

Investigating *Angel*: The Hair, the Car and the Wardrobe

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(1) As we have already seen in this collection, the vampire has long been a part of mainstream popular culture, with the mythical creature appearing as the subject of folklore, fiction and more recently film and television narratives. Since the early 1990s, film and television screens have witnessed a resurgence in the vampire genre. While the small screen has presented a range of vampire texts such as *Dark Shadows* (1991) *Forever Knight* (1992-1996), *Kindred the Embraced* (1996) and *Ultraviolet* (1998), the big screen has been dominated by *Innocent Blood* (1992), *From Dusk Till Dawn* (1996), *Dracula 2000* (2000) and the *Blade* trilogy (1998, 2002, 2004).

(2) Although the recent popularity of the vampire genre confirms the power of this creature as a modern-day cultural icon, it is also worth noting that a body of academic scholarship (in fields such as sociology, psychology, feminist, gay and lesbian studies) has developed in order to examine the meanings and pleasures of this figure in the contemporary period. Such literature has frequently made reference to the vampire as a symbol of the enduring problems of sex, power and violence in society (See Hollinger and Hollinger 1998; and Ashley 1998), paying particular attention to the ways in which the unassimilated and deviant vampire can be seen to act as a metaphor for the homosexual experience (See Gelder 1994; and Benschhoff 1997).

(3) However, although existing work on the vampire is revealing in its discussion of sex, violence and sexuality, it is also important to consider the role of performance, style and desire as it has been presented in the vampire genre. After all, although the politics of appearance is a growing area of scholarly interest (See Brunsdon 1997; Epstein 2000 and Moseley 2002), a consideration of the role of clothing and the power of consumption to a debate over masculinity is long over-due. Moreover, if one considers that the roots of the much-touted 'crisis of masculinity' lie in the 'damaging psychological split in so many men between their ... feelings ... and their public ... performances' (Clare 2000: back cover), then it is necessary to consider the role that dress and performance has to play in a debate over identity politics for the contemporary male.

(4) In films such as *The Hunger* (1983), *Bram Stokers Dracula* (1992) and *Interview with a Vampire* (1994) the night walker is an effortlessly stylish and striking figure, from David Bowie/John Blaylock's elegant yuppie creation and Gary Oldman/Dracula's decadent dandy to Tom Cruise/Lestat de Lioncourt's beautiful and effeminate portrayal. More recently, however, we have seen the emergence of a new breed of vampire who is neither effortlessly stylish nor innately chic, but rather a vain and fastidious creature who is seen consciously 'putting on' (Holmlund 1993: 213-229) his surface appearance and attractiveness as a 'manly front' (Kimmel 2001: 279) to signal strength, stamina and potency to his audience. My point here is quite simply that if the figure of the vampire can be used as a metaphor that tells us about sex and power in society, then the new breed of image obsessed vampire can

also be used as a barometer for understanding wider social and sexual concerns regarding the politics of appearance.

(5) The ways in which *Angel* (1999-2004) presents its eponymous hero as an image obsessed vampire encourages the series to be read, not simply as a parody of existing vampire texts, but also as a commentary on the politics of appearance for the contemporary male. With this in mind, this chapter will look at the representation of the fastidious vampire through notions of appearance and performance, and examine the relationship between image and authority as it is presented in the *Angel*verse.

Angel

(6) The most explicit example of this fastidious creature can be seen in the long running television series, *Angel*. *Angel* is a dark, urban show that focuses on the eponymous Angel (David Boreanaz), an Irish commoner who in 1727, at the age of 27 was sired by a female vampire and transformed into the most evil of creatures who went under the name of Angelus. After terrorising mankind for several generations, Angelus was cursed with a soul and forced to live an eternal life of guilt and regret as Angel, forewarned with the knowledge that a moment of pure happiness would turn him back into his evil alter ego.

(7) Although the programme focuses on the character of Angel as he fights both his own inner demon and the paranormal activities that threaten the residents of Los Angeles, the show also follows the lives and loves of Angel's extended investigative team who aid and assist the vampire in fighting against the coming apocalypse. Although the cast of the series changes throughout the show's history, the key players in 'Angel Investigations' and the key players in the show itself are; the eponymous Angel, the taciturn vampire with a soul looking for redemption; Wesley Wyndam-Pryce (Alexis Denisof), the fallen 'Watcher' whose vast knowledge of all things demonic are crucial to the identification of evil-doers; Cordelia Chase (Charisma Carpenter), the aspiring actress and object of Angel's affections who is Angel's link to the higher powers and Charles Gunn (J. August Richards) who is understood as the added brawn of the team. Or, to quote from the series: 'Angel is the champion, Wesley is the brains, Gun is the muscle and Cordelia the heart' of the operation ('Fredless').

(8) Although, as previously mentioned, the vampire genre is saturated with chic denizens of the night, *Angel* can be seen to offer a uniquely modern telling of the vampire myth. After all, whereas the central protagonist of existing vampire texts appear as effortlessly stylish creatures, Angel is seen to construct his surface appearance in order to project a stylish and powerful persona. However, although the eponymous Angel is written, from the outset of the first series, as a character who is obsessed with his hair, his car and his wardrobe, the vampire is not merely obsessed with style or fashion *per se*, but rather, he remains aware of the masculine power and authority that can be achieved through the calculated construction of a particular self-image.

Surface appearance and masculine style

(9) Feminist theorists often state that the rejection of fashion and beauty practices was at the heart of second-wave feminism, in which it is claimed that the paraphernalia of femininity objectified, trivialised and dehumanised women (See Wolf, 1990; Faludi, 1992 and Hollows, 2000). Although such negative connotations of female fashion as superficial and destructive are long standing and ubiquitous, little work that exists on identity politics examines the link between appearance, fashion and representations of masculinity on film or television.

(10) One rare exception here is Stella Bruzzi's seminal work on clothing and identity in mainstream film. Bruzzi considers the narrative significance of clothes in a range of generic categories including the costume film, the contemporary film noir, the cross-dress comedy and the Franco-American gangster film. This research informs us that there is an unconventional correlation between masculinity and narcissism in films such as *A Bout de Soufflé* (1960), *Le Doulos* (1962) and *Le Samourai* (1967) (Bruzzi 1997: 67-94). Taking Bruzzi's research as a starting point, I want to examine the character of Angel in his role as the fastidious vampire and consider the relationship between the vampire's 'consciously repetitive wardrobe' (Bruzzi 1997: xviii) (consisting of dark plum, deep brown and black jumpers, black open collared fitted shirts, black trench coats, black and dark brown three-quarter length leather jackets and smart black trousers, shoes and boots), his self-image and his mastery over the narrative, considering the ways in which this relationship could be understood in terms of wider debates concerning the politics of appearance. After all, those characters who present a heavily consistent image can be seen to exert control over the action and the characters around them, with a carefully controlled appearance becoming a straightforward metonym for a character's mastery over their environment (Bruzzi 1997: 129). Therefore, while the Franco-American gangster is seen to display a 'sartorial flamboyance' (Bruzzi 1997: 70) as an important sign of his masculine success, the character of Angel draws on his well fitting dark attire, his brooding facial expressions and his black 1967 Plymouth Belvedere GTX Convertible (of which only 2,026 were made) as an effected, yet important, sign of his public masculinity. Karen Sayer even goes as far as to suggest that the 'dark, tomb-like and tasteful' (2002: 105) homes that the vampire occupies are 'chosen more for aesthetic effect than necessity' (2002: 114).

'you might want to think about mixing up the black and black look' ('I Fall to Pieces').

(11) Angel's dedication to appearance is so significant to the show that fans, critics and commentators cannot help but pick up on the surface appearance and attractiveness of the vampire in their writing on the series. For example, we are informed that 'the heroic Angel ... dresses in dark clothing ... usually wearing a long black coat' (Stein 2002: Online). Likewise, we are told that the character is 'a stoic hero in dark clothing' (Entertainment Weekly 2005: Online), a 'tall, dark

vampire possessing the sort of alluring charisma that suggests an Abercrombie and Fitch model from the dark side' (Star Pulse 2006: Online). Furthermore, commentators go on to ask 'what would Angel be without the shade black' (Hyland 2000: Online) before praising the character because he 'looks better in a black v-neck jumper than any man I've seen' (Channel 4 2001: Online). Fans of the show even go as far as to ask where the characters clothing is actually from, to be told that Angel tends to wear:

a lot of Dolce & Gabbana, Prada and Paul Smith ... His coats consist of at least 20 dusters also from a variety of designers and sources, including at least one Gucci. Some are leather, some cloth. His usual boots are Helmut Lang, his shoes are Nike. His clothes are purchased from Barney's, SAKS Fifth Avenue and Neiman Marcus (Bratton 2006: Online).

Moreover, the official *Angel* magazine makes it clear to the reader that the character likes 'brooding' and 'black leather' (Hayes 2003: 11), commenting that 'you can't go wrong with basic black' in terms of sartorial taste (Root 2003: 20). Furthermore, even the description of the Angel action figure makes a point of describing the vampire's attire in minute detail, paying homage to the character in question.

Therefore, we are told that the 'figure manages to capture perfectly Angel's look and character' (Kern 2004: Online) 'dressed in complete black clothing' (Borst 2005: Online). Moreover, although:

it may look like a simple black outfit, Angel's wear is really impressive. He comes with a black overcoat, a black shirt, black pants, a black belt, and ... shoes. The most noticeable part of his ensemble is his overcoat ... made in black cloth material ... As said, Angel's shirt is also black, but the cloth used is a shiny material, allowing it to stand out from the coat and pants. The fully removable shirt includes buttons and a pocket of its own. Angel's pants ... are well made and include belt rings and pockets, as well as a button fly. The pants are held up with a small belt, which is made out of synthetic material that looks like alligator ... Lastly are Angel's working shoes, and even here, no detail has been spared (Kern 2004: Online).

Both the action figure and the action hero of the piece are popularly marketed and received as deadly brooding vampires with a penchant for well-fitted, and dark, designer clothing. With this in mind then, it is worth noting that the investigative team routinely point to Angel's clothing during their conversations with the vampire. For example, when Angel is concerned that he may appear intimidating to a damsel in distress, the advice given by Cordelia is to 'think about mixing up the black and black look' ('I Fall to Pieces'). Furthermore, when the character of Lorne a.k.a. The Host (Andy Hallett) meets the tortured vampire for the first time his clairvoyant comments are simply 'love the coat, its all about the coat' ('Judgement'), and after the vampire has sung for the host, the karaoke crowds are asked to give a round of applause to 'the vampire with soul... Mr tall, dark and rocking' ('Judgement'). Likewise when Allen Francis Doyle (Glenn Quinn), a demon/human hybrid, talks about the vampire he comments that Angel 'likes playing the hero, walking off into the dark, his long coat flowing

behind him' ('I Fall to Pieces'). Moreover, even the character in question draws attention to his dark fashion tastes throughout the series. For example, when he tries to take over a dangerous case that Gunn has become entangled in, the muscle of the group chides 'and what am I supposed to do, sit home and knit' to which the vampire replies 'I could use a sweater, something dark' ('The Shroud of Ramon').

(12) The show's creators clearly enjoy drawing attention to Angel's predictable attire. For example, in a sequence of events that lead up to a celebrated actress deliberately spilling her champagne on the vampire, we see Angel remove a form-fitting black shirt to be replaced by an identical item of clothing from his wardrobe ('Eternity'). Although we are not actually shown the vampire's sartorial storage here, this sequence clearly asks the audience to consider the dark theme that dominates his look. In fact, Angel is so inextricably linked with his dark wardrobe that when the character is turned into a puppet, this figure wears a form-fitting black leather jacket for the duration of its appearance in the series ('Smile Time'). My point here then is simply that Angel's wardrobe projects a distinct sense of masculine style as the character is dressed in a range of dark fitted designer garments that go towards constructing an overall 'macho' look, or what could be understood as a uniform of masculine authority. However, rather than view Angel's dark attire as a site of natural, authentic or hegemonic masculinity, it must be understood that the character is written and performed in such a way that it encourages the viewer to interrogate the relationship between the male's wardrobe, his self-image and his status in society. After all, Angel's aggressive style of black outfits, leather jackets and the classic convertible can be understood as a guise that serves to cover the vampire's feelings of uncertainty and to signal authority and mastery to the other characters in the series.

(13) One might assume that if the 'black and black look' favoured by the vampire acts as a 'manly front' (Kimmel 2001: 279) to mask the character's insecurity and uncertainty about his place in society, then his confident, charismatic alter ego may make different sartorial choices. After all, Ian Shuttleworth finds that 'the vampire Angelus is clearly far more comfortable with himself and his role – he has a flamboyance in word and deed which comes with complete self-assurance' (2002: 231). However, whereas the western distinguishes the hero from the villain by way of his white hat, the horror film distinguishes the final girl from the victim by way of her unisex attire, and the film noir distinguishes between the good woman and the femme fatale by way of her demure pastel hues and invariably flat shoes, Angel and his evil alter ego dress from the selfsame dark form-fitting wardrobe. The point here is that neither the hair, the car nor the wardrobe can separate these two vampires. However, that said, the character's reasons for wearing the 'black and black look' may differ considerably. Although Angel constructs a consciously repetitive wardrobe in order to hide behind its dark macho surface, the character is so aware of the discrepancy between his uncertain self and the authoritative image that he seeks to present, that he cannot help but draw attention to his sartorial choices throughout the programme, as if

to remind both himself and others of his authority in the *Angel*verse. Alternatively, Angelus is so at ease with this dark macho surface, and the mastery that it presents, that he can wear the clothes of his alter-ego without the same hysterical commentary.

(14) Although the body of the vampire cannot age or alter over time, Angel/Angelus' surface appearance has clearly changed since he was sired over 200 years ago, and the programme is keen to show the character in a range of sartorial styles in a number of flashback sequences that are seen throughout the shows history. However, it is worth noting that irrespective of the period and location of the vampires in question, whether it be 1750s Ireland ('The Prodigal'), 1780s Prussia ('Soulless'), 1920s Chicago ('Orpheus'), 1950s ('Are You Now or Have You Ever Been') or 1990s Los Angeles, the characters favour all manner of sartorial styles and shapes that enable them to blend in with the tastes dictated by a particular historical period. Therefore, irrespective of whether the vampire wears a three quarter length dark velvet jacket and knee britches, intricate waistcoats and ornate cravats, a dapper three-piece suit, casual T-shirts or form-fitting shirts, the character's wardrobe remains suited to his environment. The only recurring factor in such sartorial choices is the preference for dark attire, be it elegant dark green's, ornate deep purples, casual grey or classic black.

'The whole visibility issue' ('First Impressions')

(15) Although Angel's fixation on his own 'consciously repetitive wardrobe' (Bruzzi 1997: xviii) is seen throughout the programme, it is perhaps most evident in a particular episode in the first series entitled 'First Impressions'. Through a convoluted series of plot twists, Angel is rendered inactive, his classic Plymouth convertible has been stolen and the vampire is without an alternative mode of transport. In order for Angel to get to his next demonic battle and save the damsel in distress, he finds himself on the back of a motorbike belonging to the foppish Wesley. Angel's discomfort at being the passenger here is clear, and his lack of control in this sequence is reflected in a change in the vampire's appearance. Wesley asks Angel to put the spare pink motorcycle helmet on, to which the vampire replies '...you know I don't need a helmet for protection'. Wesley reminds Angel that wearing a helmet is the law in California at which point the vampire whines that: 'well you know it's the whole visibility issue ... not to mention the whole hat head thing ... when you come to think about it, how come I have to wear the lady's helmet'. This short and seemingly superficial sequence makes it clear that Angel's desire to maintain a perfectly consistent dark and brooding appearance is not simply a matter of fashionability or taste *per se*, but rather a desperate attempt to uphold the authoritative image that he works so hard to project. Or put more simply, the comic scene is not about fashion, but about masculine power, control and authority for the vampire hero. In his work on men, masculinity and the media, Steve Craig makes the point that a 'man's clothes speak for him [and that] 'it is up to him to make sure they say the right things' (1992: 140). With this in mind, watching Angel adorn a pink 'lady's helmet' as an accessory to his otherwise black clothing

and take the back seat on a motorcycle appears as a dysfunctional image for both the vampire himself, and for the supporting characters in the *Angel*verse.

'The car is your problem pal' ('Guise Will Be Guise')

(16) We routinely see Angel trying to come to terms with his inner demons in the shape of the violent Angelus, and in one particular attempt to work through his fears and the potential threat from his alter-ego, the vampire visits Tish Magev (Art LaFleur) a spiritual guru, in the aptly titled 'Guise Will Be Guise'. After drinks and small talk concerning the fuel economy of his treasured convertible, the vampire asks him if they can discuss those problems associated with his dark side. The swami informs Angel that 'the car is your problem pal, it says everything about you, you live in L.A. its all about the car you drive'. Angel's car can be understood as the problem here because although the vampire is a nocturnal creature that cannot look at or walk in the sun, he chooses to drive a convertible car in and around a city known for its sunlight. The point here is simply that Angel is so obsessed with maintaining his carefully crafted image that he willingly 'puts his immortal life at risk every time he takes a spin' (in a car that the guru himself describes as 'a very slick ... chick magnet') rather than consider an alternative vehicle.

(17) This concern with form over function, or rather with masculine surface over male substance is further highlighted when Angel is then asked why he wears 'all the layers, all the black when it is 80 degrees in the shade'. Although Angel points out that he wears all the black because he doesn't have a body temperature (and therefore remains unaffected by the heat) the swami nods before deducing 'so it's for the look'. Angel then seeks to challenge this claim, although his response that he 'wears all the black' because 'I don't have a reflection [and] this way I don't have to worry about matching' simply goes further to confirm his dedication to surface appearances, and his desire to maintain an authoritative self-image. With this in mind then, both Angel and the swami are aware that although the vampire does not have a literal reflection, he is in fact 'reflected in the people around [him] and in the way they see [him]'. We are told that 'appearances are very important' to Angel and yet rather than condemn the vampire for his dedication to his hair, his car and his wardrobe, it is worth noting that such outward appearances do indeed serve a social function by giving 'material form to a particular narrative of self-identity' (Giddens 1991: 81), and it is this narrative of self-identity that tells the supporting characters how the vampire in question wishes to be acknowledged and identified.

'Why is he wearing my coat' ('Guise Will be Guise')

(18) It is clear that Angel wants to be identified as a dark and urban avenger, in control of his-own image and the surrounding narrative action. However, what is most interesting about the series is the ways in which the writers routinely challenge the vampire's sense of mastery

and control. Such a challenge is evident in the final episodes of the second season, during which time the entire investigative team are seen stranded in the primitive Pylea, an alternate dimension in the *Angel*verse. Due to a series of paranormal plot devices, each member of the team finds themselves in a role far removed from the one that they perform in Los Angeles, and as such, these episodes set the wheels in motion for Angel's personal crisis of confidence about his role within the team and his place as a warrior in this world.

(19) While Cordelia exchanges her usual secretarial duties and acting ambitions for the role of Pylea's exalted ruler, Gunn exchanges his usual muscular prowess for the job of battle tactician and Wesley exchanges his usual intellectual responsibilities for those of a daring combatant, while Angel seems somewhat superfluous to the narrative action here. With this in mind, Angel's crisis could be seen in relation to wider debates about the much-touted 'crisis of masculinity' in which the modern man is said to be angry, discontent, constantly disappointed and betrayed by the workings of society (Faludi 2000: 27). Therefore, while the contemporary male seeks 'a promise of loyalty, a guarantee ... that his company would never fire him, his wife would never leave him, and the team he rooted for would never pull up stakes' (Faludi 2000: 27), Angel too seeks such reassurance about his role and relationships in society. However, rather than offer such reassurances to the vampire, the series goes further to explore his barely veiled insecurities.

(20) During their time in Pylea, the investigative team are introduced to a 'brave and undefeated' ('Through the Looking Glass') human/demon hybrid known as the Groosalugg (Mark Lutz); a creature who has Angel's strength, bravery and stamina, without the Achilles heel (be it daylight, redemption or the dark side); a creature who not only helps to save Pylea from evil forces, but who wins the heart of Cordelia. Therefore, with the Groosalugg clearly positioned as a champion warrior in the war against evil, one might expect to see the two men bond over battle scars and war stories. However, while the human/demon hybrid is seen bonding with 'the brains, the muscle and the heart' of the team ('Fredless'), Angel is simply heard questioning the valour, height and battle skills of the creature in question. The point here is simply that the vampire's feelings of competition and insecurity can be understood in terms of a wider debate concerning the sociology of masculinity, after all, such work tells us that men are scared 'of ... being dominated by stronger men' (Leverenz 1986: 451).

(21) Angel's feelings of competition and insecurity are (quite literally) brought to a head when Cordelia gives the Groosalugg a makeover that sees the warrior 'loose the battlefield hair [and] animal skins' ('Couplet') in favour of mimicking Angel's dark and 'macho' earth champion appearance. When Angel objects to the makeover, it is not due to the vampire's dismissal of fashion or styling *per se*, but rather because of the relationship between such costuming and control in the *Angel*verse. Angel's macho costuming serves to mask his feelings of uncertainty and signal authority to the other characters in the series, and as such, any man borrowing from his carefully constructed wardrobe also borrows from his power and mastery over the narrative

action. The writers make it clear here that Angel's dedication to his surface appearance as an indicator of his masculine authority is more than male paranoia on behalf of the vampire. After all, at the same time as the Groosalugg is given the 'black and black look', the supporting members of the investigative team are seen falling over themselves (and literally walking past Angel) to praise the character for his Herculean battle skills, courage and bravery. Therefore, in line with existing work on the sociology of masculinity, Angel's control over the narrative and the other characters in the series is seen to collapse when he feels that he has been dominated by a stronger man. However, the domination here is not in terms of male bravado or masculine aggression, but in terms of costuming as a signifier of male control and authority.

'I'm nearly out of that nancy hair-gel I like so much' ('Lonely Heart')

(22) The ways in which Angel reacts to the Groosalugg provides supporting evidence for Leverenz's notion that men's real fear is '...of being dominated by stronger men' (1986: 451). However, in order to further consider such work on the insecurity of contemporary masculinity it is necessary to examine the notion that men also fear 'being ashamed or humiliated in front of other men (1986: 451). With this in mind, it is relevant to look at the ways in which the programme continues to challenge the vampire's heavily affected persona, and sense of authority in the series.

(23) When Angel first comes into contact with Spike (James Masters) – his long-time vampire companion turned arch enemy – in 'Lonely Heart' the vampire acknowledges Angel's carefully constructed surface appearance. However, rather than be duped by the macho look as a symbol of the vampire's control over the action, Spike points to the masquerade as a masquerade before mocking such constructed appearances. Spike watches Angel as he saves a young woman from being killed by her drunken boyfriend. However, not content with watching, Spike offers the viewer a mocking voiceover, presenting his own version of the scene as it plays out before him, playing both sides of the conversation between the young girl and her rescuer. While Angel is advising the damsel in distress to leave her abusive boyfriend and seek shelter in a local woman's refuge, Spike's take on the scene is significant for a consideration of Angel's calculated self-image and the projection of his masculine identity. Spike's impersonation has the young woman thanking Angel as a 'mysterious black clad hunk of the night', before asking her saviour how she can repay him. Spike then adopts Angel's role (and an exaggerated John-Wayne vocal inflection) as he replies 'no need little lady ... prancing away like a magnificent poof is thanks enough ... evil is still afoot and I'm nearly out of that nancy hair-gel I like so much'.

(24) Although Spike's presentation of Angel is reminiscent of the dark, brooding and perfectly coifed image of masculinity that Angel is trying so hard to project, this character mocks the very basis of the vampire's tall, dark and handsome look. Therefore, rather than view

Angel as a desirable, physically perfect, forceful, violent and hard image of hegemonic (heterosexual) masculinity (See Healey 1994; and Jefferson 1998), Spike reinforces the long-standing and ubiquitous link between the vampire and the homosexual. With this in mind the character can be seen to foreground the unconscious weight of a culture that has made the homosexual synonymous with the well-groomed man in contemporary culture, based on the presupposition that an 'overt interest in clothing implie[s] a tendency towards unmanliness and effeminacy' (Breward 1995: 171). What I mean by this is simply that when Angel is labelled a 'poof' or 'nancy' it is not the issue of sexual orientation that is at stake, but the issue of masculinity that is in question. It is also particularly significant that these comments are by Spike, who is crucially presented as another male who performs masculine toughness to deal with his own anxieties, and fears that his own 'softness' is somehow humiliating to his manhood. Although he presents himself as a dangerous punk rocker – the Big Bad – he repeatedly finds himself in relationships in which he is romantically dependent on women, and his need to ridicule Angel is due to their shared past: Angel knows Spike's past and his origins as a vampire; he knows Spike's history with women; and he has tormented him for it for centuries.

(25) However, this is not an isolated scene in the *Angel*verse, but simply one of many sequences that presents Angel's dedication to appearance as evidence of the characters homosexuality. For example, Cordelia's friends are seen looking at Angel's hair, clothes and physicality as a site of visual and erotic display before commenting that 'the good ones are always gay' ('Expecting'), and likewise, Cordelia herself tells the vampire that he has 'a gay man's taste' ('Epiphany') when he surprises her with 'gorgeous' clothing that he has chosen by way of a peace-offering. Therefore although *Angel* can be read as a parody of the vampire genre, it cannot go as far as to disentangle vampirism and homosexuality here (See Gelder 1994).

Conclusion

(26) Using a vampire, who according to all myths, fictions and folklore is a creature without a literal reflection to examine the relationship between surface appearance, self-image and masculine control appears as a somewhat parodic take on the sociology of masculinity. However, if one considers the ways in which television horror and the fantasy genre can be used to negotiate real life experiences for its audience (See Badley 2000; Helford 2000; and Projansky and Vande Berg 2000) then I would suggest that it is precisely because of this mode of address that the series is able to investigate the nature and supposed 'naturalness' of contemporary masculinity. Therefore, rather than dismiss the significance of fashion for contemporary masculinity as symptomatic of the move towards triviality, passivity or homosexuality, through conspicuous consumption, we should continue to examine the ways in which the politics of appearance can be understood as part of a wider debate concerning sexuality and gender in contemporary culture.

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