

“ALL THAT WE BECOME”:  
RENEGOTIATING VAMPIRE/PERFORMATIVE MASCULINITY IN  
*BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER* AND *ANGEL*

By

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My project combines vampire studies and gender theory. Specifically, I analyze the recent television show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and its spinoff *Angel* in an attempt to examine the programs' representations of male vampire masculinity, namely through the two integral examples of Angel and Spike. After grounding my research in pertinent aspects of vampire studies, I argue that although androgyny is an important aspect of vampirism and gender, the performativity of gender, masculinity especially, cannot be dismissed as evaporated into the semblance of “androgyny.” This is especially true in shows like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel*, which consciously incorporate the importance of gender and performativity, which can be seen on several layers in various episodes. In regards to masculinity in particular, I argue that the vampire myth created in these shows creates personas that survive over centuries and subsequently must renegotiate the particulars of their performativity as their specific geographic, temporal, and cultural contexts shift. Both Angel and Spike are granted origin stories that indicate a

failure to successfully perform masculinity, and both of them use their vampiric monstrosity to renegotiate a hypermasculinity that conflates sexuality and violence. I argue that this conflation is essential to the reconfigurations of their masculinities. As vampires, Angelus and Spike create a homosocial bond with each other and around their female interests wherein Spike tends to copy the hypermasculinity already personified by Angelus. Both characters ultimately regain their souls and encounter the modern-day Slayer, Buffy, which together force them to separate their sexuality and violence while still maintaining both. I argue through the theories of Georges Batailles that the figure of Buffy is a romantic interest for both Angel and Spike in that she represents the very conflation of sexuality and violence they are denied, as well as the embodiment of their deaths. Ultimately, their relationships are terminal and transitional, serving only to allow both characters to find a performative masculinity that is acceptable in the modern world, one that is sexual and violent but not simultaneously, and also maintained not through a homosexual relationship but instead through a homosocial kinship network.

## CHAPTER 1 INTRODUCTION

Is there anything interesting that remains to be said about vampires? The subject has been discussed at great lengths, from *Dracula* to *The Lost Boys*, from novel to internet slash fiction. In recent years, academics interested in vampires have turned their attention to what is arguably the most popular form of the vampire myth today: *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Especially since the conclusion of the program in May of 2003, writing about the show has increased significantly, ranging from cultural studies to media studies, Postcolonialism to feminism.<sup>1</sup> In May of 2004, the show's spin-off, *Angel*, concludes its own series, ostensibly bringing an end (at least for now and for the televisual component) to what many fans call the Buffyverse, as created by Joss Whedon.

As the narratives come to a conclusion, so opens a space for a study that would link these two shows the ever-growing field of masculinity studies. This particular application is not entirely novel; there have been previous attempts to discuss the shows in terms of gender dynamics while focusing on the shows' representations of masculinity, although the vast majority of scholarship that analyzes the show's gender constructs do so with a focus on Buffy herself. Lorna Jowett's "Masculinity, Monstrosity and Behaviour Modification in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*" is a prime example of recent scholarship that attempts to analyze the masculinity of *Buffy* at some length. And while

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<sup>1</sup> One need only to look at the announced paper topics for the upcoming Slayage Conference for May 2004, with panels including "Feminism and Gender," "'Pangs,' Postcolonialism, Nationalism" to see the most recent topics of discussion within 'Buffy Studies.'

the essay provides a number of useful insights, it is also quite broad and perfunctory, spending a brief time analyzing each male character on the show. Like many similar essays,<sup>2</sup> her essay was published before the conclusion of *Buffy* or the final seasons of *Angel*, which provide essential expansions within the narratives concerning masculinity. But my aim is not simply to extend an analysis like Jowett's into the seasons that occur after her essay. Rather, I shall narrow the field and focus the lens, looking more closely at a particular species of masculinity within the Buffyverse: the male vampire. Specifically, *Buffy* provides two prime examples of the male vampire who subsequently but separately leave for Los Angeles and the promised land of the spin-off: namely, Angel and Spike. Unlike these previous studies, I argue that an extended character analysis of these vampires and their various personas as developed over the seasons of *Buffy* and *Angel* will not only create a fuller, more complete picture of their masculinity, but it will also allow me to formulate a more specific argument concerning the state of masculinity in the late 1990s-early 2000s.

In tracing the growth of these two characters, who follow eerily similar narrative paths and create interesting comparisons of masculinity, I argue that both Angel and Spike, as their personas evolve over centuries, must continually negotiate for a workable performative masculinity that their peers will acknowledge. As the show progresses through its various seasons, the personas expand and complicate themselves in notable ways, especially through Judith Butler's and Eve Sedgwick's theories of performativity and masculinity, which figure significantly in my arguments below. The human predecessors to Spike and Angel are both undeniable failures at performing masculinity,

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<sup>2</sup> Specifically I refer to Jowett, Rhonda Wilcox, Arwen Spicer, and Stacey Abbott, all of whose analyses I use in varying degrees to develop my argument.

both unable to receive the all-important acknowledgement of their gender from others, especially their mother and father, respectively. Their transformations into vampires are themselves distinctly sexual and violent, and I argue that this conflation of sexuality and violence is an essential component of Spike's and Angelus' hypermasculinity, wherein sexuality-*is*-violence-*is*-masculinity. But when these characters are forced to change their ways, whether through gypsy curses or government implants, their masculinities destabilize, forcing them to renegotiate their reiterations of masculinity in order to allow others (often Buffy herself) to acknowledge their performances. Thus both Spike and Angel must repeatedly alter their performance of masculinity and work within the gaps of performativity towards a successful masculinity. I will also show that Spike's narrative closely parallels that of Angel(us), ultimately arguing for the former's gendered mimicry of the latter, which I argue is another example of the copy without an original. Finally, the shows allow both personas to move in a specific direction that rejects the need for Buffy or women in general. Although both characters do need Buffy as a mediator through performativity, (at which point I argue that Georges Batailles works nicely to suggest why, in fact, Buffy is necessary for both characters), both ultimately leave Buffy, instead relocating themselves in a markedly homosocial kinship network that supports their newly-stabilized masculinity, one that encourages sexuality and violence but maintains a clear distinction between the two.

## CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF LITERATURE

### **Vampire Studies Overview**

I will begin, however, with a review of pertinent literature concerning vampire studies and gender. My goal in these following pages is not simply to show the path of vampires through scholarship, but to contextualize *Buffy* and *Angel* in a grander tradition of vampire mythos. Developments in the vampire lore, especially in the decades preceding these shows, create a specific linear trajectory towards the mythos Joss Whedon creates. I argue that sexuality and violence has always been an essential component of vampire masculinity (and femininity), and it is imperative that we understand this vein of vampire history if we are to appreciate the ways that *Buffy* and *Angel* reconfigures sexuality and violence in significant ways.

Scholarship concerning vampires has gone through as many permutations as the vampire stories with which they deal. As suggested by Leonard G. Heldreth and Mary Pharr, “periodically they [vampires] emerge from the darkness of the world’s imagination into folklore, literature and media. When they come forth, they take a variety of forms, among them the Roman *lamia*, the Gothic *nosferatu*, the Victorian aristocrat, or the contemporary heroic antagonist” (1). They also recognize that Bram Stoker’s *Dracula*, while a pivotal moment in the evolution of the vampire mythos, is not *the* ‘central text’ but an important link between modes of perception. In response to this wide variety of

texts and analyses, “vampire studies” has proliferated the number of anthologies in a variety of themes.<sup>3</sup>

Nina Auerbach’s *Our Vampires, Ourselves* is an essential text, from a cultural studies perspective, of recent work within the field. Auerbach argues that vampires “can be everything we are, while at the same time, they are fearful reminders of the infinite things we are not” (6). Auerbach reads the variations of the vampire mythos as reflections of their cultural contexts: “more than our heroes or pundits, our Draculas tell us who we were” and are (112). Nineteenth-century British vampires differ significantly from the American vampires of the twentieth century. These earlier forms of the vampire relied on an allure based on “intimacy,” “sharing,” and “maternal suffusion” (Auerbach 59). “The twentieth-century vampires Dracula spawned many mean things, but they have lost the love they brought to those they knew. In the nineteenth century, vampires were vampires *because they loved*” (Auerbach 60). The earlier vampires were erotically charged, which was the very essence of their monstrosity in an erotically controlled context. Later vampires’ monstrosity was grounded in social rebellion, according to Auerbach, who despite these differences identifies an important similarity: “In both cultures [British and American], vampires *turn to women* to perform the extreme implications of their monstrosity—erotic friendship in England, social rebellion in America” [italics mine] (7). As I will show, both Angel and Spike must turn to women, not to perform their monstrosity but their masculinity: the latter becoming deeply imbricated in the former, such that the performance of monstrosity as mediated through women creates the space for a more successful performance of masculinity. But when monstrosity ultimately

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<sup>3</sup> Including *The Blood is the Life: Vampires in Literature*, *Blood Read: The Vampire a Metaphor in Contemporary Culture*, and *The Vampire: A Casebook*.

becomes subdued in the cases of Angel and Spike, women continue to play integral parts in their ability to renegotiate a different masculinity.

In tracing the path of the vampire, Auerbach highlights the concept of the vampire-as-angel. In the 1970s, “hovering between animal and angel, they are paragons of emotional complexity and discernment, stealing from Van Helsing the role of knower but adding a tenderness and ineffable sorrow human beings have become too monstrous to comprehend” (131). As vampires found themselves in the 1980s of AIDS and Reaganism, Auerbach suggests they begin to reflect the changing atmosphere, particularly as changing attitudes towards sexuality alters a sexual being like a vampire. They “mutated as a species into unprecedented mortality . . . the best of them took on the *holy isolation of angels* [italics mine], inspiring awe in a humanity they could no longer govern” (7). The vampires of Anne Rice are the most obvious examples of this trend, vampires driven and “defined by their origins rather than their plots” (172). Rice’s vampires are what Heldreth and Pharr refer to as “heroic antagonists”: “they radiate a sensitivity based on their uniqueness and force, qualities coveted yet feared by a culture that reveres individual strength even as it proclaims general equality” (3). Rather than blind killers rampaging through towns, vampires become guardian angels, watching from the shadows, “so clannish and self-enclosed that they present no threat” (186). Any fan of *Buffy* or *Angel* must wonder whether Joss Whedon had read Auerbach before he named his most important male vampire as such—Angel is a clear representation of the vampire-as-angel conception, watching and protecting humanity from the shadows.

The 1987 film *The Lost Boys* is to 1980s vampire film what Anne Rice is to 1980s vampire literature. Practically every discussion of vampire studies in the 1980s refers to

*The Lost Boys* as paradigmatic. The movie introduces its own idea of vampirism, not as an “alternative to human society, but an illusion as fragile as a drug trip. [. . .] Stripped of its hunger, its aerial perspective, its immortal longings, vampirism becomes more perishable than humanity.” Vampirism was less romanticized as the immortal or the undead and more the lonely, tortured, perishable creature that the 1980s demanded. The film also introduces an important paradigm shift: the half-vampire. “For the first time, vampirism itself is mortal” (Auerbach 168). This idea of the half-vampire convolutes into the vampire-with-a-soul in the Buffyverse that is so essential for the characters of Angel and Spike, as mortality takes on the additional weight of conscience and guilt.

Trevor Holmes suggests that “there is a peculiar mix at work in end-of-the-millennium reanimations of the vampire figure, a mix that includes embodied decadence, cynical neo-Romanticism, HIV, savvy camp, and, I would add, a post-punk aesthetic” (174). Holmes discusses issues of gay male vampire fiction, which becomes far more overtly possibly in the 1990s, while Queer Theory simultaneously enabled the interrogation of same-sex dynamics in far older vampire texts, including *Dracula*. Whether Rice’s *Interview with the Vampire* or Jeffrey McMahon’s *Vampires Anonymous*, the end of the Twentieth-century saw its vampires become just a little bit self-consciously queerer. In this trajectory, vampires in the Buffyverse, too, are queerer, openly toying with notions of gay male sexuality between vampires without having gay male vampires.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>4</sup> It should also be noted that Spike is an excellent example of the ‘post-punk aesthetic’ within the Buffyverse: a Sid Vicious-like vampire with a leather jacket, platinum hair, and a British accent.

### Gendered Vampire Studies

The figure of the vampire works as well in gender studies. Rob Latham points to androgyny as a vital system within vampirism and suggests that, in fact, differentiated gender becomes irrelevant within a Marxist-materialist critique of consuming youth:

As Christopher Craft has argued in his analysis of Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, the sexuality of the vampire is inherently ambiguous because it is expressed orally, combining qualities of the masculine (penetrative teeth) and the feminine (enveloping lips), and thus generating a profound "erotic ambivalence" that destabilizes the representation of sexual roles . . . The actual gender—and thus, by implication, the sexual object choice—of the vampire is, finally, irrelevant to its enactment of an eroticized consumption. Ultimately, vampires are voracious androgynes driven by an indiscriminate longing. (97)

Subsequently, Latham, through Craft, tends to look more at 'androgyny' as the performative gender of choice within vampirism rather than specifically looking at masculinity and/or femininity, which is imperative in his own critique. However, in a program like *Buffy* that consciously reverses gender roles by turning the blonde-bimbo victim into the empowered slayer of the vampire, the actual gender of vampires in the program must remain relevant. I argue that the vampire is not simply a figure of androgyny. The narrative clearly and unequivocally points to the importance of gender for all of its characters, most especially for its male vampires Angel and Spike; indeed, I will suggest that much of their monstrosity and masculinity is in fact a function of their previous inability to perform masculinity.

Another relevant scholar who links vampires/monsters to masculinity, Cyndy Hendershot situates *Dracula* within the framework of one-sex and two-sex bodies. Within the "one-body system," a notion Hendershot takes from Thomas Laqueur,

women and men were perceived as having the same anatomy, but the male body was perceived as a more perfect version of the same sex . . . the one-sex model, however, while endorsing male dominance, also underlined the flexibility of the

body . . . in a worldview in which the body itself was mutable and liable to change from male to female, and vice versa, the social became the means of naturalizing social difference . . . social, not biological, difference is *the* mark of sexual differentiation. (10)

As society began to accept a two-body system, wherein the male body was simply better than the female body, sexual difference became predicated upon biology alone.

Hendershot posits that “Stoker introduced a body that undermined any belief in a clear-cut biological difference between men and women—the vampiric body” (21). The publication of *Dracula* occurred alongside the rise of the New Woman and the aesthete within Victorianism, both of which were seen as movements to “unhinge gender from biological sex” (21). The vampire of *Dracula* only reinforced the fears such movements instigated, as the vampire, because it is genitally undifferentiated, makes biological difference irrelevant, while at the same time making the vampire socially subservient to the masculine (the father Dracula). Hendershot suggests:

The aesthete unhinges masculine and feminine traits from rigid Victorian biological explanations of them yet subordinates them to a masculine ideal. As critics have observed, the use of the androgyne as a central ideal of the aesthetic movement subordinates feminine qualities to masculine ones . . . The one-sex body of the vampire hence parodically and demonically embodies the aesthetic ideal of a sexless body in which masculine and feminine traits exist but in which the masculine is the mastering force. (22)

Thus Hendershot identifies a crucial point: even though the Stoker vampire may be an androgynous mixture of both masculine and feminine traits, masculinity still dominates.

But do vampires on *Buffy* and *Angel* exist as one-bodied creatures still? One significant difference between such vampires and Stoker’s is the relevance of genitalia. Stoker’s vampires do not participate in genital sexuality, only an orally penetrative one. Yet by the second season, we learn that vampires such as Angel can indeed participate in genital sex (though they traditionally lack procreative capability), which in fact allows

Angel to bear a son in the third season of *Angel* (through a complex sequence of events). In regards to subordination to masculinity, *Buffy* explicitly subverts the traditional system, replacing the patriarchal figure of the father-Dracula with the female Slayer. An interesting question outside the scope of my project is whether the Slayer's subordination of the vampire is still a subordination under masculinity-veiled-as-woman or genuine, albeit "empowered," femininity.

The relevance of genital sexuality and procreation is not to be underestimated.

Cynthia Freeland points out that:

the vampire violates the norms of femininity and masculinity, as allegedly directed through heterosexual desire to marriage and procreation. Sexuality is rife in the vampire genre, which is unusual in horror for its eroticism and beauty . . . in their search for blood, they can find physical intimacy with a person of almost any gender, age, race, or social class. Sexuality is transmuted into a new kind of exchange of bodily fluids where reproduction, if it occurs at all, confers the 'dark gift' of immortal undead existence rather than a natural birth. Transgressive and violent eroticism links the vampire's monstrousness to revolution against norms established by patriarchal institutions of religion, science, law, and the nuclear family. (124)

Freeland expands the subversive eroticism of the vampire through its focus on the oral penetration of the neck instead of genital penetration of the vagina, as well as the reverse in bodily-fluid flow, as the vampire is the recipient, not the donor, of the fluid. Thus, she argues, "there is a sort of feminized component even in their 'masculine' aggression and violation" (156). Freeland links such feminization with that of the exotic vampire and the increased homoeroticism between vampires I mentioned earlier. Although the transformations of Angelus and Spike are indeed this transmuted sexuality, it is also significant that both end up heterosexually coupled with their sires, Darla and Drusilla, respectively. Although initial seasons suggest a familial pattern in their foursome, with Angelus and Darla as parents to Drusilla and Spike, later seasons complicate this familial

nature through the establishment of a sexual link between Angelus and Drusilla, as well as a homosexual/homosocial connection between Angelus and Spike. These complications become important later.

The vampires preceding those of *Buffy* or *Angel* are valuable reflections of their social contexts. Furthermore, it becomes clear that the vampire is a site of gendered hybridity, whether masculine-subordinated androgyny or subversive eroticism. There is a clear trajectory that leads into the transformation of the vampire mythos within *Buffy* and *Angel*, which, in spite of its paradigmatic changes to the mythos, moves along in a direction apropos to its context at the turn of the millennium. Male vampires in these shows are a complex mixture of masculinity and femininity, although the progression through the seasons allows for a distinct layering of this hybridization. Thus it does not suffice to say that masculinity in *Buffy* and *Angel* is about hybridity, but about how that hybridity, and the performance thereof, alters in order to navigate the change in times and seasons.

## CHAPTER 3 HISTORIES AND PERFORMATIVITIES

### **Setting up Personas**

Up to this point I have discussed the characters of ‘Angel’ and ‘Spike’ as simply two characters, but before I can continue it is necessary to clarify the varying personas that, in fact, make up ‘Angel’ and ‘Spike.’ Taking a cue from Anne Rice’s vampire stories that focus more on origin than plot, Angel and Spike often fit into the narrative of the shows through their origins, such that flashbacks are often used not as the primary revelation or crux of the narratives but as supporting juxtapositions. As many of the examples that I will discuss show, flashbacks and revelations about the pasts of these figures serve to reinforce their actions or their narratives in the present. Angel and Spike cannot escape their origins. Thus, flashbacks become a standard device on the show to reveal timely bits of information about these characters in centuries past.

Through such flashbacks, the shows are able to establish three distinct characters throughout the history of ‘Angel’: Liam, Angelus, and Angel. Liam is the Irish human of the Eighteenth-century who becomes a vampire; Angelus is the vampire he becomes; Angel is the hybrid human-vampire Angelus becomes after gypsies curse him with the return of his soul. Angel is, for the most part, the modern form of the character throughout most of *Buffy* and *Angel*. In the early seasons of *Buffy*, Angel works alongside the vampire slayer Buffy and soon develops a romantic relationship with her. Midway through the second season, they consummate their relationship, an act that, according to

the gypsy curse, removes his soul, turning him into Angelus once again. Angelus thus serves as the “big bad” for the remainder of the season. Although Buffy is forced to kill him, Angel returns in the third season. Unable to work alongside the girl he knows he cannot love, he leaves the show at the end of the third season, disappearing into the mists of his spin-off *Angel*, where he works as a private investigator, ‘helping the helpless’ as he calls it. In an investigation of the masculinity of the character of Angel, the distinctions between Liam, Angelus, and Angel are absolutely crucial not only for understanding the particular masculinity of Liam, for example, but for deciphering how the masculinity of the character evolves over time.

Likewise, Spike has at least two distinct personas: William the human and Spike the vampire (although the vampire Spike goes through several stages throughout the show, he is never granted the nominative distinctions of Angel, a point that I will develop later). Spike enters the show in the second season as an evil vampire, working with his lover/vampire Drusilla against Buffy. After the second season, he makes sporadic appearances in subsequent episodes until he becomes a regular character in the fourth season, when he is captured by a military group called the Initiative and fitted with a behavior-modification chip that prevents him from doing violence to humans. Effectively neutered, Spike joins the fight against evil (much to the chagrin of Buffy and her friends) and in the process falls in love with Buffy. After the two begin a secret sexual relationship, Buffy spurns him, which inspires him to regain his soul. Upon returning, he works with Buffy in the final season, ultimately sacrificing himself to save the world. Much like Angel, however, this death is only temporary, as he is resurrected on *Angel* for its final season, where he joins Angel and his friends in their own fight against evil.

Unlike Angel, the distinctions and barriers between William and Spike are much more fluid. Thus Spike is occasionally referred to as William or William the Bloody. This fluidity becomes even more apparent once Spike regains his soul. He does not change his name as Angel does, so there is no clear nominative distinction between Spike-with-a-soul and Spike-without-a-soul. While both may occasionally be called William, it means very different things depending on the condition of his soul. When Buffy refers to Spike-with-a-soul as William, it is often more tender, meant to invoke the more human aspect of his character. But when the various Watcher textbooks refer to Spike-without-a-soul as William the Bloody, it is a fearful nickname that refers not to his human counterpart but to the violent nature of the demon.

### **Scholarship Concerning *Buffy* and *Angel***

Much of the scholarship that deals with these characters identifies Angel as a traditional representation of masculinity. Rhonda Wilcox finds Angel to be “the most sexualized and eroticized of all the characters [with a body that] invites the constructed consumer gaze of romance novel covers, soft-core pornography, and mass circulation advertising” (83). This is to a large degree an accurate depiction of his character; however, his sexuality and eroticism become questionable once he bars himself from sexuality at all. After having sex with Buffy and learning that it is the ‘one moment of happiness’ necessary to undo the gypsy curse, he must literally remove himself from the story. Leaving for his own spin-off is the easy way to avoid his desire for Buffy without completely neutering a popular character. On *Angel*, his sexuality becomes far more subdued, though not by any means altogether eliminated, thus maintaining much of his desirability among fans intact.

Likewise, Lorna Jowett identifies Angel as “traditionally gendered. Unlike the other ‘friendly’ males on the show he is both physical and sexual (attributes heightened by his vampire nature). He is the one male character who consistently and successfully uses physical means to rescue Buffy from danger” (63). However, I argue that while Angel is the *most* traditionally gendered, he is by no means traditionally gendered. In a show about an empowered superhero-like female vampire slayer that surrounds herself with a British librarian, a fairly inept teenage dork, and a quiet musician/werewolf,<sup>5</sup> clearly Angel is, relatively speaking, the most traditionally gendered male on the show. When in a fight, it is Angel who provides the best support.<sup>6</sup> But it would be incorrect to infer from this that Angel is actually traditionally masculine. He is in all ways subordinate to Buffy. In terms of narrative, Susan A. Owen sees Angel as “plot-enabler,” serving to provide “various clichés of heterosexual romance, such as the redemptive power of dyadic love, the agony and angst of star-crossed lovers, the allure of secret trysts, and the deflowering of the female virgin” (27). Jowett reads this assertion correctly in that “Angel’s significance lies in his relationship with Buffy, but also in that he upholds ‘clichés’ of gender” (63). The dependency of Angel’s significance upon Buffy throughout *BtVS* is not only a narrative subordination but a character subordination as well. It is because of Buffy that Angel comes to Sunnydale at all; it is Buffy who kills

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<sup>5</sup> Admittedly I am wholly unfair to the “British librarian” (Giles), the “inept teenage dork” (Xander), and the musician werewolf (Oz). Their characters are by no means irrelevant to a complete discussion of masculinity on the show. Giles’ function as father-figure to Buffy is absolutely essential, and Xander is arguably the most consistently important male figure in Buffy’s circle of friends through all seven seasons.

<sup>6</sup> The one exception to this may be Riley Finn, Buffy’s boyfriend in Seasons 4-5. Through season 4, Riley enjoys enhanced abilities due to his involvement with the government’s Initiative. But when he quits the Initiative, he loses these enhancements, thrusting him into the same position as Giles, Xander, and Oz. This position as a man who cannot stand shoulder-to-shoulder with Buffy becomes an increasingly vexed part of their relationship, until Riley ultimately leaves Buffy to rejoin the government.

Angel, and it is because of Buffy that Angel leaves Sunnydale for Los Angeles and *Angel*.

Although much of the scholarship examining Spike is incomplete, since a great deal of it was published before the final seasons, which saw significant developments in his character, it is interesting how much of it situates him in the hybridized, androgynous tradition that is so common in vampire studies. Arwen Spicer argues that “the arc of Spike’s character development throughout the first six seasons of *Buffy* can be described as a progressive movement away from an ultimately disempowering masculine alignment toward a more empowering hybridization of masculine and feminine gender roles” (2). She reads various sites where Spike either codes himself feminine or is coded feminine by others while maintaining various masculine traits, becoming a sort of gendered chameleon, “continually recreating himself through whatever codes, masculine or feminine, best suit his individuality” (5). Likewise, Jowett suggests that the very fluidity of Spike and William is seen in his gendered self: “Spike may be macho, villainous and monstrous, but he is also William, passive and weak. Indeed, we might say that Spike has been modified to be more like a ‘new man’” (70). However, nearly all of these essays fail to explain the connection between Angel and Spike, which is absolutely essential in the development of the latter character. Spicer makes a crucial connection:

Spike is not proposing to become his old self at all but rather attempting to remake himself in the image of Angelus, the super-masculine dictator whose success with Dru and penchant for torture are well-documented. Not only has Spike ceased to represent an image of unadulterated masculine power; judged by the standard of Angelus, he never represented it. (2-3)

The observation that Spike is simply copying Angel is crucial to my argument. But the eventual direction of the narrative, particularly once Spike joins the cast of *Angel*, proves

Spicer incorrect when she says that “in no case does a homosocial male rivalry play a determining role in his attachment.” Although she does concede to covert homosexual subtexts in the relationship between Spike and Angel, it is for Spicer clearly only homosexual and not homosocial, positioning Spike as submissive to the dominant Angel, and therefore feminized. Spike’s inclusion in the final season of *Angel* successfully changes these possibilities, and thus I will later discuss in more detail the development of the homosocial and possibly-homosexual bonds between Angel and Spike.

### **Lessons to be Learned from Werewolves**

I begin my own analysis with the episode of *Buffy* that explicitly thematizes the show’s perspective on masculinity: “Phases” (2015). In the episode, Buffy and her friends attempt to discover the identity of the werewolf who has been killing people and animals in Sunnydale. Their detective work leads them to potential candidates, all of whom prove incorrect. Later it is revealed that Oz, the quiet musician/love interest for Willow, is actually the werewolf. On the surface, the story is a simple werewolf tale with little relevance to a discussion of male vampires. But like much of *Buffy*, there is more in play here. The werewolf in the episode is much more than a simple fantasy monster. In explaining the nature of the creature to the gang, librarian/watcher Giles says the “the full moon brings out our darkest qualities,” and that in the case of the werewolf, it elicits “inborn animalistic traits,” creating a creature of “pure instinct, no conscience.” Thus the werewolf becomes a representation of the id, acting on pure desire and without conscience. It is a sexual, erotic being that exists in both men and women. Clearly the werewolf is more than simply “innate masculinity.” Instead, it is sexuality, and the episode makes it very clear that there is no cure for werewolfism. Rather, the sufferer

must learn to simply deal with it and work his or her life around it. Just before he transforms in front of Willow, Oz tells her that he is going through changes that he must learn to accept. Later, once the problem has been resolved, Oz tells her that “I’ll be okay, I’ll just have to lock myself up” on full moons. The episode makes it clear that the innate, animalistic werewolf is a metaphor for sexuality. Oz makes this parallel fairly obvious in his comment about ‘changes,’ which Willow, not understanding that he is the werewolf, thinks is a reference to puberty or growing up. The werewolf is the innate sexuality that surfaces during puberty. And this is not simply a masculine issue, for at the end of the episode, Willow, in an attempt to console Oz, admits to her own ‘werewolfiness’ using her menstruation as a parallel. But the show also uses this opportunity to address what the show describes as a common complaint from women about men: “Guys—who do they think they are?” This is Cordelia and Willow’s common refrain concerning the mystery of men. Just as Oz is changing from man to werewolf, so do all men, according to the show, change from hot to cold, or according to Willow, from lukewarm to cold in Oz’s case. But this too becomes an extension of their sexual nature according to the general explanation the episode suggests. Thus a man’s sexuality is responsible for many things, but a man must also control or suppress that sexuality.

Both men and women go through changes when they grow up, and these changes are, of course, inevitable. But what is significant is the show’s assertion that we work around them, not with them. In “Wild at Heart” (4006), Oz meets a female werewolf who has a different attitude about her condition/sexuality: she embraces it. She is able to seduce Oz as she tries to convince him that he, too, should embrace the werewolf within. The show makes it clear, however, that this is not an acceptable route, particularly when

she is killed. Oz is left with two options: continue to suppress the animalistic urgings, or learn to control them. Choosing the latter, Oz leaves the show to ‘find himself,’ effectively favoring the control of sexuality over the suppression thereof.

The episode “Phases” also juxtaposes another masculinity-related storyline with the werewolf plot: the coming out of Larry. In the beginning of the episode, Larry is an overly-masculine, misogynistic, sexually-driven male who contrasts sharply with Oz when Larry asks him whether he has had sex with Willow. As the episode progresses, Larry becomes the obvious prime werewolf-suspect for the gang and the audience, equating the overt violence of the werewolf with the overt hypermasculinity of Larry. But when Xander confronts Larry in an attempt to make him confess, he inadvertently gets Larry to confess the wrong thing and come out of the closet. Larry is, through Xander, finally able to say aloud that he is gay, and the subsequent consequences for Larry are astounding. Larry previously equated heterosexual masculinity with violence and misogyny. But after coming out, Larry becomes polite to women, at one point stopping and helping a girl in the hallway pick up her dropped books. Buffy notices the changes and comments on them—his altered masculinity is successfully registered and approved by peers. What is at issue in this sequence is Larry’s performance of gender. Judith Butler says that unlike performance, performativity “consists in a reiteration of norms which precede, constrain, and exceed the performer and in that sense cannot be taken as the fabrication of the performer’s “will” or “choice”; further, what is “performed” works to conceal, if not to disavow, what remains opaque unconscious, un-performable” (24). The act of coming out for Larry has a profound effect on Larry’s gender. If the hypermasculine Larry is easily dropped as a mask to hide his homosexuality, is the

gender that he exhibits the “real” Larry? The show might seem to suggest as much, but this case presents a good example of the instability of gender on *Buffy*. Larry, in an attempt to appear heterosexual, apparently adopts a hypermasculine gender that he is able to drop once he accepts his homosexuality. If performativity is that which cannot be confused with will or choice, then Larry’s hypermasculinity is a clear performance of gender, hiding, even disavowing, the homosexuality within.

The episode “Phases” provides a number of valuable ideas to remember about the Buffyverse. First, sexuality is a latent fact of life for both men and women, which they must learn to accept and live their lives around. Who is able to embrace sexuality? Who is forced to suppress or control it, and how? How does this apply to male vampires? These are questions that I will address later. Second, violence is equated with heterosexuality and heterosexual masculinity. Larry threatens to beat Xander up when his heterosexuality is threatened. Additionally, a werewolf hunter tracking Oz in the episode, complaining that Buffy wants to protect, not kill, the werewolf, says “no one’s man enough to kill” the monsters of Sunnydale. In doing so he once again equates masculinity with violence. Clearly, the relations between violence, sexuality, and masculinity will be crucial to discussing the masculinity of vampires on the show. Finally, this episode suggests gender to be highly performative and unstable. Larry is able to drop the drag of hypermasculinity for a ‘kinder, gentler’ masculinity.

As I mentioned earlier, the show uses a narrative about a werewolf to setup its own perspective concerning masculinity, but I argue that the vampire ultimately presents the clearest and most precise reading of performative nature of masculinity within the Buffyverse. This shift occurs for a number of reasons. In the extra-narrative sense, Seth

Green, the actor who plays Oz, specifically asks to leave the show to pursue outside projects in the fourth season. His departure also allows for the fourth season coming out of Willow, which had been hinted at in earlier seasons. Thus in order to continue explorations of masculinity through the werewolf, it would have been necessary to introduce another werewolf character. But I also argue that although the werewolf explicitly makes clear the importance of sexuality and violence in regards to masculinity, the nature of the werewolf is of split-existence. Oz is a docile, pensive teenager when he is human, and a violent, caged animal during the full moon. Never does Oz need to reconcile directly his own sexuality and violence in relation to that of the werewolf. But the vampire does not have a split existence, but a dual existence. The vampire may change his/her face at will to reflect his/her demonic nature. A vampire is always a vampire, and thus must reconcile at all times his/her demonic nature with the human form. The characters of Angel and Spike in particular create an even more pronounced dual existence, for although they regain their souls, they are still vampires. Their natures are constantly in flux. Angel in particular struggles significantly with balancing his human and demonic natures. Thus I argue that the shows' representations of the male vampire allows for the most useful reading in terms of masculinity. Their unending need to negotiate the demon and the human correlates nicely with their need to negotiate their conflicting sexual and violent natures in a successful way.

### **Working in the Gaps of Performativity**

In Butler's response to the uptake of her previous works like *Gender Trouble* and clarifies the most troublesome issues, she specifically critiques the idea of gender as choice:

[T]here is no subject who is “free” to stand outside these norms or to negotiate them at a distance; on the contrary, the subject is retroactively produced by these norms in their repetition, precisely as their effect. What we might call “agency” or “freedom” or “possibility” is always a specific political prerogative that is produced by the gaps opened up in regulatory norms, in the interpellating working of such norms, in the process of their self-repetition. Freedom, possibility, agency do not have an abstract or pre-social status, but are always negotiated within a matrix of power. Gender performativity is not a matter of choosing which gender one will be today. Performativity is a matter of reiterating or repeating norms by which one is constituted: it is not a radical fabrication of a gendered self. It is a compulsory repetition of prior and subjectivating norms, ones which cannot be thrown off at will but which work, animate, and constrain the gendered subject, and which are also the resources from which resistance, subversion, displacement are to be formed. (22)

In the previously discussed example of Larry, it would seem at first glance that Larry *does* choose a gender, that his character is afforded the very agency or freedom to which Butler refers. However, although it is clear that Larry’s performance of gender changes, his performativity does not. Whether reiterating or repeating the norms of hypermasculinity—which may have been viewed negatively by some characters but still are an acceptable reiteration of gender within the context—or reiterating or repeating the norms of the more considerate, toned-down masculinity, Larry’s gendered shift is a shift in performance and not performativity. His shift occurs within the gaps Butler refers to: accepting and announcing his homosexuality creates a gap within the gendered space that allows him to shift the gendered performance. By no means is Larry’s gender a new one, but rather a different, differentiable, yet still pre-accepted set of norms he must, in effect, negotiate.

Such shifts in gender performance are even more important for characters like Spike and Angel. Because the shows use flashback sequences somewhat regularly to expand on these characters’ histories, their personas come to extend over centuries. Liam’s transformation into Angelus is a complete overhaul of his gendered self; the re-

ensouled Angel is likewise another significant shift in gender, and in fact Angel alone experiences shifts in gender performance over the decades. William, too, undergoes a gendered shift when he becomes a vampire, as well as when he is neutered by the Initiative and then again when he regains his soul. It would be easy to say that these shifts are the kinds of gender choices that Butler dismisses. But Spike does not simply choose one day to be more feminine one day and more masculine the next, as may be suggested by someone like Spicer. Both Angel and Spike negotiate their gender with changes in time, setting, and self. And while their performances of gender may shift, their performativity is wholly stable. In fact, I maintain that performativity is the most essential aspect of their genders—they do not cease to repeat pre-existing norms in favor of revolutionary or new gendered norms. Instead, they renegotiate *within* such pre-existing norms in such a way that allows them the most acceptance.

## CHAPTER 4 LIAM AND WILLIAM

Although Angel and Spike in their modern personas are more central to plot and most fully developed within the narrative of the programs, I actually want to begin with their human counterparts. Generally in vampire mythos, vampires are vampires, and the humans they once were are irrelevant to their state. Anne Rice's stories and their emphasis on origin rather than plot popularized the idea of considering origins at all. But *Buffy* and *Angel* take this concept even further. Rather than simply investigating the origins, the narrative of these shows often indelibly links these origins to the present. In the *Angel* episode "Prodigal" (1015), Darla, the vampire who sired (vamped) and loved Angelus, tells Angelus in a flashback that "[W]hat we once were informed all that we become." This is a very important fact within the *Buffy* mythos. Vampires in Joss Whedon's narratives are demons that inhabit the body of a human who has been sired. To sire a vampire is made more complex in this mythos than in previous ones, for the transformation requires not only that a vampire feed on the human, but that the human in turn feed on the blood of the vampire; only then will a human become a vampire. Once one does become a vampire, the soul of the human dies, and the demon takes over the body, although retaining the human's memories and often their personality traits. Although the series initially made a clear distinction between the human and the demon, such distinctions became less stable as the series progressed, especially by the time of the *Angel* spin-off, and indeed the series suggests that different vampires exhibit different

qualities of their human counterpart (usually the more ‘genuine’ the aspect or trait, the more likely it will carry on into the vampire). But in spite of this variability, Darla’s observation remains steadfastly relevant: to understand the vampire, one must understand the human.

Liam is first introduced on *Buffy* in “Becoming, Part One” (2021) in a flashback sequence that shows when, where, and how Darla sires Angelus; the episode is crucial to establishing Liam’s performance of masculinity. The scene occurs at night and in a town, as Liam and an unidentified friend are thrown out of a tavern. The two drunkenly walk away arm-in-arm, discussing their next stop for debauchery and gambling. When the friend passes out, Liam sees in the distance a beautiful lady who is clearly of a higher class. He follows her into an alley and asks what a lady of her status is doing in such a seedy alleyway; she responds that she is lonely. Liam kindly offers to protect her and, more truthfully, to keep her company, with explicit sexual undertones. When she questions whether he is up to the challenge, he retorts, “[Y]ou’ll find that, with the exception of an honest day’s work, there’s no challenge I’m not prepared to face.” To this point in the scene, then, Liam has shown himself to be a gambling drunkard who refuses to put himself to work. In 1753, it’s clear that a lazy, gambling drunkard is hardly a paragon of masculinity. As the scene continues, Darla suggests she has been “everywhere,” to which Liam confesses having never traveled, though he quickly adds that he wishes to see the world. The two move close together, face to face, as Darla offers to show him the world, *her* world, an offer which Liam gladly accepts. As he closes his eyes, her face changes to the crinkled, demonic face of the vampire she truly is, bites his neck, cuts herself above her breasts, and pulls Liam’s face into her bosom to feed. As the

camera pulls out, we see the two kneeling on the floor in this same embrace before the scene switches to the present, showing Angelus (having already slept with Buffy) stalking Buffy. Although this scene's purpose is to flash back to the act of the siring itself, it also takes care to provide several insights into the character of Liam that are particularly revealing concerning his inability to perform masculinity satisfactorily.

In the aforementioned *Angel* episode "Prodigal," flashbacks provide even more insight into Liam's home-life and likewise his failure at masculinity. Like "Becoming Part One," the episode begins with a flashback to 1753 with a maid filling a pitcher while a disheveled Liam watches from the shadows. Liam calls to the maid, Anna, to come to him. She asks him why he is hiding in the shadows, and he responds that his eyes are sensitive to the light, suggesting to the audience that this is Angelus and not Liam. But when Liam's father comes from behind and pushes him into the light, we obviously learn that this is, indeed, Liam. Thus, if there is one way in which Liam is like Angelus, it is his overt sexuality. His father criticizes Liam, now on the floor, "[U]p again all night, is it? Drinking and whoring. I smell the stink of it on you." As Liam gets up, his father calls him a disgrace. The two go back and forth until his father slaps him hard and declares, "I am ashamed to call you my son. You're a lay-about and a scoundrel, and you'll never amount to anything more than that." The scene then suddenly cuts to the present, where Angel wipes the blood from his lip as he continues to fight a demon on a subway. A later flashback offers another similar exchange between Liam and his father:

**Liam:** "You'll want to move away from the door now, father."

**Father:** Go through it, but don't ever expect to come back.

**Liam:** As you wish, father. Always, *just* as you wish.

**Father:** It's a son I wished for – a man – instead God gave me you! A terrible disappointment.

**Liam:** Disappointment? A more dutiful son you couldn't have asked for. My whole life you've told me in word, in glance, what it is you required of me, and I've lived down to your every expectations, now haven't I?

**Father:** That's madness!

**Liam:** No. The madness is that I couldn't fail enough for you. But we'll fix that now, won't we?

**Father:** I fear for you, lad.

**Liam:** And is that the only thing you can find in your heart for me now, father?

**Father:** Who'll take you in, huh? No one!

**Liam:** I'll not lack for a place to sleep, I can tell you that. Out of my way.

**Father:** I was never in your way, boy.

Liam opens the door and storms out.

**Father:** If you'll go courting trouble, you're sure to find it!

He slams the door.

This conversation makes even more explicit the inferences of the scene between Darla and Liam. He is a disappointment to his father because of his drinking and debauchery, but it is the father's judgment that is significant here: what he wanted was a man and a son, and instead what he got was Liam. The subsequent scene shows what we've already seen in "Becoming Part One" as Angel meets Darla. The clear implication here is that Liam's father's disapproval of his own son drove him to prove his father right, and thus right into the teeth of Darla. The episode has the father, the most important figure of masculinity for any boy, tell Liam that he is not a man—that he is a failure in masculinity. This is the very thing that causes Liam to seek out something—inadvertently

becoming Angelus, hypermasculinity personified. Everything that Liam is not, Angelus is; nearly everything that Liam is, Angelus is not, with the exception of sexuality (although Angelus is far more refined in his sexuality than Liam). Thus although Liam dies, he lives on to haunt Angelus, in all ways informing how the latter behaves.

Spike, too, is informed in all ways by the nature of his human counterpart, William. Like Liam, the origins of Spike are detailed through the flashbacks in the episode “Fool for Love” (5007), wherein Spike details much of his history to an inquisitive Buffy. As they sit discussing the issue, Buffy snidely asks whether he was born annoying. Spike, just as snidely, responds, “what can I tell you baby? I’ve always been bad.” But the scene immediately cuts to the first flashback, which is clearly meant to undercut Spike’s statement. As we soon learn, Spike has most assuredly *not* always been bad. The scene, set in 1880 London, begins with a close-up of William scribbling on a pad. When offered an hors d’oeuvre, he declines and asks the waiter for help selecting a more rhymable word—William is sitting alone in a party, writing poetry. He eventually joins the party-attendees and is asked to participate in a discussion of a recent strings of disappearances. But William refuses: “I prefer not to think of such dark, ugly matters at all. That’s what the police are for. I prefer putting my energy into creating things of beauty.” Another man quickly grabs hold of the scrap of paper William is holding and reads it aloud, much to the scornful delight of the others, who laugh at how bad the poetry is. As William walks away to follow a woman in the crowd, we hear one voice say how they call him William the Bloody “because his poetry is so bloody awful,” while another voice states that he would prefer having a spike in his head rather than listen to William’s poetry. Faithful viewers of the program will find both of these fact ironic: The

first because we learn that William the Bloody is in fact not a reference to his violence but rather to his poetry, contradicting what the lore about Spike suggests; the second because lore about Spike suggests he is so named because he killed people by thrusting spikes into their skulls, which the above comment seems to have inspired).

The sequence joins William sitting on a couch with a woman named Cecily. She demands to know whether William's poetry is about her, which he confesses is correct, much to her chagrin. Sensing her discomfort, he implores her "I know I'm a bad poet, but I'm a good man. All I ask is that you try to see me." At this point, Cecily interrupts him and says "I do see you. That's the problem. You're nothing to me, William." She then stands and snaps, "you're beneath me" before walking away. The shot lingers on William, alone and heartbroken before cutting to a street outside, where we see him walking and sobbing as he tears up what we presume is the poem. He stops in an alley, where Drusilla finds him. Although he is wary at first, she quickly soothes him by appealing to the very thing we know he desires: she sees him in the way that Cecily refused. "Your wealth lies here," she says as she points to his heart and his mind. In Drusilla, William finds understanding from a woman. Thus when she asks him if he wants what she can offer him, it is not surprising when he moans in the affirmative and rests his hand on her breast—clearly he is thinking sexually. When Drusilla's face turns vampiric, William looks intrigued but not frightened, and as she bites into his neck, his screams of pain subside into moans of pleasure as the two sink to their knees and, beneath the camera, Spike is born.

William is quite different from Liam, but the end result is ostensibly the same. William is not just a man of letters, but an untalented man of letters at that. He is at a

party, but clearly he is not like the other men, for he remains unable to mingle and jest with the women. He has eyes only for Cecily, who handily rebukes him, in spite of his argument that he is, in fact, a 'good man.' William simply desires heterosexual acceptance. If Cecily *were* willing to look past his 'bloody awful poetry' and see the man he believes himself to be, his masculinity, though tenuous, would likely be secured. But a bad poet without a woman to love cannot be a true man in 1880 England. Thus it is easy to see why Drusilla's words so easily sway William. In Drusilla, he sees the potential, real potential, for heterosexuality, and thus an opportunity to establish himself.

CHAPTER 5  
SOULLESS HYPERMASCULINITY AND THE IMPORTANCE OF PARENTS

**Sexual Siring**

It is worth noting at this point that the transformations of both Angelus and Spike contain overt elements of sexuality. Of course this is nothing new for the vampire mythos, as the penetrative act of the bite and the swapping of body fluids is often seen as a sexual parallel. In *Buffy* in particular, the necessity for both victim and vampire to drink blood in order to create a new vampire makes the act even more sexual. Interestingly, it makes the gender of both participants irrelevant, much as Latham suggests. Both the victim and the vampire penetrate, and both the victim and the vampire receive fluids—the already gender-ambiguous act becomes even more destabilized. The sexuality of the act is maintained far after the act itself. Darla sires Angelus, and the two of them begin a sexual, mutual relationship. So, too, do Drusilla and Spike. For the vampires, especially Spike and Angel, sex is actualized and embraced—but only problematically, as I will explain later.

Much like “Prodigal,” *Buffy* episode “Lies my Parents Told Me” (7017) provides flashbacks to William’s home-life. But whereas Liam has important interactions with his father, it is William’s mother that provides the crux of the episode. In the episode, the gang is attempting to determine the root of the trigger, by which current “big-bad” The First has brainwashed Spike in order to make him commit acts of violence. Under a spell cast by Willow, Spike begins to flashback to his past. We first see 1880 William reciting

one of his poems to his adoring mother, who showers him with praise as many mothers would. She inquires as to the significance of the Cecily referred to in so many poems, telling William that he needs a woman in his life. He in kind informs her that he has a woman in his life—his mother. He then assures her that he has hopes of finding a woman, although he also promises that he always plans to look after her. She asks him to sit with her as she continues to sew, and he sits on the floor beside her, much like a child with his mother, as she begins to sing a tune (the tune is familiar to the viewers as the trigger, and indeed upon hearing the song in the flashback, modern-day Spike experiences a violent outburst).

In a second flashback, Spike finds himself with Drusilla, apparently only days after their initial meeting in the alley, in his home. They dance together and begin to kiss passionately as they talk of their plans to lay waste to Europe. Spike confesses to Drusilla his hope that his mother join them. Drusilla is, unsurprisingly, mortified at the suggestion that they “bring mum with us.” At this point, his mother enters the room, happy to see William is okay. He explains that Drusilla has made him a vampire, and asks that she let him sire her in order to prevent her from dying from her apparent illness. Confused and afraid, he takes hold and hugs her, promising her that they will be together forever before sinking his fangs into her neck, ending the flashback. The relationship established already in these two flashbacks contrasts significantly with that of Liam and his father. William loves his mother immensely, putting her welfare before his own. Indeed, even after he becomes a vampire, his love for his mother does not die with William. Spike is wholly informed by William’s love for his mother, so much so that he decides to grant her the

gift of vampirism/immortality. Just as Darla suggests, “what we once were informs all that we become.”

In the final flashback sequence, vampire-William returns to the house and finds his mother walking about without her cane and with her hair let down—“all better,” she pronounces (although he is now a vampire, he has not yet adopted the moniker of Spike, as his mother and Drusilla continue to call him William). William suggests they shall feast and then go to the theatre or perhaps dancing, whatever be her pleasure, to which she responds, “[P]leasure? To take my leave of you, of course. ‘The lark hath spake from twixt its wee beak?’ You honestly thought I could bear an eternity listening to that twaddle?” The scene suddenly cuts to Spike fighting Robin Wood, the son of a previous slayer who Spike killed, seeking revenge for the death of his mother. The juxtaposition of this fight creates a sense of suffering from Spike, as he refuses to fight back, and instead allows Robin to strike him repeatedly as though paralyzed by the memory of his mother’s rejection. By juxtaposing this past with the present day, it becomes clear that the pain from the conversation with his mother is a lasting one. The sequence continues, back to the flashback:

**Mother:** I hate to be cruel - No, I don't. I used to hate to be cruel in life. Now, I find it rather freeing. Nothing less will pry your greedy little fingers off my apron strings, will it?

**William:** (looks away) Stop. Please.

**Mother:** (walks closer to William) Ever since the day you first slithered from me like a parasite...

**William:** What're you s -

**Mother:** Had I known better, I could have spared myself a lifetime of tedium and just dashed your brains out when I first saw you. (turns away) God, I prayed you'd find a woman to release me, (looks at him) but you scarcely showed an interest.

Who could compare to your doddering housebound mum? A captive audience for your witless prattle.

**William:** Whatever I was, that's not who I am anymore.

**Mother:** (snickers, walks up to him) Darling, it's who you'll always be. A limp... sentimental fool. You want to run, don't you? Scamper off and cry to your new little trollop. Do you think you'll be able to love her? (leans close to William) Think you'll be able to touch her without feeling me? (William looks around, panicked and disgusted, for a way to escape) All you ever wanted was to be back inside. (touches his face and body) You finally got your wish, didn't you? Sank your teeth into me. An eternal kiss.

**William:** (shakes his head) No. I only wanted to make you well.

**Mother:** You wanted your hands on me. Perhaps you'd like a chance to finish off what you started.

**William:** (pushes her away, looks away from her) I love you. I did. Not like this.

**Mother:** Just like this. This is what you always wanted. Who's my dark little prince? (tries to kiss him)

**William:** (pushes her away, knocking her down) No!

**Mother:** Get out. Get out! (stands, swinging her cane at William; they struggle and he breaks the wooden cane; Mother transforms into vampire) There, there, precious. It will only hurt for a moment.

**William:** I'm sorry (as he stakes her; her face de-vamps, and for a moment looks tenderly like his mother before turning into dust).

Although William's love for his mother was absolutely genuine and thus able to transcend his becoming a vampire, the transformation of his mother allowed the new vampire to be wholly and brutally honest. Not only does she confess to hating his poetry, but she admits that she wished he would find a woman to replace her while all the while knowing he never would, suggesting that instead of finding a good woman, he was secretly in love with her all along (the implication of 'limp' also implies a sexual inadequacy). Mother kindly does the psychoanalytic reading for us—William has an

Oedipal complex that would make Freud raise an eyebrow, though William refuses to believe what his mother suggests. In the end, his mother rejects him, and this rejection is clearly a defining moment for Spike. His fantasy, to have Drusilla and his mother at his side as they rampage through Europe, is dashed. The only woman before Drusilla to love him, to like his poetry, has rebuked him, just as Cecily earlier. In the process she has challenged his masculinity, suggesting he is limp and unable to find a woman to love because he is too attached to his mother. But as a vampire, he no longer needs to accept who he was—he has the power to create who he will be and prove his mother wrong. He will prove he can be a good man, even if he has to kill her in the process. Ultimately, rather than let the demon live and profane the memory of his mother, he kills her—his first real act as Spike. His hope to bring mother along for eternity was incompatible with his newfound vampirism, and only when he sires his own mother does he learn the truth: he was in fact a failure at masculinity. By killing his mother, he in effect destroys any semblance of that former life, any illusion that he could be the same, romantic William. To succeed with Drusilla and as a vampire, he must start anew.

In the first of several close parallels between Angelus and Spike, the conclusion of “Prodigal” has an ending similar to that of “Fool for Love.” Liam’s family finds his body and, concluding death, bury him. But of course he rises from the grave as Angelus and returns to his home. After killing his sister, he approaches his father whom he pushes to the ground. “Strange—somehow you seemed taller when I was alive,” he comments, “[T]o think I ever let such a tiny, trembling thing make me feel the way you did.” While Liam fears his father who looks down on him and runs away, it is Angelus who returns and looks down on him. Now it is the father who trembles in fear, while Angelus stands

triumphantly hypermasculine, fresh from a moment of violence against his sister and mother. Just as Spike felt the need to prove his mother wrong, Angelus wants to show his father that he can be a man: “You told me I wasn’t a man. You told me I was nothing—and I believed you. You said I’d never amount to anything. Well, you were wrong.” As his face turns vampiric, he continues “you see father? I have made something out of myself after all.” Being a vampire affords Angelus everything he lacked as Liam: power and violence. Coupled with Darla, he is an impressive display of hypermasculinity. But when Darla comes to the scene in a later flashback, she suggests that the damage of their relationship is more far-reaching than Angelus expects:

**Darla:** “This contest is ended, is it?”

**Angel:** (He has his feet up on the table playing with his father’s pipe. His family lies dead around him.) “Now I’ve won.”

**Darla:** “You’re sure?”

**Angel:** “Of course. I proved who had the power here.”

**Darla:** “You think?”

**Angel:** “What?”

**Darla:** “Your victory over him took but moments.”

**Angel:** “Yes?”

**Darla:** “But his defeat of you will last life times.”

**Angel:** “What are you talking about? He can’t defeat me now.”

**Darla:** “Nor can he ever approve of you—in this world or any other. What we once were informs all that we have become. The same love will infect our hearts, even if they no longer beat. Simple death won’t change that.”

Just as with Spike, Angelus cannot destroy the importance of his relationship with his parent simply by killing him. Angelus at this moment thinks only of power and control,

winning and defeat. But Darla, a much more experienced vampire, knows far better. Spike's mother and Angelus' father both were the final figures of disappointment in their sons' lives. Both parents were the final judges of their sons' failures in masculinity, and both play significantly in their sons' subsequent reigns of terror that seem clear representations of their refigured masculinity of violence and sexuality.

### **Sexuality and Violence**

I have already suggested that Angelus presents the clearest example of hypermasculinity in the series. Stacey Abbott suggests he is an "über-vampire," presenting in a clarified form everything that makes the vampire masculine. He is extremely sexualized, having sex not only with Darla but Drusilla. After having sex with Buffy and being transformed into Angelus again, he presents a constant sexual threat to Buffy. As Jowett points out, "as Angelus he presents a more explicit sexual threat, and plays out the bad older boyfriend scenario: after sex with Buffy he wakes and leaves her sleeping, goes out and feeds on a lone woman, blowing out 'smoke' as if from a post-coital cigarette" (64). He eventually becomes equated with a sexualized stalker, most strikingly in "Passion" (2017), when Buffy wakes up one morning to find a sketch of her sleeping, proving Angelus has been in her room during the night. Spike tells Buffy that while most vampires talk about ending the world as mostly 'blowing smoke,' Angelus is one of the crazy ones who would actually do it. Angelus has a reputation among vampires for being among the most cunning and violent, often striking fear or admiration among them.

For Angelus, however, sexuality is just as if not more important than violence. It is a sex act with Darla that turns him into a vampire, and it is sex with Buffy that turns

Angel into Angelus again. Jowett suggests that “this sexual nature is Angel/us’ flaw or weakness; indeed sex put Angelus in this position in the first place, given his relationships with the female vampires Darla and Drusilla . . . in a similar way to Oz, Angel’s sexual desire may lead to a return of his violence, but both are manifestations of his disturbing physical masculinity . . . Angel can never be good, because of his bad nature (as a vampire and/or as masculine)” (64). Although I agree that his sexuality and his violence are suggestive, even constitutive of, his physical masculinity, I disagree that he can ‘never be good’ because he is either violent and/or sexual. As “Phases” suggests, sexuality is not a bad thing, it is simply something that must be worked around. You cannot eliminate it, nor is it isolated to men or masculinity alone. Sexuality is an essential part of Angelus and Angel, and in neither form is he able or willing to suppress it.

In Angelus, however, sexuality and violence are coupled. The moment of his siring with Darla is simultaneously violent and sexual. The coupling of sexuality and violence becomes quite evident in the final fight scene between Angelus and Buffy in “Becoming, Part Two.” Having dispatched with his cadre of vampires, Buffy and Angelus duel, each armed with a sword. Buffy, who usually fights with her fists and a small stake, is forced to use a larger, more phallic sword to match Angelus’ sexualized violence. As they fight, Angelus eventually snaps her sword, suggesting victory of his own phallus over hers. Unarmed, she lays on the floor against a wall looking up at Angelus, who menacingly waves his sword in her face. He has stripped her of everything, and he tells her, “[N]o friends, no weapon, no hope—take all that away, and what’s left,” as he thrusts his sword towards her for one final, violent, sexual penetration. Of course Buffy grabs the sword with the palms of her hands, preventing such penetration, answers

his question, “[M]e,” and thrusts the sword backwards into his face. Ultimately Buffy triumphs over Angelus’ sexualized violence, before sending him back to hell. During the fight, Willow successfully casts a spell that restores Angel’s soul, but Angelus’ damage is done, and Buffy must tearfully penetrate Angel with his own sword in order to save the world, restoring the inverted hierarchy of the show. The coupling of sexuality and violence is thus damned, self-destructive, and wholly rejected in a modern world where Buffy exists.

### **The Trouble with Souls**

Before all of this, however, Angelus exists before Buffy is even born, happily merging sexuality and violence—a different time and the lack of a soul and its accompanying conscience make this conflation more possible than the modern context of *Buffy*. But when he rapes and murders a gypsy girl, they curse him with his soul—Angelus becomes Angel, the first vampire with a soul. For a long time, Angel descends into a lowly state. Darla, able to smell the stink of his soul, rejects him. Although Angel attempts to feed on humans, tries to remain evil, tries to hold his sexual violence intact, he is ultimately unsuccessful—his soul and its subsequent conscience weigh too heavily upon him now. Unable to enact such soulless hypermasculinity, he disappears into the American sewer system, feeding on rats, wasting away for a century. Stripped of his violence and sexuality, Angel slips back into the Liam persona—a degenerate, drunken failure in masculinity. It is only when Angel is shown Buffy through a mysterious stranger named Whistler that he realizes he can do and be more: “I wanna help her. I want...I wanna become someone,” he tells Whistler, who agrees to train Angel and have him waiting in Sunnydale for her arrival.

His new existence, his ability to perform his new masculinity effectively, is wholly dependent upon Buffy. This is made clear in the episode “The Wish” (3009), where the narrative enters an alternate universe where Buffy never came to Sunnydale. Angel is there, but he is a prisoner of the vampires that control Sunnydale. He passively allows a vampire-Willow to torture him a regular basis, calling him her ‘puppy.’ Without Buffy, not only has Sunnydale fallen to the forces of evil, but Angel never successfully enacts the new masculinity he creates in the regular universe: a masculinity that relies on, but separates, sexuality and violence.<sup>7</sup>

### **Spike’s Violent Love**

Spike’s masculinity is more problematic than that of Angelus. Jowett suggests “Spike is primarily a comic character, and his gendering began in the form of parody” (67). But Spicer tends to have a more supportive argument, arguing that Spike actually begins as “a paragon of masculinity, one half of a symbolic whole completed by his ultra-feminine lover, Drusilla. Their very names establish this division of roles: ‘Spike’ obviously phallic, ‘Drusilla’ flowery and feminine” (2). Furthermore, we learn early in Spike’s presence on the show in season two that Spike has killed two slayers, an impressive feat among vampires, one that even Angelus is unable to match. However, as the series progresses and in later seasons, it becomes clear that Spike’s masculinity is wholly dependent upon Drusilla. In “Lover’s Walk” (3007), Spike returns to Sunnydale heartbroken after being dumped by Drusilla. He stumbles around town with a bottle of alcohol, moping at one moment and throwing violent fits the next. Having kidnapped Willow to cast a love spell for him, he threatens her with a broken bottle and then

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<sup>7</sup> Although outside the boundaries of my own project, it is worth noting that this alternate universe is worthy of additional analysis. We meet a bisexual/S&M vampire-Willow dating an equally-queered Xander, who might interact with the implications of my argument in interesting ways.

immediately sits down next to her and tells his sad tale as if they are chums, at one point even putting his head on her shoulder, to which she awkwardly responds by patting his head and consolingly says, “there, there.” Later, in a scene with Buffy’s mom, Joyce, he retells the same tale (word for word—as though the telling itself is performance) over a cup of hot chocolate to a slightly more sympathetic audience. But such moments of sentimentality and confidence with other women ultimately do him no good. It is only after a brawl with a group of vampires that he realizes he’s been looking at the problem all wrong:

I'm really glad I came here, you know? I've been all wrongheaded about this. Weeping, crawling, blaming everybody else. I want Dru back, I've just gotta be the man I was, the man she loved. I'm gonna do what I shoulda done in the first place: I'll find her, wherever she is, tie her up, torture her until she likes me again.

At this moment, Spike realizes that a conflation of violence and eroticism will get him farther than moping, crying, and casting a spell. Although he leaves Sunnydale optimistic that his plan will work, his return alone in the fourth season suggests that being the man he used to be was not enough for Drusilla. But when we see Spike again in “The Harsh Light of Day,” (4003), he is no longer depressed, in spite of his inability to woo back Drusilla: he has a new girlfriend, recently vamped/former-best-friend-of-Cordelia, Harmony. His new relationship with Harmony progresses into the next season, but it becomes increasingly clear that Spike is merely using her—mostly for sex. She is not the understanding, mysteriously feminine Drusilla, but a doltish, air-headed blonde bimbo who, more often than not, annoys Spike. However, the fact that he keeps her around when he clearly doesn’t enjoy her company only underscores his utter dependency on women.

At this point, Spike becomes imprisoned by the Initiative and fitted with the behavior modification chip that prevents him from attacking humans. In “The Initiative” (4007), the behavior modification chip is explicitly paralleled with sexual impotency for Spike. After escaping the Initiative, he ends up in with Willow in Buffy’s dorm room. He attempts to attack her but is unable to, resulting in the following conversation:

**Spike** : I don't understand. This sort of thing's never happened to me before.

**Willow** : Maybe you were nervous.

**Spike** : I felt all right when I started. Let's try again. (He leaps on her and draws back immediately. He tries again, with the same results.) Ow! Oh! Ow! Damn it! (He gets up, kicks the dresser, and paces around the room.)

**Willow** : Maybe you're trying too hard. Doesn't this happen to every vampire?

**Spike** : Not to me, it doesn't!

**Willow** : It's me, isn't it?

**Spike** : What are you talking about?

**Willow** : Well, you came looking for Buffy, then settled. I--I... You didn't want to bite me. I just happened to be around.

**Spike** : Piffle!

**Willow** : I know I'm not the kind of girl vamps like to sink their teeth into. It's always like, "ooh, you're like a sister to me," or, "oh, you're such a good friend."

**Spike** : Don't be ridiculous. I'd bite you in a heartbeat.

**Willow** : Really?

In this scene, violence and sexuality become overtly and humorously intertwined. The double entendre is obvious, and it suggests that for Spike, being unable to do violence to Willow is as troubling as sexual impotency is to ‘normal’ masculinity. Thus Spike’s masculinity is clearly dependent upon the ability to do violence as well as sex.

Both are essential, and this is why Spike is so willing to join the good fight—violence is violence, regardless of the victim, be it human or demon. Thus, once Spike learns that the chip doesn't prevent him from doing violence to demons, he almost too enthusiastically joins the gang, much to their resistance. Does Spike's sense of masculinity change because of his behavior chip? He is still able to have sex with Harmony, and in fact it is during this time that he develops his crush on Buffy. Likewise, he is still able to perform violence, albeit on demons. Spike's performativity remains eventually unchanged, negotiating with the new set of variables in which he finds himself. In fact, his sense of gender is only seriously threatened when he is unable to satisfy his erotic longings for Buffy.

Through the fourth, fifth, and sixth seasons, the relationship between Spike and Buffy changes, causing significant changes in Spike's performance of masculinity. At first, Spike secretly harbors feelings for Buffy, as demonstrated through fantasy sequences during sex with Harmony and dream sequences. In "Crush," (5014), Spike's love for Buffy finally becomes expressed, with disastrous results. Buffy is disgusted to learn of his feelings for her, and at the advice of her friends and family tries to shoot him down completely. But this episode has two greater significances. Buffy's rejection of Spike is oddly similar to the rejection of Cecily: just as she suggests she does not wish to see him, so does Buffy command Spike to get out of her life, even to get out of Sunnydale. But there is a difference as well: Cecily's rejection was successful, as William does as she wishes and leaves her forever. But over a century later, Spike is even more the romantic than he was as William. Rather than accept Buffy's rejection, he steadfastly maintains that something exists between them and that they cannot simply

ignore it. William was a romantic but also a pushover. In contrast, Spike is unrelenting, much to Buffy's dismay. He refuses to accept her rejection and in the process becomes akin to the sexual threat that Angelus became, although with far less potency or danger to Buffy. Spike's constant rejection turns him into a feminized lover. Spicer argues,

Spike casts his identity as a forlorn lover in the feminine [as 'love's bitch,' as he refers to himself in "Lover's Walk"] and the courage to confront that identity in the masculine ["at least I'm man enough to admit it"]. His assignment of these specific genderings is conventional. His feminizing of the heartbroken lover, in particular, follows the current pop culture notion that in romantic relationships, "men are from Mars; women are from Venus." In other words, men are substantially motivated by desire for sex, women by desire for love or companionship. Though it goes without saying that Spike has a vigorous libido, 'love's bitch' clearly inhabits the Venus side of the equation: he is a feminine lover." (5)

Spicer is correct to note that in spite of Spike's overt sexuality, he is in fact feminized. When Buffy does finally relent and begins a sexual relationship with Spike, it is just that: sexual. Spike gladly agrees, hoping it will lead to more. But for Buffy, it is only about the sex, and the episodes with their sexual encounters are, by the standards of previous sex scenes, rather risqué, with elements of S&M. When Buffy realizes she is just using Spike for sex, she ends the relationship. Again she rejects Spike, but again he refuses to believe it is over—he still feels something, and she seems to as well.

Returning to "Crush," a second significant issue is that Spike chooses Buffy over Drusilla, who returns to Sunnydale to take back her former lover. The episode initially suggests that Spike will take her back, returning to his old ways. But he specifically chooses Buffy, and in fact he suggests that he will kill Drusilla for Buffy in order to prove his love. Of course Spike again confuses sexuality with violence, a move that Buffy unsurprisingly rejects—killing Drusilla does not prove his love, only that he is a

“sick, miserable vampire.” Spike here is still operating under an older system of masculinity, where sexuality-*is*-violence-*is*-masculinity. But why does Spike choose Buffy? And for that matter, why does Angel fall in love with Buffy? I will address these issues shortly.

### **When a Chip Just Isn't Enough**

With only the behavior modification chip, Spike lacks an understanding of good and evil. “Fools for Love” offers Quasimodo of *The Hunchback of Notre Dame* as an analog to Spike, both of whom perform acts that are selfishly based on impressing a woman. This is especially true of Spike, whose blend of violence and sexuality may have impressed women like Drusilla but does little to woo the likes of Buffy. For a short while it *does* woo Buffy, however, who, having been resurrected and apparently pulled from Heaven, desperately wants to “feel again” and finds that violent sexuality with Spike, who too understands death, is the closest she can come to satisfying that yearning. Their eroticism is both taboo and violent. In “Smashed” (6009), Buffy and Spike engage in a violent sexual eruption that causes the house they are in to fall down around them—although they are so caught up in each other that they do not notice the rubble until they wake up the next morning.

When Buffy subsequently ends their relationship, Spike refuses to accept it. He continues to try and woo Buffy, an effort that climaxes in “Seeing Red” (6019) with Spike’s attempt to rape Buffy in her bathroom. Buffy still refuses to believe she actually cares for him, and Spike refuses to believe her rebuff. “I’m going to make you *feel* it,” he tells her as he climbs on top of her. It becomes clear that Spike, once again, confuses violence and sexuality. But Buffy will have none of it, beating him off of her and forcing

him out. This moment crystallizes everything about Spike's masculinity that is no longer workable. To have Buffy—the modern, self-empowered woman—he can no longer rely on a masculinity that overlays violence and sexuality. In retrospect, Spike, haunted by the screams and pleadings of Buffy, finally comprehends the significance of what he has done and the futility of his current state: “Why do I feel this way? This isn't the way it's supposed to be. It's the chip. Steel and wires and silicon. It won't let me be a monster. And I can't be a man. I'm nothing.” In the moment, the audience is fooled to believe he intends to remove the chip as he leaves Sunnydale for Africa.

When he returns, we learn that Spike has, in fact, not removed the chip but instead regained his soul. Thus, when he says that the chip fixes him in a state of nothingness between man and monster, he suggests that the chip is not enough. Behavioral change is not enough for the modern man. He can try all he wants to be a man, but in the end it is how others interpret his own repetition of norms that establish his gender. Buffy refuses to look past the fact that he has no soul, and because he has no soul, he is unable to know right and wrong, unable to understand that violence is not sexuality. He requires a soul, a conscience, to become a man in Buffy's eyes.

And indeed, when he returns, Buffy finally sees that, with a soul, Spike *is* a man. He has not been tamed, for he is still the strong, powerful vampire he was, still able to sacrifice himself in the series finale, to become a champion, in the lexicon of the narrative. But no longer does he confuse this violence for sexuality. And in fact, he does not return to Sunnydale to woo Buffy back. When Buffy asks him why he actively sought to regain his soul, he replies, “Why does a man do what he mustn't? For her. To be hers. To be the kind of man who would nev— . . . to be a kind of man.” Although he does not

say it, Spike knows now that he should not have tried to rape Buffy. And he doesn't complete the statement because to be a kind of man, any kind of man, is to know that he should not have raped her. In the world of *Buffy*, masculinity can no longer pretend to beat women in the name of love. Spike shows that love is *not* necessarily about sexuality, and that sexuality is *not* necessarily imbricated with violence. Spike does not give up his eroticism. But he also does not have sex with Buffy once he regains his soul. The closest he comes is in "Touched" (7020), when he and Buffy lay in bed holding each other, looking into each other's eyes. This occurs during a montage of non-conventional sexuality, cutting between this scene, a lesbian scene with Willow and Kennedy, Xander and Anya, and white Faith and African-American Robin Wood, each making love. Given its inclusion in this montage of sex, it becomes clear that this tender moment between Spike and Buffy is indeed as erotic as the other scenes of sex. But there is absolutely no violence. Spike and Buffy succeed where Angel and Buffy fail—achieving a tender eroticism that is devoid of any violence. In this regard, Spike becomes perhaps the best example of the new, hybridized masculinity, ironically (given their similarities as I will discuss below) surpassing even Angel. He is strong, still able to commit violence against evil, willing to sacrifice himself for not just a woman but for the world, yet able to love a woman unselfishly, erotically, and devoid of any form of sexual violence.

CHAPTER 6  
THE PARALLEL PATHS OF PERFORMATIVITY

The shared love of the slayer is perhaps the most obvious parallels between the two vampires. However when Angel, and eventually Spike, come to Los Angeles, the parallels between them become far more overt. In the *Angel* episode “Destiny” (5008), flashbacks reveal that the parallels between Angel and Spike are perhaps not coincidental. The episode opens in 1880 England, shortly after Spike’s siring, and details the initial meeting between Spike and Angelus. Drusilla introduces her new creation to Angelus. The scene also makes clear that the homosexuality hinted between Angel and Spike in earlier episodes is not a recent development:

**Angelus:** So, instead of just feeding off of this William... you went and turned him into one of us. Another rooster in the henhouse.

**Drusilla:** You're not cross with me, are you?

**Angelus:** Cross?(grabs William's arm and holds it out into the ray of sunlight beaming through the closed curtains) Do you have any idea what it's like having nothing but women as travel companions, night in and night out?

**William:** (pulls his sizzling hand away from Angelus) Touch me again—

**Angelus:** Don't mistake me. I do love the ladies. It's just lately... I've been wondering...(holds his own fist in the sunlight) what it'd be like...(watches his hand sizzle) to share the slaughter of innocents... with another man. (turns his hand over so the palm is in the light now; watching as it smokes) Don't... don't think that makes me some kind of a deviant, hmm? (pulls his hand back) Do you? (Staring at Angelus, William sticks his own hand in the light voluntarily as Angelus laughs and slaps William on the shoulder affectionately) Ah hah! I like this one! You and me, we're gonna be the best of friends.

Not only does Angelus overtly suggest a homosexual connection between the two, but here we also see, for the first time, Spike imitate Angelus. The episode makes it clear that Angelus becomes a vampire-mentor for Spike. Of course Spike loves and adores Drusilla, but she hardly provides a model of vampiric hypermasculinity. We can presume that this scene occurs after his encounter with his mother—the moment that encourages Spike to prove what kind of a man he can be. Angelus, already established as the paragon of masculinity, provides the ideal for Spike to copy. The episode, and indeed the series, suggests that Spike's vampiric masculinity, combining sexuality and violence, is merely a copy of Angelus' masculinity. This copy of a copy seems the very thing that Butler argues about gender itself:

[. . .] *Gender is a kind of imitation for which there is no original*; in fact, it is a kind of imitation that produces the very notion of the original as an *effect* and consequence of the imitation itself. In other words, the naturalistic effects of heterosexualized genders are produced through imitative strategies; what they imitate is a phantasmatic ideal of heterosexual identity, one that is produced by the imitation as its effect. (313)

Although Butler here is discussing homosexuality as a copy of the so-called original heterosexuality, the relevance to Spike and Angel is obvious. Spike effectively tries to copy Angelus's performance of masculinity, but we know quite well that Angelus' masculinity is equally performative. Indeed, Angelus' masculinity is tenuously dependent upon his use of simultaneous sexuality and violence and becomes easily disrupted by his soul. The masculinity of Angelus, in fact, becomes naturalized, becomes an original, only because Spike copies it.

This same episode also makes relevant the analysis of homosociality by Eve Sedgwick. Before the episode, there is already a clear rivalry between Angel and Spike for the affections of Buffy. Angel's brief return to Sunnydale at the conclusion of the

series provokes what Buffy calls a “Dawson’s Creek” response when Angel reacts poorly to the revelation of Spike and Buffy’s relationship. Spike likewise gets jealous when he sees Angel and Buffy together. But the two do not really experience this rivalry together until Spike shows up on Angel’s show the next season. The two repeatedly trade barbs at each other’s expense concerning Buffy and who she *truly* loves. This is the first example of the triangles that Sedgwick discusses. Starting from René Girard’s theories, Sedgwick points out that “in any erotic rivalry, the bond that links the two rivals is as intense and potent as the bond that links either of the rivals to the beloved: that the bonds of ‘rivalry’ and ‘love,’ differently as they are experienced, are equally powerful and in many senses equivalent” (21). Even more significant is the triangle that involves Spike, Angelus, and Drusilla, as demonstrated first in the second season when the recently-retransformed Angelus’ flirtations and overt sexuality with Drusilla makes a wheelchair-bound Spike jealous. This same triangle is further developed in another flashback sequence in “Destiny.” Spike walks in on Angelus having sex with a woman, who turns out to be Drusilla. Upon seeing Spike, Drusilla asks whether he missed her, to which Angelus answers for him, “I’m sure he did, Dru. After all, you are his destiny,” making light of what Spike said to Drusilla in an earlier flashback. The two laugh at Spike, who understandably grows angry, at which point the scene cuts to the present, where we join Spike and Angel in fisticuffs over a mystical cup. Like the scene in “Lies my Parents Told Me,” the flashback is spliced into the present-day narrative to give more depth to the anger between these two characters. Because we have seen plenty of other flashbacks and modern-day scenes that show Angelus and Spike on friendly terms, we know that Spike is able to look past Drusilla’s indiscretions. But at the same time, much as Sedgwick

suggests, there is a clear triangle that develops between Angelus, Spike, and Drusilla, the homosocial bonds of which last far beyond Drusilla's presence. Indeed, the same two points create a new but overlapping triangle with Buffy as a fourth node. The second triangle, laid over the existing triangle, only serves to strengthen the rivalry and, subsequently, the homosocial bond, between Angel(us) and Spike.

CHAPTER 7  
OVERLOOKING THE CHASM, STUCK IN THE MIDDLE

**How Batailles Works with *Buffy***

Knowing, then, that there already exists a rivalry bond between the two vampires, as well as a sense of mentor/mentee between them, it is not surprising that both end up falling in love with Buffy. But the question remains, why do they fall in love with Buffy, a vampire slayer? The slayer is the sworn enemy of the vampire, its harbinger of death. Spike's plans are repeatedly foiled by Buffy, and Buffy kills Angel(us) in order to save the world. Spike specifically chooses a resistant Buffy over his creator, sire, and lover Drusilla. What would be the reason behind this? To answer this question, I turn to Georges Bataille's theories on eroticism. Bataille begins by describing the difference between discontinuous and continuous beings:

Beings that reproduce themselves are distinct from one another, and those reproduced are likewise distinct from each other, just as they are distinct from their parents. Each being is distinct from all others . . . he is born alone. He dies alone. Between one being and another, there is a gulf, a discontinuity. This gulf exists, for instance, between you, listening to me, and me, speaking to you. We are attempting to communicate, but no communication between us can abolish our fundamental difference. If you die, it is not my death. You and I are *discontinuous* beings. (12)

Bataille argues that eroticism, sexuality, is the attempt by the discontinuous being to bridge that gap: "so it seems to the lover . . . only the beloved can in this world bring about what our human limitations deny, a total blending of two beings, a continuity between two discontinuous beings" (20). However, while this is how it seems to the

lover, in fact, “eroticism open[s] the way to death. Death opens the way to the denial of our individual lives” (24). In the erotic act, the individual risks losing her/himself, something we can rarely achieve. Although “the urge towards love, pushed to its limit, is an urge toward death” (42), the discontinuous being will “come *as close as possible* to death. Without flinching. And even, if necessary, flinching . . . as even, if necessary, dying” (*Guilty* 93). Eroticism allows us to get as close as possible, put one leg out over the cliff, and then withdraw ourselves back onto solid ground, our heart beating, ourselves spent, according to Bataille. He also links eroticism to violence, suggesting that:

[T]he violence of death and sexual violence, when they are linked together, have this dual significance. On the one hand the convulsions of the flesh are more acute when they are near to a black-out, and on the other a black-out, as long as there is enough time, makes physical pleasure more exquisite. Mortal anguish does not necessarily make for sensual pleasure, but that pleasure is more deeply felt during mortal anguish (105).

The figure of the vampire slayer is the linkage of sexual violence with the violence of death for Angel and Spike. She is everything they once were but can no longer be: simultaneously sexual and violent. For both Angel and Spike, seeking to bridge their own gulfs, seeking continuity of their own, Buffy provides the purest form of eroticism-leading-towards-death. They are very much in love with the enemy, indeed in love with death itself. Spike’s relationship with Drusilla was important as a hypermasculine vampire because he already put forth sexuality and violence simultaneously. But once fitted with the chip, neither Drusilla nor Harmony provide any satisfaction towards death—they are ultra-feminine, relics of the old fashioned masculinity, and in no way

provide the cliff overlooking the abyss to which Bataille refers: Only Buffy makes Spike's or Angel's eyes roll back into their heads.

At the same time, neither Angel nor Spike can maintain such eroticism. Angel learns that eroticism with Buffy *is*, for him, death. If he is to maintain his fragile, tenuous grip on a masculinity wherein sexuality and violence are enacted, then he cannot have Buffy, who represents that very union. And he cannot simply be friends with Buffy, nor even be near her. Ultimately, he must leave for Los Angeles. There, he is only able to maintain that tenuous grip on masculinity because he is offered another option: employment and fatherhood. In *Angel*, he surrounds himself with an increasingly male circle of peers, with only fleeting possibilities of eroticism. He begins his own investigation service and, in the final season, even becomes the CEO of the multi-dimensional, demonic law firm of Wolfram and Hart. Meanwhile, as the result of a brief fling with Darla, he becomes a father. Without Buffy, who provided a way of being sexual and violent independently, he must ultimately depend upon the traditional values of masculinity: productive membership in society and heterosexual reproduction. Angel's only subversion of traditional masculinity within his own show ultimately becomes the replacement of a beloved woman with a homosocial kinship network, into which Spike easily fits.

### **Why Not Go Gay?**

It is interesting to note how the show flirts with the homosexual connection without ever actually solidifying it. Why, then, does the show refuse to allow Spike and Angel to become lovers? In the tradition of Kirk/Spock slash fiction, there is a large amount of slash fiction that can be found on the internet linking the two of them together.

And although many shows on network television are often wary of having a gay couple, *Buffy* clearly cannot make such a claim, as queer audiences quickly hailed the show's lesbian relationship between Willow and Tara as one of the most accurate portrayals on television. The show could easily go the next step and couple Spike and Angel. One valid possibility is the fear of alienating the many fans who continue to hold out for the reunion of Buffy with either Angel or Spike. As the finale of *Angel* draws closer, one of the central curiosities among fans is whether Buffy will return and, if so, whom she will choose. But I would argue that there is another reason as well. The current strategy on *Angel* positions both characters in a gray area. Audiences know that both Angel and Spike still love Buffy. But the show undeniably provides homosexual undercurrents between them. This strategy in effect opens up the implications of the masculinity both Angel and Spike perform. By linking them as exclusively homosexual, the importance of their homosocial kinship network would become effaced. However, forcing at least one of them into a distinctly heterosexual relationship would also efface the same homosocial kinship network central to *Angel*. Thus the current strategy avoids associating their masculinity with *either* heterosexuality *or* homosexuality.

### **Maintaining a Tenuous Masculinity**

Does Spike maintain his newfound masculinity on *Angel*? Brought back from the grave under complex circumstances, he finds himself amid Angel and his gang at Wolfram and Hart, the evil law firm. Although he initially wants to go to Buffy, who is reportedly now in Italy, he ultimately decides against it, preferring instead to keep her memory of him untouched. "If I show up now," he says, "flesh and bone, my grand finale won't hold much weight. All of it . . . won't matter." Thus Spike suggests that his

sacrifice, while noble, still had an element of selfishness to it. It is better, suggests Spike, to let Buffy think he died honorably than to let her know he has come back. But it might also be suggested that this is a cop-out on Spike's part. He must know that, at some point, Buffy will learn he has returned. And in one of the final episodes of *Angel*, "Shells" (5016), Spike gives this possibility some support. In the episode, the group is mourning the loss of Fred, a beloved (and only remaining) woman in the group. Angel gives Spike the option of becoming a roving, fully-funded champion (in a conversation that sounds remarkably like a couple considering divorce), but Spike turns it down, opting instead to stay in Los Angeles. At first he says the decision is based on what Fred would have wanted, the same reasoning we would have expected from Spike of years past. But Spike corrects himself, "[I]t's what I want. I don't really like you, suppose I never will, but this is important, what's happening here. Fred gave her life for it. Least I can do is give what's left of mine. The fight's comin', Angel. We both feel it. And it's gonna be a hell of a lot bigger than Illyria. Things are gonna get ugly. That's where I live." Although Fred does still matter, and, in fact, Fred's death helps lessen much of the tension between Angel and Spike (putting aside their differences for the good of a common good—a woman they both care about—another triangle), Spike ultimately stays because he wants to, because he feels he can do some good. Although Spike has entered the even-more-homosocial kinship network of *Angel*, forgoing any real possibility of eroticism or sexuality, he is still able to maintain the masculinity he performs at the end of *Buffy*. He finally acts selflessly and for the good of others, not just a woman he loves and is trying to impress.

## CHAPTER 8 CONCLUSION

The evolution of the personas of Spike and Angel, as I have detailed them, represents a complex and ever-changing negotiation of gender and sexuality. Both Spike and Angel are failures at performing masculinity properly as humans. Both Spike and Angel are afforded the opportunity to renegotiate their genders, effectively revealing gender as a whole within the Buffyverse to be highly performative in nature. Both Spike and Angel are afforded a masculinity as vampires that conflates violence and sexuality, often requiring the victimization of women. Both Spike and Angel ultimately must accept that they can no longer operate in the modern world with such a masculinity, forcing them to re-adapt into a masculinity that allows for the separation yet maintenance of both sexuality and violence, to varying degrees of success. Both require the love of the slayer, the agent of their death, to arrive at their gendered destinations, but both must ultimately give up the same slayer for the sake of their own masculinity. The new masculinity that Spike and Angel work towards is transitionally dependent upon women, but is ultimately maintainable, as least so far as the narrative suggests, within a network of homosocial kinship. If Auerbach is correct, and vampires are reflections of their cultural contexts, then Spike and Angel, in their search for a workable masculinity that can operate within the confines of a changing heterosexuality, wherein a woman is afforded sexuality and violence as well, are clearly reflexive products of their times. Their existences, as both

vampires and men, are not easy, nor easily attained or maintained, but absolutely essential if they wish to survive relatively unscathed.

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