



**Stacey Abbott**

## **A Little Less Ritual and a Little More Fun: The Modern Vampire in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer***



(1) The Prophecy, the Hellmouth, The Brethren of Aurelius, The Master, The "Anointed" One, the "Chosen" One, a vampire with a *soul*—the very language used in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* suggests an adherence to a conception of the vampire defined by superstition and tradition. Given the changes within the vampire genre in recent years with modern hybrid films such as Kathryn Bigelow's *Near Dark* (1987), Joel Schumacher's *The Lost Boys* (1985) and Steve Norrington's *Blade* (1998), it is interesting to note that Joss Whedon's vampires seem to mark a return to a pre-modern representation of vampirism.

(2) Paul Heelas, in his book *The New Age Movement*, argues that tradition is "embedded in the established order of things. By definition, tradition-informed ways of life are those in which the person thinks in terms of external loci of authority, control, and destiny rather than going within to rely on themselves."<sup>[1]</sup> His argument about tradition based pre-modern culture clearly applies to many of the superstitious villages of vampire literature and early vampire films, where villagers believed in the supernatural and placed their faith in superstition, ritual, and religion. Sunnydale, a small town located on the Hellmouth, appears to mark a return to this type of "tradition informed" culture where all of the world's evils are clearly projected onto an external force (the mouth of hell), the vampire is simply a supernatural "revenant" defined by superstition, and the slayer is ruled by destiny . . . or is she? I will argue in this article that although the show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* appears this way at first glance, it has, with each season of the television series, gradually disembedded itself from these traditions in order to create a modern vampire and slayer, both independent and self reliant.

(3) The process of breaking from tradition is in the first instance gradual manipulation of the conventions of the vampire genre. These conventions are primarily manipulated by emphasizing the physical over the spiritual in the show's iconography as well as the representation of the vampires and slayers themselves. In her fight against the vampires, Buffy's main weapons are her wooden stake and crucifix traditionally chosen for their symbolic and religious significance. Although these weapons are key icons of 19th century vampire literature, namely Bram Stoker's *Dracula* (1897), and more importantly play a vital role in the early filmic adaptations of *Dracula*, they have little role to play within most recent examples of the modern vampire genre.

### **Iconography**

**(4) The Crucifix.** From the 1970s onwards the significance of the crucifix to vampires has been continually challenged throughout the genre. In George Romero's *Martin* (1977), the supposed vampire Martin challenges his superstitious uncle's beliefs and completely undermines traditional vampire iconography by first biting into a clove of garlic and then holding a crucifix to his face while explaining, in the most dismissive tone, "that there is no magic." Stephen King makes a similar critique of the modern church in his vampire novel *Salem's Lot* when his failed priest, Father Callahan, stands up to the master vampire, Mr. Barlow, only to have his fear undermine his faith and the power of the cross with it. With his faith gone, the cross in his hand simply becomes a "piece of plaster that his mother had bought in Dublin" and Barlow plucks it from his hand with ease, snaps it in two and throws it to the floor. Barlow reminds Callahan that "without faith, the cross is only wood"<sup>[2]</sup> and has no power. This crisis in faith is taken up again in *Fright Night* (Tom Holland, 1985) when the B-movie vampire killer Peter Vincent holds up a cross to the vampire Jerry Dandrige and, in his best ham-actorly voice, commands the vampire to step "back! Creature of the Night!" to which the vampire laughs and responds, like Barlow, "You have to have faith for that to work on me." Both novel and film suggest that in the modern world faith is a rare commodity, a fact that explains the speed and the ease with which the vampire infiltrates the community.

(5) In *Buffy*, however, the crucifix is restored as one of the key weapons in the slayer's fight against evil, suggesting that the show is a return to more traditional vampire mythology. Buffy and her friends repeatedly carry crosses as a means of protection. This is quite anomalous to the rest of the society who, unaware of the existence of vampires, do not wear the crucifix as a sign of faith or protection. In "Welcome to the Hellmouth" Angel gives Buffy a crucifix which she wears throughout most of the four seasons both as a talisman against danger and as a symbol of her secret identity as the Slayer. Despite its effectiveness, however, its role within the show seems to suggest a growing separation between its image and its religious significance. In "Nightmares," the Master explains the nature of fear to the "Anointed One" by explaining his own fear of the cross. As he slowly approaches a large crucifix, a reminder of the ruined church within which they live, he explains that "We are defined by the things we fear. This symbol, these two planks of wood, it confounds me. Suffuses me with mortal dread. But fear is in the mind. Like pain, it can be controlled. If I can face my fear, it cannot master me." As he speaks his final line, he grasps the cross to demonstrate his control of the fear but as he touches it, the skin of his hand begins to burn and the sound of sizzling is heard on the soundtrack.

(6) Similarly in the episode "Angel," when Buffy and Angel kiss on the dance floor, the shape of Buffy's cross is burnt into Angel's chest where it was pressed against him in their embrace. In this case however, the cross does not seem to fill Angel with dread as it does the Master and he does not turn away from it like *Dracula* in Browning's adaptation of Stoker's novel (1931), but it simply has a physical effect upon him like an allergy. This is supported by other vampires' contact with the cross throughout the

simply has a physical effect upon him like an energy. This is supported by other vampires' contact with the cross throughout the series. Spike wears leather gloves so that he can hold the Du Lac cross without any physical reaction in "What's My Line?" while the homicidally insane vampire in "Helpless" ignores Buffy's threat by forcing her cross onto his skin and allowing it to burn into him. This has much in common with the film *Blade* which abandons the use of the cross in this modern secular world and, as John J. Jordan explains, regards the characteristics of vampirism as a scientific phenomenon.<sup>[3]</sup> For instance, while crosses are ineffective in the film, garlic and silver are not for they produce an *allergic* reaction in the vampire. The Van Helsing character, Whistler, offers a scientific explanation when he argues that the vampire's response to these weapons is to go into anaphylactic shock. My point is, therefore, to suggest that while the presence of the crucifix in *Buffy* seems to maintain the association of vampires with evil, its Christian meaning seems to have faded for the modern generation of vampires, and it has become, like other religious symbols,<sup>[4]</sup> simply another weapon to be used by the Slayer like a wooden stake, a quarter staff, a cross bow and even a rocket launcher.

**(7) Blood.** Similarly the significance of blood to the vampire has changed *BtVS* from earlier vampire incarnations. McNally and Florescu argue that the notion of vampirism grew out of the moment when ancient man

discovered that when blood flowed out of a wounded beast or a fellow human, life, too, drained away. Blood was the source of vitality. Thus men smeared themselves with blood and sometimes drank it. The idea of drinking blood to renew vitality thereupon entered history.<sup>[5]</sup>

In Stoker's *Dracula*, the exchange of blood is ripe with symbolic and holy significance evoking or suggesting taboo forms of sexuality, holy communion, birth and death, as well as the creation of a psychic link between vampire and victim (i.e. Mina and Dracula). In *Buffy* blood has simply come to mean food to the vampires. Angel survives on pig's blood which he buys from the local butcher and keeps in his fridge; Darla equates the chaos of a natural disaster with picking "fruit from the vine" ("Angel"); while Spike describes humanity as little "happy meals on legs" ("Becoming" Part 1). While an exchange of blood does result in one's transformation into a vampire, to simply be drained and killed means death and nothing more. The taste for blood no longer seems to be the source of the vampire's immortality but simply a by-product of it.

**(8) Sunlight.** Nina Auerbach has argued that the pre-*Dracula* vampire was a spiritual creature that gained vitality from the moon for "like the moon, they (vampires) live cyclically, dying and renewing themselves with ritual, predictable regularity. A corpse quivering to life under the moon's rays is the central image of mid-century vampire literature."<sup>[6]</sup> Stoker's *Dracula* himself gained power by night and was trapped during daylight hours in a physical form. 19th Century literature produced a series of vampires that seemed to transcend the physical in favor of the ethereal, and it was predominantly with the advent of the modern medium of cinema that the vampire became increasingly defined by his/her physical form. The shift from spiritual empowerment by night to physical destruction by sunlight came about most notably in F. W. Murnau's 1922 unofficial adaptation of *Dracula*, *Nosferatu*, which used the capabilities of cinema to suggest that vampires could be killed by sunlight. As the sun rises, Count Orlock simply fades into nothingness with the assistance of a slow dissolve. Since then the dangers of sunlight remained a consistent characteristic of the vampire, adopted in most vampire films and literature as a common threat to the vampire if not always the primary method of destruction. Most notably, Hammer Studios' *The Horror of Dracula* (Terence Fisher, 1958) features a dramatic death scene where Dracula is burned to ash and bone by rays of sunlight.

(9) In recent decades the power of the sun has become increasingly prevalent as a means of destroying vampires in such films as *Fright Night*, *Fright Night Part 2* (Tommy Lee Wallace, 1988); *Near Dark*; and *Interview with the Vampire* (Neil Jordan, 1994). In fact both *Near Dark* and *Interview with the Vampire* suggest that the sun (and fire by association) is the only means of killing the modern vampire. Sunlight is such a key component of the vampire genre that the pilot episodes of *Buffy* self-consciously pays tribute to the tradition when Buffy reminds the vampire Luke about the dangers of the sunlight, before smashing part of the blacked out window, allowing light to stream in. Momentarily distracted by what he thinks is sunlight, Luke screams in pain before finally realizing that it is artificial light and confusedly turns back to Buffy who quips, "It's about nine hours from now moron" before staking him through the heart in the "old fashioned" way.

**(10) Physicality.** The growing threat of sunlight in vampire mythology however does indicate an increasing emphasis upon the physicality of the vampire. Gone are the traditions of vampires who can transform themselves into vapor or other creatures. Lord Ruthven, in Dr. Polidori's *The Vampire* (1819), was suspected of having transformed himself into moonlight while Dracula could transform into vapor, wolves and rats. The vampires in *Buffy* are, like the humans that surround them, singularly defined by their bodies. They burn, they feel pain, they can be sick, they can be poisoned. When Darla shoots Angel in "Angel," she explains that bullets cannot kill vampires but they will hurt like hell. When Spike is rescued from the debris of the church fire by Drusilla at the end of "What's My Line," he is injured and is revealed in a later episode to be confined to a wheelchair. In the first part of the third series finale, "Graduation Day," Faith<sup>[7]</sup> shoots Angel with a poisoned arrow which causes him to faint, develop a high fever, become delirious, and almost die.

(11) The emphasis upon the physical over the spiritual throughout the series is further demonstrated by the equation of the Slayer's powers with her physical strength. In classic vampire literature and films, those who face the vampires, like Dr. Van Helsing, have traditionally been learned scientists or religious figures who triumph over the vampire through virtue and intelligence. Peter Haining describes the vampire hunter as "one of the most courageous figures to be found in the pages of horror fiction. A *man* who ventures into the world of the Undead armed only with a crucifix, a wooden stake, a bottle of holy water and some garlic"<sup>[8]</sup> (my emphasis). While Buffy possesses both virtue and intelligence, which clearly explain what makes her a superior Slayer to Faith, and has all of the accoutrements listed by Haining, it is her physical prowess and skill in combat that distinguish her from the great vampire hunters and make her a threat to the vampire/demon world.

(12) In the third season episode "Helpless," when Buffy is forced to undergo an ancient rite of passage on her 18th birthday which takes away her strength and co-ordination, her friends talk about it as if she has lost her "powers" and equate this loss with Superman losing his superpowers. Her training involves developing her skill with different, more sophisticated weapons, and her encounters with the underworld always involve a knockout brawl. Since modern vampires do not sleep rather conveniently in coffins within their own tombs (as in *Dracula*), the Slayer cannot rely on killing them in their sleep but must face them awake, usually in groups and at their strongest. It may seem odd that no matter how demonic the villain, Buffy can win in a good fight, occasionally toting a ritualistically determined weapon. I would argue that this trait is key to the series for both the Slayer and the demons are physically determined beings, bound by the same laws of nature, not as we understand them but laws of nature established and

physically determined beings, bound by the same laws of nature, not as we understand them but laws of nature established and consistently developed in the world of *Buffy*.

**(13) Mythology.** While the show's play with generic conventions begins to demonstrate a gradual break from tradition, it is through the overarching narrative to the series that we witness the self-conscious break from superstition and tradition based conceptions of vampirism to a modern secular view. This narrative unfolds through the evolving opposition between vampire and slayer and as Gregory Waller argues, "the bloody confrontation between man and monster is linked with questions about the role of faith and the status of science in the modern world-in the broadest sense, with the relationship between civilization and the primitive"[9]. That relationship however is not a simple, clear cut opposition but rather a cleverly intertwined relationship, for the vampire and its slayer are intrinsically linked in vampire fiction. Whether on the page or on film, the changes in one prefigure the changes in the other.

(14) The title of this article, "A little less ritual and a little more fun," is a line spoken by the vampire Spike in the second season of the series, after his initial arrival in Sunnydale ('School Hard'), when he decides to forgo the ritualized worship and genuflecting toward the "Anointed One," the vampire successor to The Master, and kill him instead. Spike's entrance marks a decided shift from pre-modern to modern vampire. His arrival in Sunnydale is pre-figured, however, by the arrival of the young Slayer the year before, who like Spike, walked into a ritualized world of vampires and vampire slayers, the Brethren of Aurelius on the one side and The Council of Watchers on the other, structured like opposing religious sects.

(15) Both the Brethren of Aurelius and the Council are presented to the young Buffy as decidedly foreign and "Old." Giles, the representative of the Council of Watchers, is presented as English, cool, officious and linguistically dense, while the Master looks ancient and monstrous in appearance and his language is based upon old world manners of speech. He, like Giles, often speaks in purple prose, quoting rituals and prophecy such as the following pronouncement about the arrival of the Anointed One:

Five will die, and from their ashes the Anointed One shall rise. The Brethren of Aurelius shall greet him and usher him to his immortal destiny . . . "As it is written, so shall it be."

This recitation is quite similar in style and substance to the prophecy of the Slayer as quoted by Giles in the first episode of the series.

Into each generation, a Slayer is born. One Girl, in all the world, a Chosen One. One born with the strength and skill to hunt the vampires, to stop the spread of their evil . . .

As has been observed by Rhonda Wilcox in "There will never be a "Very Special" *Buffy*," this use of language is quite distinct from that of Buffy and her friends. Wilcox argues that the role of language within the series is to establish an opposition between the world of adults and the world of children thus equating the transformation into a vampire with growing up.[10] Although I agree that this is a major element of the series, I would argue that this opposition additionally tracks the evolution of the vampire (and slayer) from the "old world" to the modern world. The series initially equates vampirism with an old world, primarily Christian, conception of vampire mythology. As Paul Barber points out in his book *Vampires, Burial and Death*, the concept of vampirism clearly prefigures Christianity, as myths of vampires exist in virtually every culture dating back thousands of years, but the development of Christianity had a huge effect upon the evolution of vampire mythology. Within the Eastern European vampire myth, the causes, Barber suggests, for vampirism are many but include causes such as damnation, excommunication, birth on holy days, and conversion to a non-Christian religion.[11]

(16) Defined as the antithesis to Christianity, the vampires of the Brethren of Aurelius are like the vampires of 19th century folklore and much of its fiction. They are structured like a religious order worshiping one master, "The Master," like a High Priest. This is demonstrated in the first episode of the series, "Welcome to the Hellmouth" when the Order is introduced by a crane shot moving down from the high school above to the remains of a ruined church buried beneath the town. The space is filled with candles and as the camera tracks through the lair, a voice is heard chanting "The Sleeper will wake . . . The Sleeper will wake . . . The Sleeper will wake." The film cuts to a close up of the speaker, Luke, as he kneels before a large pool of blood positioned in the center of the space like a religious altar and completes his chant with the words "And the world will Bleed . . . Amen." Luke's prayer prefigures the Master's resurrection from the pool later in the episode.

(17) In the second part of the pilot episode, "The Harvest," after the Master has risen, a religious ritual is performed to prefigure the Harvest and release the Master to the world above. The ritual is to prepare Luke to be the "Vessel" for the Master, linking the two so that Luke can go to the surface to feed and transfer his strength to the Master. This ritual is presented as an inversion of the Christian rituals of Communion and Ash Wednesday. First Luke kneels before the Master and literally drinks from his hand, while the Master chants "My blood is your blood. My soul is your soul," to which Luke responds "My body is your instrument." The parallels with the symbolic drinking of Christ's blood in Holy Communion is clearly evoked in this ritual. Furthermore, the Master's gesture of drawing a symbol of "The Vessel" on Luke's forehead with the blood from his hand to mark the beginning of the Harvest, a ritual of indulgence, is reminiscent of the ritual of a priest drawing a crucifix out of ash on the foreheads of his congregation to symbolize the beginning of Lent, a period of penance and abstinence.

(18) Similarly, the Council of Watchers, as represented by Giles, is also presented like a religious order bound by tradition, rituals, and superstition. When Giles seeks to convince Buffy of her birthright, he recites the prophecy of the Chosen One quoted above. As Buffy and her friends regularly congregate in the library, it becomes a religious center for study and research as well as a sanctuary from the evils of the Hellmouth. It has an altar for the books of knowledge, the folkloric bibles upon which the Council's belief is based, and Giles is the high priest of this knowledge. Buffy and her friends constantly return to consult with Giles in the same manner that the vampires return below to report back to the Master. The opposition between these two sects and their beliefs is supported by the fact that the Hellmouth upon which the Master rests, is directly below the library as revealed in the final episode of the first season, "Prophecy Girl."

### **The Slayer Tradition: The Evolution of Buffy the Vampire Slayer**

(19) The subversion of tradition is gradual from season to season, but Buffy's modern attitude and language, does, however, increasingly chisel away at the ritual and traditions of the Slayer. She regularly mocks the sanctity of her duty. "Sacred Duty, vadda

increasingly, erases away at the heart and traditions of the Slayer. She regularly, mocks the sanctity of her duty, "Sacred Duty, yada yada yada" ("Surprise"), and confounds Giles with her use of slang and pop culture references, "My spidy sense is tingling" ("I Robot, You Jane"), Buffy notes, evoking the Marvel Comic hero. As Giles points out to her mother, who asks about Buffy's difficulties with History, Buffy "lives very much in the now, and history, of course, is very much about 'the then' . . ." ("Angel"). In the end it is her embodiment of the "now" that gives her an edge against the vampires with whom she does battle and the council for whom she works, for her actions consistently undermine their expectations and confuse their tradition bound perception.

(20) From the start of the series, however, the hallowed nature of the Council is most subtly undermined by Buffy's independence and the emergence of the 'Scooby Gang'[12]—Buffy's friends Willow, Xander and eventually Angel and Cordelia—as more powerful allies to the Slayer than the traditions and rituals of the council. The Slayer is by tradition supposed to work alone in secret with only the supervision of her Watcher. That her friends become a further source of her power is however acknowledged by a number of her enemies such as Spike who complains "A Slayer with family and friends. That sure as hell wasn't in the brochure" ("School Hard," 2003) and Adam, the demon/human hybrid of Season Four, who does his best to control her by separating Buffy from her friends.

(21) In "Prophecy Girl" (1012), the final episode of the first season, Buffy undertakes her first real act of rebellion against Giles and her duty when she is told that the prophecy dictates that she will face the Master and die. While both Giles and Angel are afraid for her, they feel bound by an adherence to the prophecy. They believe that what it dictates will come to pass and the threat of the Master is too great to ignore. Buffy, however, demonstrates her refusal to be bound by prophecy and tradition by choosing to quit instead. For the first time, she scoffs at Giles' worship of the books and challenges his usefulness to her by throwing his books back at him and demanding "The Signs! Read me the signs! . . . Tell me my fortune! . . . You are so useful sitting here with all of your books. You're really a lot of help." To complete her confrontation with Giles, Buffy, in a self-consciously symbolic gesture, rips the crucifix from her neck and throws it to the floor.

(22) This outburst causes Giles to question the usefulness of the Watcher and the Council in the modern world and encourages him to take action that will pre-figure his own break with the Council in the third season ("Helpless") by prioritizing Buffy's safety over tradition. He ignores prophecy, responsibility, and ritual and decides to face the Master himself. In her final act of defiance, however, Buffy returns to the library determined to save the world, knocks Giles unconscious, and resumes her role as Slayer by her own volition. It however, requires each of the characters to defy tradition and prophecy in order to help Buffy destroy the Master. Giles, Willow, Cordelia and Ms. Calendar work together to locate the Hellmouth and fight off the demons and vampires when it opens in the library. Similarly, Xander follows his heart and forms an alliance with Angel to find and help Buffy. This defiant act not only saves Buffy from death when she is found face down in a pool of water after the master has risen, but also defies the prophecy and marks a new phase in her development as a Slayer. After she is brought back to life by CPR, returned to life like a vampire, she is stronger and more in control than before. By the end of the episode, each character has contributed to the fight, defying the traditions of the Council and it is the formation of the "Scooby Gang" that marks the shift in power from old to new world.

(23) From this point onward, Buffy increasingly leads a shift in her ranks away from the traditions of the Council to the modern methods of the Scooby Gang, with Buffy gradually replacing Giles as leader. Both Willow and Xander come to embody the modern institutions of science and the military through Willow's computer science skills merged with a scientific interest in witchcraft and Xander's memories of military protocol from a demonic spell that turned him into a soldier. Paul Heelas argues that in the modern world

Increasingly, . . . people have ceased to think of themselves as *belonging to*, or as *informed by*, overarching-systems. Such disembedded, desituated or detraditionalized selves, the argument goes, have adopted cultural values and assumptions which articulate what it is to stand "alone"—as *individuals*—in the world.[13]

Buffy's emergence as leader of the gang is directly predicated upon her detraditionalizing herself in Heelas' sense and gradually building up her ability to stand alone against her worst fears and enemies. This is most dramatically articulated in the finale of the second season, "Becoming," when Buffy must act in Giles' absence (as he is being tortured by Angel), to protect the gang, rescue Giles and face Angel on her own. As Angel prepares to deliver what he thinks will be the fatal blow, he attempts to use her isolation against her by pointing out how everything she holds dear has been stripped away from her, "That's everything huh? No weapons, no friends no hope. Take all that away and what's left?" to which she responds "Me" as she catches the blade between her two hands and turns the fight back on Angel. The process of seemingly stripping everything away from her has taken her to a new level in her power, given her the strength to "stand alone in the world" and brought her one step closer to independence and her true power. Buffy's independence culminates at the end of the third season when she finally quits the Council and in order to destroy the mayor blows up not only the school but specifically the library itself.

### **The Evolution of the Vampire**

(24) As I mentioned earlier, the vampire and Slayer are intrinsically linked so as Buffy gradually extricates herself from the tradition of the Slayer so too do her vampire enemies. Therefore when Buffy undermines prophecy and destroys the Master in the first season, she calls forth a modern vampire to take his place. While it takes three seasons for Buffy to fully escape the tutelage of the Council (her graduation from high school is equated with her graduation from the Council), it does not take as long for the show to introduce a shift in vampires from Old to Modern world. Spike is the first vampire in the series to suggest that vampires possess the ability to evolve with the world and embody a new age. Nina Auerbach argues that there is a vampire for every age and that 'since vampires are immortal, they are free to change incessantly. Eternally alive, they embody not fear of death, but fear of life: their power and their curse is their undying vitality.'[14] I would take this further to suggest that it is the vampire's ability to defy time and "change incessantly" that identifies it as distinctly modern. Like Buffy, the modern vampire, as represented by Spike, lives eternally "in the now."

(25) The distinction between Spike and the Brethren of Aurelius is established upon his arrival by his rather irreverent entrance. As Spike enters the room, one of the vampires is proclaiming that the Feast of St. Vigeous, a vampire holy day in honor of their patron saint, will be as glorious as the Crucifixion which he claims to have witnessed. Spike ignores the reverence of the moment and dismisses this remark by pointing out that "if every vampire who said he was at the crucifixion was actually there, it would have been like Woodstock" and continues to steal the limelight by anecdotally pointing out that "I was actually at Woodstock. That was a

been like Woodstock and continues to steal the limelight by anecdotally pointing out that I was actually at Woodstock. That was a weird gig. Fed off a flower person, and I spent the next six hours watching my hands move." While the Old World Vampire is claiming to have witnessed the Crucifixion, a claim that suggests that he is one of the ancients and therefore commands a place of rank within the Order as well as attaching Christian significance to their own celebration of St. Vigeous, Spike lays claim to have witnessed a 20th Century pop culture event which resulted in his getting high. Furthermore, Spike demonstrates a great deal of contempt for the prayers and rituals performed by the Order throughout the episode. When Drusilla chastises him for not "playing with the others"--- which may put them at risk with the "Anointed One" (or the "Annoying One" as Spike puts it)—Spike reluctantly takes her point but demonstrates his complete lack of faith in all things traditional when he describes this ritual as "going up and get chanty with the fellas."

(26) With the death of the Anointed One, Spike sets up shop in Sunnydale and becomes the leader among the vampires (at least until Angel's transformation into Angelus) based upon his confidence, strength, and humor. Spike is presented as having a great deal in common with the members of the Scooby Gang. In the first instance, he has abandoned the old world language of his predecessors and speaks in the vernacular of the period. Similarly, no longer ruled by ritual and superstition, Spike's attempts to find a "cure" for Drusilla's illness demonstrates how he treats magic like a science. This is similar to Ms. Calendar's and Willow's equation of witchcraft with science as well as directly paralleling their attempts to cure Angel through the casting of a curse. Furthermore, despite his involvement with ritual, Spike constantly maintains his secular cynicism through his post-modern humor. As he performs all of the steps of the healing ceremony, reciting the verses, binding Angel to Drusilla and mixing their blood, he adds his own punchline to the ceremony by finishing the ritual with "Come to a simmering boil and remove to a low flame."

(27) By moving further and further away from the clear-cut opposition between the Brethren of Aurelius and the Council of Watchers, the program emphasizes an ambiguous distinction between the vampire and slayer. A distinction that becomes increasingly ambiguous when Buffy's true love Angel becomes the show's chief villain in Season Two. Although the show professes to project the evils of the vampire onto a demon inhabiting a human corpse, the show clearly demonstrates that what defines the vampire is unquestionably the human he/she was before. Drusilla is mad because she was driven mad before Angel turned her, Harmony continues to be self-centered and superficial and although Willow is quite shocked to see that her vampiric double demonstrates homosexual tendencies, this does foreshadow Willow's "coming out" in the fourth season.

(28) In the second season, when Angel loses his soul and becomes the monstrous Angelus again, Buffy attempts to console herself with the thought that the monster who is tormenting her is not the man she loved. This becomes increasingly difficult because no matter how evil his actions, Angelus continues to do and say things that suggest that, like Willow's double, Angelus is simply an alternate version of Angel and not simply a demon inhabiting his body. When Buffy faces Angelus in the shopping Mall ("Surprise," 2013), she tells him that she is prepared to kill him because he isn't really Angel. He undermines her confidence by questioning "You'd like to think that wouldn't you?." In fact, he continually asserts that he is Angel, but Angel released from the shackles of humanity, i.e. conscience and love. Like the other vampires, Angelus' personality as a vampire is defined by who he was as a human. He continues to dislike Spike and mock Xander and his obsession with Buffy is equal to his love for her.

(29) This argument is supported in a third season episode "Enemies" when Buffy and Angel want to trick Faith into revealing what she knows about the Mayor's grand plan. To do this Angel pretends that their ritual to take away his soul was successful and he has become Angelus once more. To carry out the performance, he must mock Buffy, kiss Faith, and punch Xander and he is so convincing that Buffy, who was aware of the ruse from the start, is visibly shaken by it. Buffy must remind the others that Angel was only acting, but as she repeats that phrase again, she is clearly trying to convince herself. It is becoming clear to her that the cruelty that defines Angelus is a part of Angel.

(30) In a first season episode of his own TV series ("Eternity"), Angel is slipped a tranquillizer, otherwise known as a "happy" pill, which mimics the effects of his one moment of true happiness. The result is again the momentary resurrection of Angelus, this time mocking and threatening his colleagues Wesley and Cordelia. The cruel words that he hurls at them, to insult Cordelia's acting ability, to mock Wesley's bravery, come from Angel not the demon. They are things that he has thought but out of friendship, good conscience, and understanding, refrained from saying. This episode completely undermines any suggestion that the evil that is Angelus is the evil of a demon and not the man.

**(31) What makes *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*** such an effective television program is that the evil that she battles is not a product of an ancient world but the product of the real world itself. *Buffy* has used the past four years to painstakingly dismantle and rebuild the conventions of the vampire genre and work toward gradually disembedding the vampire/slayer dichotomy from religious ritual and superstition. The removal of religious dogma and superstition from the genre and the transformation of the vampire into a physical rather than ethereal being, acknowledges that what we describe as "evil" is a natural product of the modern world.

(32) In the final episode of the fourth season, Buffy makes the final break with the past and her heritage by facing the primal spirit of the first slayer. While the first slayer professes to be alone and live only in the action of death, Buffy asserts both her independence and her existence within the present by declaring "I am not alone . . . I walk, I talk, I shop, I sneeze. I'm gonna be a fireman when the floods roll back. There's trees in the desert since you moved out and I don't sleep on a bed of bones . . . Now give me back my friends." Buffy vanquishes the first slayer by turning her back on her and declaring that her primal force is not the source of Buffy's power. Having cut her ties with the past, the question as to the source of her power, expressed by the final line of the episode, "You think you know what's to come? What you are? You haven't even begun," captures the uncertainty of a secular age, disembedded from tradition, independent and looking for answers.

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[1]Paul Heelas: *The New Age Movement* (Blackwell Publishers, 1996) p. 155.

[2]Stephen King: *Salem's Lot* (New English Library, 1976) p.365-366

[3]John J. Jordan: "Vampire Cyborgs & Scientific Imperialism: A Reading of the Science-Mysticism Polemic in *Blade*" *Journal of Popular Film and Television* vol. 27, no.2, Summer 1999 p.10.

[4]In "Lover's Walk" Angel and Buffy lob bottles of holy water at a group of vampires, like grenades.

[5]Raymond McNally & Radu Florescu: *In Search of Dracula: The Enthralling History of Dracula and Vampires* ( Robson Books,

1995). p. 117

[6]Nina Auerbach: *Our Vampires, Ourselves* ( The University of Chicago Press, 1995) p.25.

[7]The secular irony of Faith's name is that of all the characters she possesses the least amount of faith in religion, the spirit world, the council or humanity itself.

[8]Peter Haining: "Introduction" to *The Vampire Hunters" Casebook* edited by Peter Haining (Great Britain: Warner Books, 1996) p. XI.

[9]Gregory Waller: *The Living and the Undead: From Stoker's Dracula to Romero's Dawn of the Dead* (University of Illinois Press, 1986) p. 22.

[10]Rhonda V. Wilcox: "There Will Never be a "Very Special" *Buffy*" *Journal of Popular Film and Television* vol.27 no.2 Summer 1999 16-23.

[11]Paul Barber: *Vampires, Burial and Death* (Yale University Press, 1988) p. 37.

[12]Scooby Gang is a term that is officially coined in the second series (What's My Line Part 1) by Xander who tells Cordelia that "If you want to be a member of the Scooby Gang, you have to be prepared to be inconvenienced." The term is of course a popular cultural reference to the gang of teenagers who investigate crimes of seemingly supernatural origin in the cartoon *Scooby Doo*. Prior to using this term the group are occasionally referred to as a Club or Buffy's Slayerettes.

[13]Paul Heelas: *The New Age Movement* (Blackwell Publishers, 1996) p. 155.

[14]Nina Auerbach: *Our Vampires, Ourselves* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1995): p.5.