Amazon youth, all dressed in modest white dresses, are handed individual glasses of milk while a tray displaying a cut up male corpse is passed around. Building on the premise that Amazons kill men to worship Harmonia, the Amazon youth are instructed to ‘consume that kill, as a symbol of unity with those who completed their blood missions and furthered the life of the [Amazon] tribe.’ Reluctantly, the young Amazons consume the milk and corpse, realising that the ritual cannibalism is an essential step in their rite of passage to adulthood, and that they have not been given an alternative. This scene jarringly juxtaposes the Amazons’ youth and innocence (denoted by the white dresses and milk) with their inevitable destiny to become savage, man-killing monsters. The ritual also calls to mind the First Communion rite, where young girls wear white dresses and consume bread and wine representing the body and blood of Christ, as part of their initiation into

55 Nosachev (2020) 5.

Catholicism. By having the Amazons consume an actual corpse of an unknown victim – rather than a food item representing Christ’s willing sacrifice – the initiation ritual in *Supernatural* perverts the traditional religious ritual to highlight the Amazons’ monstrosity, in particular the threat that they pose to their unsuspecting male victims. Since perversions of Catholic doctrine conventionally serve as shorthand for occult practices in popular culture, this initiation rite further reinforces the Amazons’ association with the realm of the occult.⁵⁶

After engaging in ritual cannibalism, the Amazons are told that they are ‘close to fulfilling [their] tribal destiny’, and that their initiation to Amazonian society will be completed once they ‘take the final glorious step into adulthood’. This final step in the initiation process is ritual patricide, which is revealed when Sam returns to Professor Morrison and learns that the Amazons’ ‘ritual of initiation requires that the child born of the mating process must kill her own father’. While Sam is at Professor Morrison’s office, Emma visits Dean’s accommodation and explains that she has to kill him, insisting that she doesn’t have a choice.

Cannibalism and patricide are not attested as rites-of-passage for Amazons in any extant ancient sources, further illustrating the show’s divergence from ancient material for narrative purposes. In antiquity, the Amazons’ transition from girlhood to womanhood was marked through puberty rites, with first intercourse serving as the rite-of-passage into adulthood.⁵⁷ According to ancient authors, an Amazon can only ‘set aside her virginity’ (ἀποπαρθενεύονται) when she has killed an enemy man in battle – in Herodotus’ account an Amazon can cease to be a virgin once she has killed a single man,⁵⁸ though Hippocrates claims that they must kill three men in battle and then perform the sacred marriage rites.⁵⁹ Pomponius Mela provides a similar account of the Amazons’ intercourse rites, noting that virginity serves as a ‘punishment’ for the women who fail to demonstrate their prowess on the battlefield, since ‘killing the enemy is the [Amazon] woman’s military duty, so much so that it is considered a shame-

56 See, for example, Chambers (2021) and Kapp (2022).

57 See Leach (1976: 77–9) on ‘rites of passage’ as rituals which mark the ‘movement across social boundaries from one social status to another’, and pp. 34–5 on puberty rites in particular. See Vernant (1980: 23–4) on the Amazons’ rites of passage.

58 Hdt. 4.117.1.

59 Hippoc. Aer. XVII.

ful act to not strike down an enemy'.⁶⁰ Once an Amazon has relinquished her virginity, her daily life is radically different, marking first intercourse as a significant rite-of-passage within Amazonian society. Hippocrates explains that non-virginal Amazons must cease hunting and warfare, unless they are 'seized by the necessity of a compulsory military campaign'.⁶¹ Since war training and armed combat were central to the day-to-day lives of the ancient Amazons, the banning of non-virginal Amazons from military activities (with the exception of dire circumstances) signifies a radical change in their daily customs as they progress into adulthood. Diodorus further expands on the expected roles of a non-virginal Amazon, outlining that they devote their time to nurturing and raising their female offspring, as well as implementing administrative state matters.⁶²

There is some point of connection between the Amazons' initiation rites in antiquity and *Supernatural*, as in both cases the Amazon must kill a man as the crucial step in her rite of passage. The ancient Amazons' requirement to kill an enemy in battle highlights their militaristic nature, showing that Amazons must contribute to and protect their community from antagonistic outside forces in order to have the right to procreate. By stark contrast, since the *Supernatural* Amazons kill their own fathers, they are reconfigured from skilled warriors to taboo-breaking murderers, committing patricide as an act of worship to Harmonia. The introduction of ritual patricide also makes for a compelling narrative that distinguishes 'Slice Girls' from other *Supernatural* episodes. While the Winchester brothers often face supernatural adversaries, having Dean's life be threatened by his own biological daughter creates additional intrigue, tension and conflict. Despite the small moments of empathy that Dean feels towards Emma throughout the episode, his final comment at the episode's conclusion – 'she really was [my daughter], she just also happened to be a crazy man-killing monster' – unambiguously reinforces the monstrous portrayal of the Amazons in 'Slice Girls'.

⁶⁰ Mel. 3.35.

⁶¹ Hippoc. *Aer.* XVII.

⁶² Diod. 3.53.1.

DEFEATING THE AMAZON

In *Supernatural* 'Slice Girls', as in the ancient Greco-Roman material, the story ends with the defeat and death of the Amazon. Emma's final scene is intense and dramatic, alternating between clips of Emma threatening Dean while Sam races to the apartment. When Emma pulls a knife on Dean, he holds her at gunpoint but is unwilling to kill her, instead urging her to 'walk away' and live a normal life. Sam overhears this conversation from the doorway, and he shakes his head in disbelief that Dean is willing to let a supernatural monster go freely. When Emma insists that she has to kill Dean, Sam bursts in and shoots her in the chest, saving his brother without hesitation. Emma falls slowly to the ground, with sombre instrumental music playing while the camera pans to a closeup of her fatal wound. The Winchester brothers then head straight to the warehouse where the Amazons' initiation took place, in the hopes of finding and killing the remaining Amazons, though they find that all the Amazons have already fled.

In line with the typical ending of a *Supernatural* episode, we then transition to the final scene of the brothers on the road, debriefing their emotional response to the episode's events. Dean expresses annoyance at the Amazons' escape, wishing that they had an opportunity to torture them, but insisting that they'll be ready for the next time the Amazons resurface. Sam replies by chastising Dean for his hesitation with Emma, reminding Dean that their line of work requires them to 'kill the monster' no matter the circumstances. To reinforce his point, Sam reminds Dean of an earlier case where they hunted a kitsune (fox-like shapeshifter) named Amy, who subsisted on the remains of morgue patients and only killed humans to feed her dying son. Sam sympathised with her plight and let her flee, but Dean tracked her down and stabbed her in the heart, causing a rift between the brothers ('The Girl Next Door', 7.3). By reminding Dean of this case, Sam argues for the necessity of Emma's death, presenting the death of the Amazon as a victory in the fight against supernatural beings.

In this way, Emma's death scene is inextricably connected with the wider paradigm of the monster versus hero/hunter dynamic underlying the entire *Supernatural* franchise. Within this framework, it is Sam and Dean's prerogative to save the day by defeating supernatural threats, so monstrous adversaries such as the Amazons function as hero quests that ultimately demonstrate the strength, skill and courage of the Winchester brothers.⁶³ The attitude towards monsters

63 Borsellino (2009) 108.

in *Supernatural* – as epitomised in the second series but characterising the franchise as a whole – is summarised by Jessica George (2017) in her study of authorship and monstrosity in the show:

‘Dean, the older brother, holds a black-and-white view of monsters, asserting, “If it’s supernatural, we kill it” (2.03 “Bloodlust”). Sam, the younger brother, puts across a slightly more nuanced view, insisting that their “job is hunting evil. And if these things aren’t killing people, they’re not evil” (2.03 “Bloodlust”). For Sam, what makes a monster is the danger it poses to humanity.’

The Amazons in ‘Slice Girls’ suit these two criteria for monstrosity: they are more-than-human beings with supernaturally enhanced abilities; and they actively pose a threat to humanity by killing and mutilating the men that are unknowingly used to father future generations of Amazon women. However, in the case of Emma’s death, we see a slight role reversal from the typical model outlined by George. Since Dean typically has a black-and-white attitude towards killing monsters, his unwillingness to shoot Emma is a notable exception. His choice to spare Emma’s life can be accounted for by his inner conflict as her biological father, as well as his grief at recently losing his father figure Bobby Singer, resulting in an overwhelming sense of apathy and a loss of purpose. By contrast, Sam’s uncharacteristically harsh response towards the adolescent Emma (who we would typically expect Sam to empathise with, due to her lack of control over her destiny) is explained by his overwhelming desire to protect his brother at all costs, as well as his anger over Dean’s hypocrisy in killing the kitsune Amy but giving Emma the opportunity to flee.

Emma’s death at the hands of protagonist, Sam Winchester, calls to mind the numerous ancient visual and written sources where Greek male warrior-heroes defeat and kill Amazon women. Since Amazons were renowned for their military prowess, they were frequently portrayed in one-on-one combat with skilled Greek heroes or fighting against the opposing Greek army – Penthesilea fought Achilles in Troy,⁶⁴ Hippolyta battled Heracles in her homeland⁶⁵ and Antiope’s Amazons fought Theseus and his army on Athenian soil.⁶⁶ Though these Amazons put up a formidable fight and successfully slaughtered several enemy

⁶⁴ Apollod. 5.1; Quint. 1.612–21.

⁶⁵ Ap. Rhod. *Argon.* 2.777; Diod. 2.46.4.

⁶⁶ Plut. *Vit. Thes.* 27.2–4; Isoc. *Paneg.* 68–70.

Greeks, they are ultimately killed by the primary hero of the opposing side, conferring great honour and renown upon the hero capable of killing an Amazon. As Lorna Hardwick notes in her study of Amazons in ancient Greek epic, Amazons ‘had a stock role as an index of heroic achievement’ since ‘they were worthy opponents, so they are worth defeating’.⁶⁷

A similar dynamic is apparent in the *Supernatural* episode, as Sam’s killing of Emma cements his position as a heroic protagonist. However, there is a substantial difference in the way that Emma’s death confers heroism upon Sam. While the ancient Greek heroes use their strength and military skill to defeat Amazons in extensive combat scenes, Sam merely ambushes and shoots Emma. Sam’s heroism is therefore not a result of his ability to defeat a worthy military opponent but is instead shown through his dedication to protecting his brother. This is indicative of the show’s attitude towards heroism and heroic acts, as *Supernatural* consistently presents self-sacrifice, looking after one’s family and putting oneself in personal risk to protect the innocent as key indicators of heroism. Sam and Dean’s failed attempt to eradicate the remaining Amazons also illustrates the show’s construction of Amazons as an index of heroic achievement. If the brothers had successfully eliminated the threat posed by the Amazons, they would have achieved their underlying goal to protect innocent citizens from supernatural threats, which serves as their driving motivation throughout the series. Sam and Dean view their inability to defeat all Amazons as a personal failing, noting that they ‘screwed up’ because of their lack of focus in the aftermath of Bobby’s death.

Emma’s death scene marks a strong point of contrast with the dominant modern Amazon image typified by Wonder Woman and the Xenaverse Amazons. While the latter are aspirational figures on account of their successful defiance of patriarchal norms and their ultimate victories in battle, Emma’s defeat evokes the ancient narrative pattern where Amazon women are killed by men to resolve the threat they pose to the male-headed state. In this way, *Supernatural* draws upon the gendered Othering of the Amazons in antiquity but takes this to the extreme, transforming the Amazons from hostile warriors to supernaturally endowed beings who seduce men, engage in ritual cannibalism and kill their own fathers.

67 Hardwick (1990) 16.

CONCLUSION

In constructing the Amazons in *Supernatural* 'Slice Girls', the writers overtly challenge the dominant portrayal of the Amazons in contemporary media, as seen when characters Dean Winchester and Professor Morrison mock the image of Wonder Woman. While the conventional modern Amazon figure is an aspirational role model and feminist icon, the Amazons in *Supernatural* are hostile, inimical figures posing a direct threat to men. In constructing an original take on the modern Amazon image, 'Slice Girls' draws explicitly on ancient Amazon mythology, while introducing supernatural elements to depict the Amazons as monstrous adversaries for the Winchester brothers to defeat. The construction of the Amazons in 'Slice Girls' is best understood in relation to the narrative constraints of the *Supernatural* series, illustrating that the reception of classical figures is heavily influenced by the restraints of the media they appear in. The radically different construction of Amazons in *Supernatural* compared to the Wonder Woman franchise and *Xena: Warrior Princess* demonstrates how a range of factors such as feminist ideology, narrative story arcs, character's perspective and male bias (or lack thereof) influence the portrayal of the Amazons in reception texts. The shift in representation from empowered heroines to monstrous supernatural adversaries reaches back to ancient narratives where Amazons function as monsters for the Greek heroes like Achilles and Theseus to overcome. A similar narrative pattern exists throughout the *Supernatural* series, as the Winchester brothers are ultimately driven by their goal to defeat dangerous supernatural creatures, including Dean's Amazon daughter Emma.

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