

“Not Like Other Men”? : The Vampire Body in Joss Whedon's *Angel*

In *The Lure of the Vampire*, Milly Williamson argues that the sympathetic vampire is a virtual star – a figure existing independently of a single actor or a single character. Joss Whedon's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* spin-off *Angel* uses this recognisable vampire star to inform its title character and thus immediately invokes a set of conventions. These not only encompass “the vampire as a sympathetic and pathos-filled character because of its unwillingness to *be* a vampire and its lack of control over this aspect of its destiny” (Williamson 70), but also offer pre-existing associations with control, heroism, gender, and sexuality, areas *Angel* focuses on consistently. Through *Angel* the spin-off is able to debate the body and masculinity from the outset.

Angel features in *Buffy* as a mysterious stranger who assists the Slayer in modern Sunnydale, California. He meets beautiful, blonde Darla in a Galway alley in 1753; she offers to show him the world and turns him into a soulless, demon vampire. Known as Angelus, he wreaks havoc with her for decades, until killing a gypsy girl in 1898 leads to a curse that returns his soul and with it guilt for his evil deeds. Since the gypsies want him to suffer endlessly, the curse stipulates that if he ever experiences perfect happiness, his soul will be removed again. After a period of despair, *Angel* (as he now calls himself) seeks redemption by helping *Buffy* fight evil. They fall in love, but on feeling true happiness during sex with her, he temporarily loses his soul and reverts to evil Angelus. (Scholarship tends to differentiate between the ensouled and soulless versions of the character by using *Angel* and

Angelus, as the show does). Though his soul is eventually returned, this problem ends any hope for a relationship with Buffy, and Angel moves to Los Angeles. Now he fights the good fight via Angel Investigations, assisted initially by half-demon Francis Doyle and former Sunnydale High cheerleader Cordelia Chase; later Wesley Wyndam-Price (also from *Buffy*), Charles Gunn, demon Lorne, Fred (Winifred) Burkle, and the vampire Spike (from *Buffy* as well).

In *Buffy*, Angel's body is displayed frequently as an object of desire or torture, but *Angel* changes his presentation because we "now see Angel, not through Buffy's love-struck eyes, but through his own subjective experience," as Stacey Abbott observes ("Walking the Fine Line"). David Greenwalt, *Angel*'s producer, has said, "*Buffy* is about how hard it is to be a woman, and *Angel* is about how hard it is to be a man" (in Nazzaro, 158), and Angel now assumes traditionally "masculine" roles: superhero, warrior, boss, patriarch, father. As a vampire star, he is a powerful vehicle to embody liminality, however, and he combines "feminized" aspects (such as nurturing or fashion sense) with hypermasculinity (heroic action), his body a site where masculinity is openly re/constructed. During "Carpe Noctem" (3.4), Cordelia explains that Angel is "Not like other men." He is always an Other man, yet, spearheading the show's development of alternative, plural masculinities, he is revealed to also be one of the guys.

Signs of difference

Anyone familiar with popular culture knows that differences between vampires and humans are relatively subtle. In an early episode of *Angel* a young demon tells the half-human Doyle, "You're passing. . . . You can walk down the street" ("Hero" 1.9). This ability to "pass" and the term itself applied to demons draws attention both to their similarities to humans, and their difference, tapping into a history of racial and ethnic tensions in the U.S. (However, see Ono for a different take on race, passing, and vampires in *Buffy*.) Drawing on horror, noir, and superheroes, the Other masculinities of demon and human protagonists challenge what is considered normal. The show gradually repositions the demon world *as* normal, existing both as opposite and mirror to the "real" L. A. Angel is often de-

scribed as the vampire with a soul, but his *body* expresses identity: physicality is intimately related to the self.

Angel stands in direct contrast to the vampire Spike, who enjoys eating, fighting, getting drunk, and having sex. Abbott notes that vampires can be “humanized through their physicality” (*Angel*, 48), and Spike’s corporeal pleasures certainly demonstrate this strategy. The contrast between the two is persistently foregrounded in *Angel* and, as Abbott points out, the cavemen versus astronauts argument from “A Hole in the World” (5.15) “serves as an eloquent summation of [their] fundamental differences” (*Angel*, 77), with Spike espousing the brutal physicality of the cavemen and Angel the more cerebral teamwork of the astronauts. In “I Will Remember You” (1.8), Angel temporarily becomes human and experiences “normality” with Buffy, and his new corporeality is emphasized sexually and sensually. Snacking in bed, Angel drops ice cream on his chest and Buffy licks it off, later telling him, “I felt your heart beat,” a sure physical sign that he is no longer an undead vampire. Physicality reinforces their intimacy, and Angel now (literally) enjoys humanity. However, he decides that he must retain his vampire body and its superpowers to fight evil. For him, corporeal pleasure is associated with being human, and returning to vampirism banishes it.

Typical vampires feed on humans, yet Angel controls his appetite, subsisting largely on pigs’ blood. Only exceptional instances show him craving or drinking human blood, as when he tells Wesley that Connor, his infant son, “smells like food” (“Sleep Tight” 3.16; this is part of a plot against him); or when, after a long incarceration at the beginning of season four, he needs nourishment and feeds from Wesley’s arm (“Deep Down” 4.1). Abbott notes how such moments are presented as visceral through “the sounds of skin being penetrated and liquid being swallowed” (*Angel* 60). But while vampirism has its own physicality, for Angel it is something to be controlled or repressed.

This repression can be related to the bodily control expected of an action hero. And, on another level, controlling his bloodlust highlights Angel’s heroism and humanity. Williamson suggests that the “body becomes the central site of signification in melodrama, where the possession of a physical flaw can evoke innocence and victimhood” (41) and even vampirism can function in this way. The notion of vampirism as a physical flaw is strikingly visualized in *Buffy* and *Angel*: “vamp-” or “game-face” is a trans-

formation of the features (including the iconic fangs) which generally accompanies feeding, hunting, or fighting. It is an outward sign of the inner demon, as highlighted in alternative world Pylea, where Angel's whole body is transformed, becoming excessively Other, wholly demonic ("Over the Rainbow" 2.20). In early seasons of *Buff*y, Angel was reluctant for Buffy to see him vamp out ("What's My Line, Part One" 2.9); just so, he is here clearly ashamed that his demon is so physically obvious. Rather than revealing Angel to be a monster, as vampire features do in other popular representations (such as *The Lost Boys*, 1987, dir. Joel Schumacher, an originator of the facial transformation), this change in features evokes further sympathy for his condition by presenting it as a physical flaw beyond his control.

Generally, however, Angel appears relatively "normal" (human) next to other demons. Elyce Rae Helford has suggested that "[t]rue Otherness on *Buff*y is about excessiveness" (23), and Angel's Otherness is dissipated in the spin-off by comparison with Lorne and other demon characters. The host of a demon karaoke bar, Lorne is "Big, bold and very green" (Holder, Mariotte and Hart 13). Colorful suits, spiky bleached hair and heartfelt singing offset his size, green skin, and red demon horns, and Lorne is always in-your-face excessive. His physical Otherness is constantly underlined: he cannot venture into human L.A. without a disguise, and when his head is cut off in Pylea, it is later reattached. Lorne's connection to the mystical (he gives spiritual guidance by "reading" clients' singing) is a further sign of Otherness. He is even different from his own species: originally "Krevlornswoth of the Deathwok Clan," he never fitted into his violent home dimension, Pylea, as he does in showbiz town L. A.

As if his physical differences were not enough, Lorne is extremely camp, and throughout his relationship with Angel there runs a hint of pursuer and pursued.¹ In "Judgement" (2.1), the Angel Investigations team enters the bar for the first time. Lorne is singing, "I'm about to lose control and I think I like it," an indication that if Angel represses his demon side, Lorne revels in his differences from humanity and from conventional, heterosexual masculinity. Surrounded by demon characters that display obvious physical difference but are accepted as normal, the sense of Angel's Otherness is lessened. Allison McCracken suggests that *Buff*y distinguishes itself from conventional horror films where "the often gender deviant mon-

ster threatens normalcy; in *Buffy*, it is the pleasures and comforts of *difference* that now become threatened by normalcy" (128). *Angel* operates similarly, presenting difference as preferable to normality partly *through* Angel's resistance to his differences, often seen by others as unhealthy repression.

As the protagonist of a long-running television show, Angel's vampirism is normalized through familiar exposure, but episodes like "Carpe Noctem" reinscribe the strangeness of the vampire body, allowing viewers to experience it anew. Here, investigation into the death of a young man begins at a gym, immediately suggesting a preoccupation with body image. Angel discovers that someone is watching the gym from the retirement home across the street. The observer, Marcus, is questioned about its male attendees and is quick to point out that he is "more a girl-watcher." But Marcus watches men because he wants their bodies. Literally. Marcus then uses magic to swap his body for Angel's.

The differing attitude of Angel and Marcus to the same body is conveyed through various means, with emphasis on physicality and sexuality. Cordelia, continuing an earlier conversation with Angel, suggests he should let smitten co-worker Fred (Winifred) down gently, reminding him to stress that he is "not like other men," whereupon Marcus-as-Angel assumes that Fred is a man and that Angel is gay. Discovering the truth, he moves on Fred, then seduces a female visitor, attempting to have sex with her and finding that "his" body is a vampire. His attitude, both to casual sex and to vampirism, is completely uncharacteristic of Angel, affording viewers a pleasurable reversal. When Marcus-as-Angel visits a nightclub, he persuades a woman away from her boyfriend, gets into a fight over it and discovers his vampire strength. One of his opponents asks him what he's on and he replies, "Well, I'd say I'm high on life, only – I ain't alive. Which means I'm never gonna die. I'm gonna be young, handsome and strong forever," giving a huge (and hugely out-of-character) grin at the thought.

While Angel strives to control his vampire body, "Carpe Noctem" undermines any notion of bodily control through both Angel and Marcus. Typically, as Karen Sayer observes, the series draws "attention to Angel's longevity and the biological fixity of his body" (104) – as for Marcus-as-Angel. For Angel-as-Marcus, the emphasis is on the unreliability of his aging body: he cannot see without his spectacles, and he has a weak heart.

When Wesley and Cordelia ask the rescued Angel-as-Marcus if he is all right, his reply is, “I gotta pee.” Comedy arises from the insertion of Angel’s subjectivity into an all-too-mortal body, but the differences of Angel’s vampire body (highlighted anew when Marcus inhabits it) are, like aging, both natural (determined by biology) and yet out of his control. The unfolding narrative insists that a controlled physical identity is always a fiction. Given that the bodies Marcus chooses are conventionally masculine, and that he adapts Angel’s Other body to a traditional version of masculinity, the role of such conventions in constructing these fictions is highlighted.

Sexuality and the vampire body

The elements of sexuality in this body-swap episode raise another key issue. Simply being a vampire seems enough to make anyone sexy (as William’s transformation into Spike also demonstrates), and Angel is no exception. When Wesley adopts Angel’s identity to take on a case in his absence during “Guise Will Be Guise” (2.6), he quickly seduces a rich, attractive woman and Cordelia disbelievingly comments, “One day as Angel – *one day!* – and he’s getting some” (also noted by Abbott “‘Nobody Scream’,” 197). This stereotype is taken to extremes in the (always off-screen) character of the Immortal, a vampire Casanova, in “The Girl in Question” (5.20), ridiculing the convention of the irresistible male hero by showing even vampire stars Angel and Spike bested by the Immortal’s superior attractions.

Furthermore, in line with postmodern representations of the vampire as polymorphously perverse, Angel is attractive to both sexes, as admitted first by Doyle in “I Fall to Pieces” (1.4). Stan Beeler notes the latent homosexuality in “Judgement” and observes that Angel “is consistently represented as extremely uncomfortable with the idea that he is attractive to gay men” (94). Neither demon L. A. nor West Hollywood conform to traditional norms of gender and sexuality; thus Angel’s discomfort with queerness, rather than the alternative sexualities represented or alluded to, is presented as unusual. Rivals Spike and Lindsey McDonald, as well as Lorne, play on homoeroticism. Though Angel and Spike are superficially presented as heterosexual via female companions Darla and Drusilla, their history together

is never clarified and their pairing in season five is characterised by the bickering of a long-standing couple. As Abbott comments, “the series overtly acknowledges the homosocial/ homosexual continuum that is kept beneath the surface of the buddy film” (*Angel* 79). Similarly, competition between Angel and Lindsey can be read as a form of antagonistic romance, as the following exchange demonstrates.

Lindsey: “If you want me I’m on your team.”

Angel: “I want you, Lindsey. [Pause]. I’m thinking about rephrasing that.” (“Not Fade Away” 5.22).

“The consistent use of humor,” observes Abbott, “serves primarily to call attention to transgression rather than undermine it” (*Angel* 72): Angel’s moments of homophobic anxiety are comic because a range of Other sexualities (including Angel’s own) are normalized in the show.

Straight or queer, Angel assumes he must refrain from sexual activity. Having lost his soul once during sex with Buffy (*Buffy* “Innocence” 2.14), Angel believes that he must never have a sexual relationship, although the curse stipulates perfect happiness rather than sexual satisfaction as key to removing his soul (as proved in “Eternity,” 1.17, when Angelus returns briefly after a client slips a happy-pill into Angel’s drink in an attempt to loosen him up). Thus, while apparently banning him from sex, the curse foregrounds Angel’s sexuality. When *Star Trek: The Next Generation* attempted to construct a different type of masculinity for Captain Picard than for Kirk, captain in the original series, *STNG*’s first officer Riker was identified by some regular viewers as “the captain’s dick,” an obvious way of displacing Picard’s sexuality (see Wilcox for a more detailed discussion). Arguably, Angel’s repressed sexuality is similarly displaced onto other characters at times. For instance, during season four, Wesley gets to act out the “bad” sex that Angelus enjoys. In “Soulless” (4.11), Angelus manipulates the team by exposing sexual tensions and the script articulates the way Angel’s sexuality is displaced and negated when Angelus tells Fred and Gunn that Angel lies awake listening to them have sex with “hands under the covers.” The ensemble cast is an integral part of sexual representation here, drawing repeated attention to Angel’s apparently sexless existence and to the ways conventional masculinity is tied to sexual prowess and heteronormativity.

Moreover, despite the curse, Angel enjoys sex with Buffy when he briefly becomes human in “I Will Remember You”; has several steamy bedroom scenes with old flame Darla in season two (culminating in “Re-

prise” 2.15);² acts out a love scene with Cordelia in “Waiting in the Wings” (3.13) and again in “Awakening” (4.10); and is enchanted into having sex with a co-worker in “Life of the Party” (5.5). Sex and romance might be considered necessities for a successful television show, though serial narrative dictates that romantic/sexual fulfillment is always temporary. The curse on Angel negotiates both, simultaneously upholding and subverting the convention of the sexually attractive and virile hero and tying Angel’s avoidance of sex to his reluctant vampire status. Finally, in “Smile Time” (5.14), Wesley persuades Angel that his fears about making his relationship with werewolf Nina sexual are ill-founded: “if you achieve a moment of perfect happiness? . . . 99.999 ad infinitum of the best relationships in the recorded history of the world have had to make do with acceptable happiness.” What has been a significant area of physical control for Angel’s character, something that separates him from other males, is now put into perspective.

Sexuality is also highlighted through the “miracle” birth of Connor to Angel and Darla. As vampires, they should be physically unable to produce a child: Connor’s existence further underlines Angel’s Otherness and a “natural” result of heterosex becomes a sign of difference. At the same time, it allows him to try out a “normal” masculine role, and the show presents Angel as a new man, willing to be a capable and loving single parent (at a time when celebrity dads such as David Beckham and Jude Law were lauded in the popular press). This combines many, sometimes contradictory, elements of modern masculinity, matching “traditionally paternal qualities. . . with an ability to nurture” (Thomas 191³). Angel is caring and sensitive, refusing (in “Dad” 3.10) to allow any of the others to even hold the baby.⁴ The typical group shot of Angel leading the team into action is revised at the end of “Dad” to show him pushing baby Connor in the stroller, collapsing into one image his heroic and domestic roles. As McCracken notes, *Angel* is perhaps “unusual in that the critical and queer positions [it offers] remain equally valid and narratively interdependent – they are not used to buttress normative masculinity but to provide valid, often preferable, alternatives to it” (132). That Angel’s sexual behavior ranges from romantic, to violent, to procreative, to an ill-advised fling at an office party demonstrates the many available positions open to such alternative masculinities.

Reconstructing the heroic image

This construction of attractive, alternative masculinities continues across other genre strands, and conventions are often renegotiated via the vampire star. For instance, Angel's supposedly inactive sex life adds a twist to the vampire as sexual predator but fits his construction as action hero (see Tasker 138). While male action heroes are almost always physically adept and virile, the narrative focus sidelines sexual activity in favor of action scenes. Angel's particular situation gives a neat explanation for this apparent contradiction, and the delight the show takes in reminding both audience and character of his "impotence" is juxtaposed with Angel's status as a superhero, bringing that status into question as well as redrawing "normal" sexuality.

Angel's superpowers derive from vampirism, which gives him strength, speed, "immortality," youthfulness, and fast recuperation from injury. He has been compared with various superheroes, both within the show itself and in scholarship (Halfyard discusses "superheroic predecessors" such as Batman and Superman, and Angel's "superheroic credentials," in some detail). Superhero cool is transmitted physically, first through clothes and image. "It's all about the coat," as Lorne says when in "Judgement" and during "Guise Will Be Guise" a key factor of Wesley adopting Angel's identity is indeed the coat. It functions as vampire cloak, Batman-style cape, and noir trenchcoat, and along with Angel's brooding demeanor it constructs a composite dark hero image. Angel is so identified by this style that when, in "Carpe Noctem," Marcus-as-Angel wears a flashy red shirt and black leather pants, Cordelia says, "*You're Angel? With that cologne? I don't think so.*" (It is well known to viewers of *Angel* and *Buffy* that black leather pants almost always signify evil.) However, Angel is able to perform different kinds of masculinity by adopting different corporeal styles (see Butler on gender as performance), as when he impersonates extrovert Rat Pack vampire Jay-Don in "The Shroud of Rahmon" (2.8).

That Angel can discard at will his superhero and "male-in-crisis" image highlights it as a construction, as do various parodies that occur throughout the show. "In the Dark" (1.3) opens with visiting vampire Spike providing his own dialogue between Angel and a female client lately rescued from a violent encounter. From, "How can I thank you, you black-clad hunk of a

night thing?” to “Evil’s still afoot. And I’m almost out of that nancy-boy hair gel I like so much. Quickly, to the Angel-mobile, away!” Spike casts Angel as a vigilante superhero, a morally dubious figure whose ambivalence is reflected in style, hair, and sexuality. Even the comparisons to Batman might point to ambivalent sexuality, given the camp television version of the 1970s.⁵

A superhero needs more than a costume, however, and the warrior body is another convention. McCracken notes how the presentation of Angel’s body differs from the typical hard-bodied action hero in that it is “a fantasy construct, a classical body but also a Christ-like, feminine one that is open, vulnerable, and subject to bleeding” (123). In *Buffy*, torture and S/M scenes displayed Angel’s body and presented him as the feminized victim; now physical suffering emphasizes his position as redemptive champion. Richard Dyer suggests that white Western masculinity is modelled on Christ, entailing suffering “as the supreme expression of both spiritual and physical striving” (17). In this case, both physical endurance and permeability are hyperbolically rendered through Angel’s vampiric body. McCracken suggests that later torture scenes show Angel clothed and impenetrable (139), losing the vulnerability of previous representations. In such scenes Angel’s suffering may become an assertion of masculinity, but it is far from closed and invulnerable, because although he chooses to help others and consequently often endures unendurable violence, Angel is rarely in control of what happens to his own body.

Initially, Angel’s warrior body is contrasted with other male characters; with Wesley’s ineptitude in early seasons (for a detailed account see Abbott, “ ‘Nobody Scream’ ”). Just as Angel’s clothes reflect his dark, brooding nature, so his physical presence adds to the image. In actor David Boreanaz’s portrayal, he “articulates himself through the most minimal gestures,” Abbott observes, while Wesley’s (Alexis Denisov’s) “movements are huge and exaggerated” (“ ‘Nobody Scream’ ” 194). Susan Jeffords suggests that late twentieth-century action movies shore up traditional notions of masculinity through “repetition of the spectacle of the masculine body. . . the male hero, his weapons and his environment” (47). Admittedly, some scenes do present striking images of Angel and his swords, axes, or wrist stakes, but this is an ensemble show; and increasingly Gunn, Wesley, Connor, Spike, and Cordelia use similar weapons to as much effect. Other characters, such as Connor or Spike, also have skill, strength, even super-

powers that rival Angel's, and many regular male characters outsize Angel by being taller or simply bigger than he is. In this way Angel is normalized: he is no longer the benchmark of hypermasculinity he was in *Buffy* (see Jowett), just one version of masculinity among others (and Others). Furthermore, Angel's physical suffering is paralleled in other characters (Spike, Wesley, Gunn, and Lindsey), so that permeable, wounded masculinity becomes the norm rather than the exception.

Angel's image is undermined by comedy too, and as McCracken neatly observes, his "heroic body is also kept in check by putting him in situations where his body is spectacularly humiliated" (134). Thus, one episode treats us to a brief (imaginary) view of Angel dancing at a party ("She" 1.13), a loose and flamboyant physical display he would never allow himself. Abbott states that this "emphasize[s] Angel's characteristic stillness" and "control of himself" ("Nobody Scream" 195), since he does not actually dance. However, the scene was, as McCracken relates, popular with fans, who commented on Angel's "cute," "adorable," "geeky" dancing, "not exactly the words usually used to refer to a superhero" (135). This is no isolated incident and Abbott argues that the show uses comedy "to undercut traditional representations of the superhero as strong, suave, and masculine in favor of a more human representation" (*Angel* 42).

The range and complexity of the show's representations thus use both action and violence, as well as parody and comic performance to reveal masculinity itself as a construction. A striking example that parallels "Carpe Noctem" in parodying Angel's superheroic body is "Smile Time." Investigating a children's television show after several suspicious deaths, Angel is magically turned into a puppet version of himself. When he calls the team to his office after this transformation, they barely recognize him: Wesley asks, "Angel, is that you?" That Angel is not in control of his body and his usual identity is clear – he cannot work the television remote with his puppet fingers, and Fred exclaims, "Oh my God, Angel, you're – *cute!*" and coos over his "little hands." Puppet-Angel thus delivers another pleasurable reversal, as Spike notes, "Angel, what the hell happened to you? You look ridiculous."

Physical appearance is integral to this episode and to its subversion of conventional heroic images. Puppet-Angel *does* look both cute and ridiculous and, developing the imaginary dancing scene from "She," these unhe-

roic adjectives are applied within the episode itself. Angel admits to Nina, “I didn’t want you to see me this way. It’s a little embarrassing,” but despite being “a wee little puppet man,” he wins his scuffle with Spike. When evil puppet Polo tells Angel during the show-down fight, “I’m gonna tear you a new puppet-hole, bitch,” it is a sure sign that his masculinity is in question, but puppet-Angel puppet-vamps out and is victorious. Another revised group shot (paralleling that in “Dad”) shows the team going into action, walking towards the camera in slow motion with Angel, a two-foot-high puppet, holding his sword in the centre. Puppet-Angel and Nina go for breakfast at the end of the episode, the start of a sexual relationship. All this seems to conclusively demonstrate that sex appeal and heroism are not measured by the physical body and that Angel, now as always, is not like other men, not a conventional hero.

Returning to Abbot’s comment that comedy subverts and humanizes heroic masculinity, allowing characters like Wesley and Gunn to share the heroic role literally humanizes this masculine role. Abbott notes that the physical slapstick comedy associated with Wesley in early seasons is carefully used “to contrast Wesley’s insecure image of masculinity with Angel” (“Nobody Scream” 193), but slowly Wesley becomes the capable “rogue demon hunter” he once described himself as (“Parting Gifts” 1.10). Conversely, Gunn’s reluctance to give up his legal “upgrade” in season five (legal knowledge is downloaded into his brain when the team take over law firm Wolfram & Hart) implies that for some, “muscle” and fighting skills are not enough to make the man.⁶ Constructions of subjectivity and masculinity relate to physicality in many characters, not just Angel, and all must remain open to alternatives and change, rather than simply embodying the closed control of the conventional action hero.

Other men?

The vampire star is thus just the starting point for representations of masculinity in *Angel*. When McCracken observes that, as the show develops, “the visible and emotional suffering that Angel has endured passes instead to the supporting characters” (139), she seems to regret this shift. However, given that this is an ensemble show representing multiple mascu-

linities and challenging notions of normality, the shifting of appealing male openness or vulnerability to characters other than Angel is surely a deliberate strategy. *Angel* offers not just one monolithic version of masculinity but a continuum of masculinities, and at any time any character may occupy a position along this continuum. An episode or a season later, that position may have shifted for that character, while another character might now occupy it. The fluidity of identity in shows like this is part of their appeal and, perhaps, part of their realism, despite the use of vampires and demons. McCracken concludes of *Buffy* and *Angel* that “While both texts allow for moments of mourning for his vampire character’s lack of humanity, it is clear that making Angel ‘a real boy’ is ultimately undesirable” (141).⁷ Certainly Angel’s vampirism offers what Williamson calls “the lure of the vampire,” and it enables his character to successfully highlight issues of control and heroism in relation to gender and sexuality. By virtue of being Other men, Angel, Spike, and Lorne are able, over and over, to show how they are “not like other men,” but otherness explores rather than defines masculinity, and humans Wesley, Gunn, and Lindsey follow suit. By virtue of being wounded, open, permeable, but heroes nevertheless, they *all* question why anyone might want to be “like other men” when alternative masculinities are so much more attractive than conventional, monolithic masculinity.

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Notes

1. Otherness and sexuality are sometimes conflated, as in the demon brothels featured in the episodes “War Zone” (1.20) and “Couplet” (3.14). See Beeler for a reading of Lorne as camp.

2. That Angel has sex with Darla at this point is a demonstration of his despair, and he clearly expects the worst to happen – but it does not.

3. Thomas is discussing Inspector Morse.

4. However, this may be staged for the benefit of the evil law firm Wolfram & Hart’s surveillance.

5. See, for example, Medhurst’s discussion of Batman, camp and sexuality.

6. Gunn's position is always contentious, and Meyer offers an interesting perspective on it in *Reading Angel*.

7. Angel's acceptance of his vampire nature towards the end of the final season might seem to reinforce this. However, the comic book series *Angel: After the Fall*, which picks up the story where the television show leaves off, offers us further developments regarding *Angel's* male character: here Gunn is a vampire, Wesley a ghost, and Angel himself, finally, a human.

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