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The Leviathans in the Television Series “Supernatural”*

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Leviathan is a mythical creature which has appeared a number of times in various cultural texts, capturing the human imagination. Its origin “dates to [...] the distant past. The Akkadian Tiamat, Ugaritic Yam or Egyptian Apophis (Greek Typhon) are its prototypes”¹, but it has been known under this name only since biblical times. According to the Judeo-Christian tradition, the monster was created by God himself on the fifth day of the creation of the world as a master of other sea creatures brought into being alongside.

While the Bible mentions Leviathan five times (Hi 3, 8; Hi 40, 24–41, 34; Iz 27, 1; Ps 74, 14, Ps 104, 24–26), in most cases these passages reveal little. An exception is the passage in the Book of Job in which its appearance was described:

Behold, the hope of him is in vain: shall not *one* be cast down even at the sight of him? [...]

I will not conceal his parts, nor his power, nor his comely proportion. Who can discover the face of his garment? *or* who can come *to him* with his double bridle? Who can open the doors of his face? his teeth *are* terrible round about. *His scales are his* pride, shut up together *as with* a close seal. One is so near to another, that no air can come between them. They are joined one to another, they stick together, that they cannot be sundered. By his neesings a light doth shine, and his eyes *are* like the eyelids of the morning. Out of his mouth go burning lamps, *and* sparks of fire leap out. Out of his nostrils goeth smoke, as *out* of a seething pot or caldron. His breath kindleth coals, and a flame goeth out of his mouth. In his neck remaineth strength, and sorrow is turned into joy before him. The flakes of his flesh are joined together: they are firm in themselves; they cannot be moved. His heart is as firm as a stone; yea, as hard as a piece of the

* *Supernatural*, dir. by E. Kripke and others, Warner Bros, USA, 2005.

¹ Z. Drapella, *Od Lewiatana do Jormungandra. Rzecz o potworach morskich, ludziach z Morza i duchach wód*, Wydawnictwo Morskie, Gdańsk 1976, p. 27.

nether millstone. [...] Sharp stones *are* under him: he spreadeth sharp pointed things upon the mire. He maketh the deep to boil like a pot: he maketh the sea like a pot of ointment².

This terrifying metaphor combined with the fear, known since the dawn of time, of the devastating power of the element of water, embodied by Leviathan, led to the monster becoming a metaphor for Evil. One of the best examples is Kabbalah, where “Leviathan symbolizes Samael, the prince of evil”³. It also plays a very important role in one of the biggest satanic organizations, The Church of Satan, where it is known as one of the *Four Crown Princes of Hell*. Leviathan became also an inspiration for various authors — writers, painters and screenwriters — who refer to it in their works, drawing to a lesser or greater extent on the Bible and Apocrypha⁴.

The Leviathans are also characters in one of the most popular American television series of the 21st century, *Supernatural*. These, however, do not have a great deal in common with their biblical precursor. Information as to their existence appears in the episode *Meet the New Boss* (S07E01), beginning the seventh season. The episode is devoted to Castiel, an angel who, in an attempt to overcome his heavenly opponents (rebels of Heaven having ceased to obey the commands of God), decides to absorb the souls of sinners and demons in purgatory, thereby gaining their power. Having executed his plan, he becomes extremely powerful, declares himself the new God and begins the extermination of his disobedient kind and religious leaders of all faiths. During the purge he begins to hear many voices in his head. Moreover, his body begins to disintegrate and it appears as if something is attempting to penetrate his skin. Castiel does not understand the changes occurring. Death, summoned by the Winchesters to battle the angel, explains these to him. Seeing “the new God”, the Horseman of the Apocalypse states that his unhealthy appearance is the effect of absorbing from purgatory creatures much older than souls. When Dean, listening to the conversation, asks what this means, Death explains: “Long before God created angel or man, he made the first beasts. The Leviathans. [...] I personally found them entertaining but he was concerned they’d chomp the entire Petri dish. So he locked them away. Why do you think he created purgatory? To keep those clever, poisonous things out. Now, Castiel has swallowed them. He’s the one thin membrane between the Old Ones and your home”.

² Hi 41, 9. 12–24. 30–31. All quotations are drawn from the King James Version.

³ A. Unterman, *Encyklopedia tradycji i legend żydowskich*, trans. O. Zienkiewicz, Książka i Wiedza, Warszawa 1994, p. 157, author’s translation.

⁴ Andrey Zvyagintsev *Leviathan* (2014) demonstrates that the cultural theme of Leviathan is still viable. In the movie, the title character is Russia — a country where citizens are being destroyed in all possible ways for the sake of the state’s interests. The theme of Leviathan has frequently appeared in literature, as in works written by Thomas Hobbes (*Leviathan*, 1651), John Milton (*Paradise Lost*, 1667), William Blake (*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*, 1790–1793), Jim Butcher (“Codex Alera” series, 2004–2009) or Scott Westerfeld (*Leviathan*, 2009).

The information on the Leviathans gained from Death is not entirely consistent with the legends known from the Judeo-Christian tradition. According to one of these, God did indeed create a pair of sea monsters, Leviathans, before creating man, but for fear that they might destroy the Earth he decided to kill one — the female. As the legend has it, after the annihilation she was immersed in brine, to marinate until doomsday⁵. As for the male, its destiny is to battle another monster, Behemoth. The result of this terrifying duel will be the death of both creatures. Following the end of existence, "from the skin of leviathan God will construct tents to shelter companies of the pious while they enjoy the dishes made of his flesh. The amount assigned to each of the pious will be in proportion to his deserts, and none will envy or begrudge the other his better share. What is left of leviathan's skin will be stretched out over Jerusalem as a canopy, and the light streaming from it will illuminate the whole world"⁶. While the question of the origin of the Leviathans in the series is not clarified so thoroughly, it is certain that the number is not in agreement — hundreds of them appear in America.

Having learned of the Leviathans, the Winchesters decide to perform a ritual aimed at drawing the monsters and souls from purgatory out of Castiel and returning them whence they came. Unfortunately, their actions do not produce the desired result and the Leviathans seize control of the body of the angel. When they conquer the "vessel", as all supernatural creatures call the human form, on Castiel appear black lines resembling veins or spreading tree branches changing shape and continually waving. His behaviour also changes completely, with Cass becoming aggressive.

Having seized the body of the angel, the Leviathans enter a source of drinking water and fully immerse themselves in it. A while later, a whirl comes into view at the point at which they disappeared, and visible on the surface of the water is a black, swirling mass, which flows in all directions. The immersion in the reservoir is an obvious reference to the biblical origin of the Leviathans, which — as has been mentioned — according to the Old Testament came into being as sea monsters, with power over all other sea creatures. This is also an apparent mockery of the symbolism of water, perceived, regardless of the cultural environment, as a source of all life. Polluting it with their presence, the Leviathans transform it into a deadly weapon against humanity — something essential for existence becomes suddenly a source of suffering and death. The choice of water as peculiar means of transport is also a move well thought out. In America, where the action of the series is set, virtually everyone has almost unlimited access to it. By travelling through the pipes, they are able to arrive at any place and reach anyone, thereby maximizing the area of their influence.

⁵ See L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews*, The Johns Hopkins University Press, Baltimore and London 1998.

⁶ Ibid.

At first the Leviathans do not wish to draw the attention of mortals. Concealing their true identity poses no problem for them as the beasts, unlike their biblical precursors, do not resemble sea creatures in any way. In fact, it is not known what they look like — they may have no physical form. This is indicated by the form in which they leave the body of Cass (a black, swirling mass) and their relocation through the sewer pipes, as well as the fact that in order to function they require the bodies of mortals.

In order to take the form of a chosen person, the Leviathans need only touch the victim or something which contains the DNA of the person, such as hair⁷. As well as changing their physical coating, the monsters acquire all of the knowledge of those whom they have decided to resemble, in effect becoming for third persons almost impossible to differentiate from a normal human being. Following the alteration, the monsters in most cases devour their prey. During the attack they reveal their true nature — they open their unnaturally large mouth, full of sharp teeth, and show a split tongue. They can also be recognised by “bleeding” a black slurry when wounded.

The lack of characteristics distinguishing the Leviathans — at least at first glance — from a normal human being makes them especially dangerous. The creatures take the form of further individuals to feed on the surrounding mortals. This occurs for instance in the case of those Leviathans who take the form of teenagers on a swimming team and consume other boys from the group (S07E02), or that of their kind who decide to seize the bodies of hospital personnel so as to obtain constant access to nourishment.

These individual acts of cruelty, although terrifying, may be considered innocent when compared with the entirety of the plan with which the Leviathans have appeared on Earth. For their aim is the complete conversion of mortals into food. In order to satisfy their hunger to the highest possible extent, the beasts, led by Dick Roman — a millionaire whose body was seized by the leader of the Leviathans — conduct research aimed at discovering a means of modifying DNA so as to enhance appetite and slow metabolism. At the same time they seek cures for fatal diseases affecting humanity. Thanks to this mortals would become even more overweight and live longer, which for the Leviathans would mean more food.

Not wishing to depend solely on uncertain experiments on human DNA, Dick Roman implements an additional plan, one ensuring immediate efficacy. Through his ownership of the firm SucroCorp, he begins production of food additives (including Isoglucose), which find their way into almost all of the food in the USA. Their consumption leads people to concentrate solely on food and remain indifferent to the surrounding reality.

⁷ The Leviathans use the first method very often, it being enough here to mention the situation in which one becomes Bobby having been touched. The second method is used by other Leviathans who become Sam and Dean and as the hunters commit crimes throughout the United States.

The best example of the idea of the Leviathans working smoothly is the behaviour of the people in Biggerson's Restaurant, one of the restaurants which the Winchesters and Bobby visit in the course of one of the cases. The people there are focused obsessively on eating — one of the local guards, with whom the hunters converse, is more interested in his sandwich than in the fact that his partner was lost several days before. Dean commences to show the same strange indifference after he decides to eat on the premises. Having noticed the unusual behaviour of the man, Sam and Bobby begin to understand that poisoned food is likely to be responsible for the odd dullness of those around them. Their concerns are confirmed when from the sandwich which they have taken for observation flows a black slurry resembling the "blood" of the Leviathans.

The poisoned food at Biggerson's Restaurant is but an exercise for activity on a wider scale. Soon after the incident the additives produced by Dick Roman and his kind are present in almost all of the food available in the supermarket. This is perfectly visible in the behaviour of people in the shops or on the streets. They are indifferent to the surrounding reality — some gazing aimlessly ahead, others obsessively repeating the same action — and at the same time entirely passive — for instance, when Sam asks a stranger to provide him with his blood, the man, without no objection or emotion, stretches out his arm (S07E22).

Consumption of food containing additives produced by the Leviathans is dangerous not only to humans, but also to creatures consuming mortals. Growing aware of this are vampires, the companions of the last living Alpha, their protoplast, with whom Dick Roman began cooperation, beguiling him with promises of shared interests⁸. Although the leader of the bloodsuckers himself takes a very serious attitude towards this agreement, it soon transpires that the covenant was simply a deception — the vampires who drank the blood of those consuming regular, generally available food died and their lips and necks appear to have been burnt. This is a result of the introduction to food the additives produced by the Leviathans. It is no side effect, but a deliberate undertaking by the Leviathans, who have no intention of sharing their food with any other supernatural creatures. Edgar admits this in a conversation with Alpha, to whom he previously promised an alliance embracing all of their kind. When the father of vampires asks the Leviathan when the problem of the plague affecting bloodsuckers will be solved, he answers that it never will and adds: "We want you to burn like the little roaches you are. ... Our additives kill the wolves too, the shifters and those disgusting little things that eat corpses. Anything with a taste for human. ... Mankind is a limited resource, after all" (S07E22).

An unwillingness to share food with other breeds of demon is but one of many examples demonstrating that the Leviathans are remarkably selfish and

⁸ As Alpha told the Winchesters of Dick: "We are on excellent terms, he and I. [...] He said grabbing a snack would be easier than ever" (S07E22 *There Will Be Blood*).

treacherous, as well as arrogant. Also becoming convinced of this is Crowley, the king of Hell, who attempts to begin a collaboration with the leader of the Leviathans, sensing that these are powerful creatures. Dick considers his proposal unworthy and laughs at it, saying: "I'd sooner swim through hot garbage than shake hands with a bottom-feeding mutation like you. Your demons are ugly, lazy, gold-digging whores. You're less than humans. And they're no good for much till you dip them in garlic sauce. I'd never work with you, Crowley. In fact, if I wasn't busy with better things, I might wipe your kind from the face of the universe. And you'd deserve it"⁹. The aversion which these words carry is clear even to Crowley, who has already heard many blunt opinions of himself and his charges.

Dick Roman's kind remain disloyal not only to other supernaturals, but also to each other. This is easily observed in the episode "Out with the Old", in which two Leviathans attack the Winchesters. One of the monsters, George, reveals to the Winchesters where they can find the borax harmful to his kind as well as a sword, in this way helping to kill his own boss, solely due to the fact that he did not appreciate her work. In order not to be suspect, he tells the hunters to immerse him in the corrosive substance. When afterwards the hunters, surprised at the unexpected alliance, ask why he allowed his boss to be hurt, he explains: "Because I am dying to know what the bitch tastes like. ... If Joyce is alive, that I spend the rest of my life cleaning her messes. Or worse, I get eaten. Or bibbed".

Despite all of the negative qualities, it cannot be denied that most of the Leviathans possess a smartness and intelligence. Their leader, Dick Roman, has a concrete plan for the use of mortals and begins to execute this almost immediately after emerging on Earth. His deeds are well thought out and impressive: both the takeover of the company producing food additives, thanks to which — following minor modifications — a human can be changed into a passive being (while at the same time disposing of other supernatural creatures) and the establishment of a laboratory seeking cures for diseases affecting humanity in order to make them a healthier "snack" are evidence that he does not act without thought. Shortly before his own death, the man organises a meeting at which he presents to the most prominent members of the society his future plans, which encompass not only the expansion of the activity of the Leviathans, but also further modifications aimed at improving the quality of their food¹⁰. His intelligence combined with the knowledge which the Leviathans gain through devouring their victims, along with their love for cruelty, makes these creatures extremely dangerous not only to ordinary mortals, but also to supernaturals. They demonstrated this a number of times by killing angels, demons and vampires.

⁹ Dick changes his mind as to cooperation with Crowley, but only when needing a favour.

¹⁰ One of these is a cream intended to kill those who despite the great appetite for some reason do not gain weight. In this way Dick wishes to eliminate individuals in whom it is not worth investing. Dick presents the operation of the new substance on Polly, a slim teenager. Having been injected with the innovation, the girl vomits and falls dead to the ground (S07E23).

The Leviathans prove to be difficult — even for supernatural creatures — rivals for the Winchester brothers. Their annihilation requires great effort, which is also in accordance with the previously mentioned text of the Book of Job. It was written of Leviathan that: "The sword of him that layeth at him cannot hold: the spear, the dart, nor the habergeon. He esteemeth iron as straw, *and* brass as rotten wood. The arrow cannot make him flee: slingstones are turned with him into stubble. Darts are counted as stubble: he laugheth at the shaking of a spear". (Hi 41, 26–29). In the Judeo-Christian tradition this question is (or will be) solved thanks to divine intervention — according to some interpretations it was God who killed the female Leviathan whilst the male died in battle with Behemoth, and according to others he smashed his head (Ps 74, 14) or will do so on the day of the Last Judgement (Iz 27,1).

In the series, on the other hand, the hunters must eliminate the mythological creatures. In order to do so, the Winchesters and Bobby try practically every trick which was effective in previous battles with other supernaturals. In the episode "Hello, Cruel World" Bobby fires silver bullets at one of the Leviathans from a double-barrelled shotgun, but this makes no impression on the monster. In the same episode Dean attempts to kill another Leviathan by throwing the wreck of a car at him. Although it seems initially that crushing the creature with a vehicle weighing several tons has brought the desired effect, in the end his efforts prove ineffective.

Eager to discover means of destroying the Leviathans, the hunters imprison and torture one of them, but he claims that it is impossible to kill such beings as he is. While the Winchesters do not believe his words, all of their efforts thus far indicate that the creature is telling the truth. It is known for certain that rock salt does not affect them (as in the case of ghosts), and neither holy water nor acid. Finally the discouraged Bobby severs his head, which it transpires a partial solution — although the head regenerates after several hours, it allows the monsters to be disposed of at least temporarily.

The best means of annihilating the Leviathans is the previously mentioned borax, a chemical substance which is an ingredient in many cleaning agents. This occurs by chance — when Bobby is torturing one of the monsters in the cellar, Sheriff Mills is cleaning the ground floor, and the lather runs onto the Leviathan and burns large holes in his body. Borax combined with decapitation and the keeping of the head far from the trunk allows the Leviathans to be halted until someone succeeds in joining the head with the rest of the body, and thus, in some cases, forever.

Discovering this method assists the hunters greatly in the battle with the creatures, although even this is not entirely effective. As it transpires, there is only one strategy for the complete removal of the Leviathans from the face of the Earth — it is necessary to kill their boss. Information on doing so is to be found on a stone tablet on which the word of God has been set down. This tablet was located

in Iran, but Roman, aware of its significance, ordered it to be brought to him. He fails to seize the stone, however, the Winchesters getting hold of it beforehand. Although the brothers have no idea what their prize is, they know how important it is for the Leviathans. Eventually a teenager, Kevin Tran, anointed a prophet by Heaven, helps them decipher the text. The boy finds there the information that in order to destroy the mythical monsters they need blood from three fallen supernatural creatures — an angel, the Ruler of Fallen Humanity and the Father of Fallen Beast — as well as the bone of a mortal who proved righteous.

Wishing to eradicate the Leviathans as rapidly as possible, the Winchesters begin to assemble the ingredients necessary to return the Leviathans to purgatory. Obtaining the blood of an angel comes with no effort as Castiel wishes to help them and at the same time redeem his wrongdoing — after all, it was he who brought the creatures to the Earth. It is slightly more difficult to obtain the blood of Crowley, whom Sam and Dean consider to be the Ruler of Fallen Humanity. The demon admittedly — remembering the humiliation which he suffered because of Dick Roman — promises to present them with his ichor, but only if the hunters gather all of the other ingredients essential to kill the leader of the Leviathans. He assists the Winchesters incidentally by revealing that there remains in the world one more living Alpha, who is likely to be found in a town in North Dakota.

Making use of the clue, the men reach the hideaway of the leader of vampires. He, however, is not initially eager to cooperate, being mindful of the pact with Dick Roman previously mentioned and the fact that the hunters have already attempted many times to destroy him. However, when he discovers that he has been cheated by the Leviathans, without pausing to think he provides the Winchesters with his blood. As a result, the only thing which they lack is the bone of a virtuous human, which they obtain by digging up the remains of an exceptionally devoted nun, and the blood of Crowley, which the lord of Hell has already promised to them.

Yet before the blood is transferred, the demon is summoned by Dick and trapped such that he cannot leave freely. The leader of the Leviathans is suddenly extremely interested in establishing cooperation with Crowley, for whom earlier he had expressed his disdain, as he becomes conscious of the fact that the Winchesters know how to annihilate him and his kind. Dick therefore proposes that in return for providing the hunters with fake blood he will allow the vassals of Crowley to take possession of the souls of the Canadians. In doing so, the Leviathan pretends friendliness and suggests that the deal is exceptionally beneficial for the demons. Both his proposal and behaviour towards the king of Hell are an excellent example of arrogance.

It is arrogance and the feeling of superiority which contribute to the eventual failure which Dick suffers. Blinded by his own successes, the Leviathan does not even consider the idea that Crowley might cheat him. But for his disrespectful behaviour towards other supernaturals, neither Alpha nor Crowley would have agreed to give their blood to the Winchesters. Both the king of Hell and the proto-

plast of vampires were unwilling to help the hunters — they are, after all, their natural enemies. The actions taken by Dick, however, irritated them so greatly that they did agree to aid the Winchesters. Thanks to their cooperation Dean pierced with a deadly weapon the neck of the leader of the Leviathans, who then burst, splattering everything with black slurry.

It may appear that the Leviathans in the series *Supernatural* are creatures which derived from their biblical prototype their name alone. At first glance the only thing which they have in common with the sea monsters known from the Holy Bible is the link with water previously mentioned. At the same time they are unequivocally negative characters — arrogant, cruel, ready to obliterate humanity for their own pleasure. It is their behaviour which tallies with the perception of Leviathans in the Judeo-Christian tradition, and earlier still, in the religious legends of the Middle East — as a symbol of chaos, and evil difficult to defeat.

The Leviathans in the Television Series “Supernatural”

Summary

The paper is an attempt to describe leviathans appearing in “Supernatural” TV series in reference to their archetype known from Judeo-Christian tradition. Originally they were portrayed as a fearsome sea monsters which had extraordinary strength. Leviathans known from “Supernatural” are seemingly showing only slight resemble to monsters known from holy scriptures or legends. They look like people and — if they want to — they can blend in and behave like a normal mortal. However, they have a lot in common with archaic image of this monsters: cruelty, brutality and arrogance that leviathans manifest to the human kind make them the epitome of chaos and the example of original Evil.