Undressing the Vampire: An Investigation of the Fashion of Sunnydale's Vampires

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Introduction

In the fourth episode of the first season of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003), Buffy encounters a vampire in a park. They tussle violently and exchange blows before the vampire escapes, only to be staked later in the episode. There is nothing largely significant in the format of this scene; in fact, one of the ongoing features of the show is one-off vampire battles between an anonymous vampire and the Slayer. In these scenes, the setting often alternates between a cemetery and an alleyway behind The Bronze, the witty quips change to match the opponent, and surface details in the vampires may reflect plot details in each episode (for example, a vampire having a claw on his hand). But the one distinct characteristic that most of these vampires share, other than the fact that they meet the same demise, is their attire. This vampire is dressed in black boots, black leather trousers, a black leather jacket, a studded belt and has long, wild dyed black hair ("Teacher's Pet" 1.4). The audience would immediately and unmistakably attribute this vampire to the alternative subculture, which this paper uses as an umbrella term that encompasses punk, goth, and skate styles that usually derive from or exist alongside alternative rock music. The prevalence of alternative fashion to denote vampires is not isolated to this episode, or even to this season. In fact, across the entirety of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, a significant number of anonymous vampires are dressed in alternative fashion, making them, as Bieszk says "the ultimate subculture." Moreover, many of the recurring vampire

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characters also fit this trend, such as Spike, who is an amalgamation of Sid Vicious (Recht, *Der Sympathische* 175-79) and Billy Idol (Early 14, Recht, *Der Sympathische* 179-81).

This is at first puzzling because there is no logical reason within *Buffy* lore why vampires would dress in this manner. After all, vampires are pariahs who "exist along a border of life and death, vacillating between human and monster," so would presumably feel no requirement to obey traditional social codes and norms (Stater 4). When translated to fashion, the very idea of vampires purchasing specific items of clothes is preposterous. After all, they abhor human values and qualities. Even if the vampires in *Buffy* did feel a strong need to follow fashion (perhaps as a means to assimilate in order to aid their hunting), this fails to explain why a significant number follow alternative fashion only. For example, Buffy says in "Potential" (7.12), "their tastes, their fashions can vary" (00:29:05-10). In the *Angel* episode "The Prodigal" (1.15), Darla postulates that "What we once were informs all that we have become," suggesting that the personality of the human victim plays a significant role in forming what the vampire will be like (00:36:44-48). Corollary to this theory would be the demonstration of a more diverse and eclectic range of fashions by the vampire population in Sunnydale, as opposed to the typical appearance of predominantly alternative vampires.

These points clearly demonstrate that the presence of a significant number of alternative vampires cannot be explained by the rules of the storyworld. Furthermore, it is not fair to say that the choice of attire was an aesthetic choice made by the creators. While the darkness and macabre of the vampires' alterative clothes easily reflect their noxious natures and intentions, *Buffy* was never a show known for patronizing its audience with condescending clues, but rather one that was prepared to appropriate the tropes of horror in order to subvert the expectations of the viewer. This is the fundamental principle that the name of the show is built upon; the superficial cheerleader connotations of "Buffy" contrast with the dutiful and mysterious role of "the Vampire Slayer." These principles permeate the vampire characters, too. In fact, Recht argues in his analysis of gender roles in *Buffy* that it is the amorphous bodies of the "undead subjects," which often oscillate between human notions of gender and race, that specifically allows Whedon to challenge and reverse traditional norms (Recht; "Undead Objects" 2). Instead of dictating tone, the presence

of vampire fashion in the show often undermines expectations. For example, the first vampire (and character) shown in the series is dressed as a Catholic schoolgirl, depicting her as the innocent victim until it is revealed that she is in fact the vampire ("Welcome to the Hellmouth," 1.1). Moreover, Harmony, a recurring character in both *Buffy* and *Angel*, subverts the expectations of a vampire by wearing typical Valley girl attire and thus blurring the line between villain and bimbo. Additionally, while horror mise-en-Scène might dictate that villainous characters wear dark or black clothes, which historically resonate the "connotations of the sinister," this does not immediately advocate the use of *alternative* fashion to incite fear (Hollander 365).

It is equally puzzling, in this sense, considering that *Buffy* was originally pitched as a fashion-conscious show for teens with costume designers who were always conscious of keeping characters hip and trendy to ground "the unreality" of the show's themes within "the reality of a one-Starbucks California town like Sunnydale" (Clemons 9). The presence of alternative vampires adorned in "anti-fashion" appears contradictory if one of the fledgling aims of the show was to win the appeal of an audience of young fashionistas (Davis 183). Clemons argues, on the contrary, that the non-fashionable vampires are a specific device used to cajole the fashion-conscious audience. She states that the New-Wave vampires exaggerate the fashionable characters, amplifying their style, while transforming themselves into a vehicle for humour whereby the audience can ridicule them for their poor fashion choices (Clemons 11). However, this negates the fact that the purpose of these characters is predominantly to evoke fear, not laughter. Moreover, rather than inviting mockery, there are many vampire characters who are presented as attractive and even sexually alluring, while simultaneously being alternative.

Clearly, while it is unlikely that the use of alternative vampires was a choice made to enrich the aesthetics of the show or to alert the audience to the intentions of characters, the sheer number of vampires dressed in a goth, punk, or grunge style affirms that it was indeed a conscious decision made by the creators. In fact, the fashions demonstrated are used as cultural signifiers to signpost the audience to the deeper interpretative themes represented by vampires in the show. After all, it has been a long-established academic idea that vampires represent social fears. Heidenrich describes vampires as a "representation of an outside threat" within a dominant culture (1) and

Asma reminds that even the word "monster" derives from the Latin word "to warn" (13). At the inception of vampires into the realm of popular culture, Stoker used the vampire as a vehicle to explore the idea of a waning racial purity in a time when the British empire was expanding its geographical boundaries (Lyubansky 137). But the idea of the vampire was appropriated in different guises whenever a society experienced social upheaval (Abbott 6), which explains why the vampire crossed the ocean in the 1970s with the feverish publication of Anne Rice novels. Just over a decade later, vampires were formally made into a dangerous and alluring subculture in *The Lost Boys* (1987). Its new breed of "glam-punk biker" vampires, concocted by director Schumacher, who was a former costume designer with an "acute understanding of the importance of clothing in film," amplified the fear of youths out of control by accentuating the grit of alternative culture and using black as a "subversive anomaly" (Flynn). The Lost Boys were "undisciplined forces of desire working outside cultural networks of socialization" (Weinstock).

Similarly, *Buffy*'s vampires, broadcast mainly between the tempestuous backdrop of the end of the millennium and 9/11, can be interpreted as representations of their own. As the show has often been interpreted alongside feminism, many scholars parallel vampires with the "dangers of a patriarchal society" (Chandler). Postcolonial readings of the vampire characters portray them as the race that has been excluded by white, middle-class values. Abu-Remailch writes that the vamp-face is used to 22acialize these characters and visually make them inferior (6). Hautsch extends this to argue that the origin myths in the show state that demons inhabited the earth first, meaning they represent the indigenous people who are subjugated to social exclusion and even extermination (8). Field argues that all episodes in *Buffy* can be regarded allegorically and that the vampires holistically represent a lack of temporal awareness and the consequences that can have on morality. The vast reaches of academia have already interpreted how we should consider *Buffy*'s vampires, but few researchers have paired an interpretation of what the vampires represent with an empirical understanding of how they are *presented* on screen. This kind of analysis was achieved by Shapiro, who used a content analysis of vampire bites to suggest that the show was overtly heterosexual in its depiction of vampire bites and inadvertently argued that they represent a fear of non-consensual sex, stating that "the bite itself stands as a euphemism

for sex, forbidden by social mores." *Der Sympathische Vampir* acts as another worthy example, in which Recht uses a visual analysis of each relevant scene in *Buffy* to argue that the main vampiric characters, or "sympathetic vampires," are presented in a way that deconstructs binary gender norms (41-3). Moreover, scholarly attention has been paid to the fashion within *Buffy*, but this existing research has again negated the link between representation and presentation; or specifically, the connection between the alternative mode of vampires and how this affects how they are represented by the audience. After all, understanding exactly why we fear the goth-punk vampires in *Buffy* can only reveal more about our precise "deep-rooted anxieties and fears" (Arata 621).

This research aims to use a content analysis of the fashion styles of every vampire shown in *Buffy* to bridge the gap between how vampires have been represented and how vampires are *presented*, to show how the alternative fashion of vampires in the show links to deeper and concurrent themes of drug addiction and social anomie.

Methodology

Content analysis was the method used to quantify the fashion styles of the vampires shown on screen in *Buffy*. This was partly in response to Shapiro's accurate assertion that *Buffy* scholarship has neglected quantitative research in favour of a postmodern approach that "disdains the numerical." While the show indeed covers a plethora of themes and allows for a wealth of interpretation, the sheer breadth of the show, which spans 144 episodes, also permits a more empirical approach. Every episode from Season One to Season Seven was examined in detail and each vampire was recorded. If they were named in the episode, their name was recorded. If not, they were given a nickname based on an observable and memorable characteristic, such as a line they gave, an obscure piece of clothing, or the setting they were in. Every vampire that was shown on screen was recorded, including those shown in flashbacks and in dreams. If a character was turned into a vampire, they were also included if they were prospectively shown in their vampire form. In order to address whether the vampire was alternative or not, alternative fashion was operationalised and coded into the following observable descriptors:

Spiked Hair, Messy Hair, Dyed Hair, Long Hair (male), Studded Belt, Boots, Leather Trousers, Bracelets, Choker, Grunge Attire, Leather Jacket, Ripped Jeans. To be considered "alternative," a vampire needed to display at least two of these characteristics. This increased the validity of the research, as many characters displayed *one* of the descriptors without being considered "alternative." For example, the Mayor's vampires often wore leather jackets; however, they wore formal, high-breasted leather jackets that are much more corporate than alternative. However, as they did not fulfil any of the other criteria, they were not marked as alternative. If a vampire met two or more of the criteria, they were marked as "alternative." If they did not, they were marked as "Non-alternative." If the vampire was obscured in the scene or it was difficult to accurately tell whether what they were wearing was alternative, they were marked as "Unclear." However, it should be noted that this label was used very sparingly, and that if there was a clear shot of the vampire (if only for a brief moment), and they did not display any of the descriptors, then it was marked as "Non-alternative."

The use of the descriptors heightened the objectivity of the research, but obviously, there was a degree of interpretation that was necessary in unpacking the styles of the vampires, particularly when considering *how* items were worn, rather than what items were visible. If a vampire was wearing a miscellaneous item that fell into the alternative category (for example, a black bandana or a denim waistcoat / vest), then "Grunge attire" was marked. Whenever this item was marked, a description was added of what the particular item was. Such an item still only counted as one point on the criteria, and, as mentioned above, each vampire required two points on the criteria in order to be considered alternative. Adding this descriptor admittedly reduced the objectivity of the method, but at the benefit of helping to overcome the problem of operationalising style. For example, in episode four of the first season, Xander saves Buffy from a vampire who is wearing a plaid shirt ("Teacher's Pet"). This is not an item generally considered alternative on its own; however, a red and black plaid shirt unbuttoned over a t-shirt is a core feature of 1990s grunge scene. On top of this, the vampire had spiked hair, so the outfit is clearly a stylistic choice to make the vampire alternative. Similarly, the vampires in "Bad Girls" (3.14) wear black boots and pendants, but are clearly presented as a medieval sect of vampires, rather than in grunge

attire, and thus were not marked as alternative. In these individual cases, prudent subjectivity increased validity.

Findings

The total number of vampires in *Buffy* is 418. However, 18 vampires within this sample were marked "unclear," and thus their data was excluded as neither alternative or non-alternative. Of the remaining 400, 159 of them were alternatively dressed. This means that as a raw figure, 39.7% of the vampires were alternative, meaning more than one in every three of the vampires that Buffy encounters in the entire series is part of the alternative subculture. However, a recording was made of the number of vampires who had only just risen as a vampire when Buffy encountered them. After all, the vast majority of these vampires were dressed in a suit, which would normally fall under "Non-alternative." In these instances, though, the vampire's agency over their attire was removed, as they were dressed by someone else, formally, before being buried in these clothes. The reasoning for these vampires' wearing suits is not an aesthetic or stylistic choice (although suits are used for *Buffy* villains in other instances to symbolize corporate evil), but for the purposes of realism. If these vampires who have neither chosen to dress alternatively nor non-alternatively are removed also, the net figure for the number of vampires becomes 373. This further increases the percentage of alternative vampires to 42.6%. The most popular way in which the show decided to present alternative fashion was through the use of leather jackets, as 95 alternative vampires were wearing them. The connotations leather shares with death and slaughter make it an appropriate fashion choice for a vampire. This also demonstrates that material, as well as color and type of clothing, was important. General grunge attire was another common feature, which commonly took the form of unbuttoned plaid shirts over t-shirts, pendants, and leather waistcoats / vests.

The table below shows a breakdown of the vampires by season. There were two episodes that could be considered anomalous: the final episode of Season One, "Prophecy Girl," and the ninth episode of Season Three, "The Wish." These episodes differ from the others not in their presentation of vampires, but simply in the quantity portrayed on screen. "Prophecy Girl" features a horde of 18 vampires and "The

Wish" shows 68 vampires (approximately 40% of all vampires shown in each of these seasons). The final column in the table shows the rate of alternative vampires in each season if these anomalies were excluded from the data.

Season	No. of Vampires	*Just Risen*	*Unclear*	***Net Vampires***	**Alternative**	**Percentage in season**	Anomalies
1	45	1	2	42	8	19%	7/24 = 29.2%
2	55	3	0	52	21	40.4%	
3	167	3	12	152	71	46.7%	42/93 = 45.2%
4	47	2	0	45	27	60%	
5	44	4	2	38	18	47.4%	
6	29	0	0	29	7	24.1%	
7	31	14	2	15	7	46.7%	
Total	418	27	18	373	159	42.6%	

The findings demonstrate that alternative vampires are present throughout all of the seasons of *Buffy*, suggesting that a correlation between alternative fashion and vampires was purposefully made by the creators; however, there is some variance across seasons. Season One, for example, has the lowest percentage of alternative vampires. Even with the possible anomalies removed, only 29.2% of vampires were alternative. This is 13% lower than the overall percentage. Interestingly, Shapiro found that Season One had a higher number of vampire bites than any other season and attributed this to the desire of creators to establish itself as a vampire show. While it may be true that the prevalence of vampires was necessary, there was clearly less eagerness to link alternative fashion to vampires in the pilot season. In fact, many of the vampires are dressed in medieval regalia—in "Angel" (1.7), The Three wear chainmail and armor, and in "Welcome to the Hellmouth" (1.1), vampire monks dwell within the Master's lair. The deficit of alternative vampires in Season One can also be explained by Clemons' assertion that *Buffy* was originally pitched as a fashion show. Clemons argues that the vampires are purposefully fashioned in outdated and even ridiculous costumes to contrast with the fashionable characters as a vehicle for humor. One example is in "Welcome to the Hellmouth," in which Buffy successfully identifies a vampire within a large crowd due to his incongruous outfit and remarks "only someone living underground for ten years could think that was still the look" (00:30:30-38). However, in Season Two, the trend clearly emerges in

which the show purposefully links vampires with alternative fashion. In this season, 40.4% of the vampires are dressed alternatively. This figure increases in Season Three and peaks in Season Four, where 60% of the vampires shown are alternative. There is a significant drop at Season Six, where only 24.1% of the vampires are alternative. This supports Shapiro's findings that Season Six had the lowest number of vampire bites, which he attributes to how Season Six focused less on vampires and more on Buffy's returning from the dead and struggling to deal with "real-life" issues. Season Seven also has fewer vampires in comparison to other seasons, partly because of the introduction of the Turok-han, or "ubervamp" as *Buffy* canon colloquially remembers them. These were not included in the content analysis because they are considered an "entirely different race" of vampire ("Bring on the Night" 7.10, 00:23:04-06). However, even in Season Seven, the percentage of alternative vampires was at the same point as Season Three.

The findings clearly demonstrate that the show forged a link between alternative fashion and vampires. A notable example of this is in Season One with the character Jesse, who, as a human is a So-Cal surfer-type who may be classified on the periphery of alternative fashion. Once he becomes a vampire, he completely changes his fashion identity and instead adopts dark clothes, spiked hair, and a pendant ("The Harvest" 1.2). The same is true of Xander and Willow, who are ultra-gothic when they appear as vampires ("The Wish" 1.9). Their vampirism is thereby accentuated by the use of alternative fashion. This also occurs with Angelus (who was not counted in the content analysis, as Angel had already been included) who wears leather trousers and a leather jacket, unlike his altruistic alter-ego Angel, who, in contrast, is depicted as "bourgeois manliness" by his formal coats and shirts (Recht, *Der Sympathische* 131).[1] As Angelus is evil and thus "more" vampiric, he dresses more alternatively. Spike is perhaps the most notable example of a vampire in alternative fashion in the show, as he consistently appears with gelled-back, bleached-blond hair, dark clothes, and a long leather jacket. However, it is fitting that he is most alternatively dressed (black DIY t-shirt with sleeves cut off, padlock chained around neck and hair spiked up) during a scene where he kills his second Slayer and is therefore at the peak of his vampiric power ("Fool for Love" 5.7). Finally, the intrinsic link between vampires and alternative fashion is clearly demonstrated in the episode "The Wish"

(1.9), which presents an alternative dimension in which vampires rule Sunnydale. In this dimension, the vampires have taken over the local nightclub called The Bronze and transformed it from the college-rock bar featured in *Buffy* into a caricature of alternative culture with industrial music playing and the vast majority of vampires being overtly and conspicuously dressed in a goth-punk manner.

Discussion

A structuralist reading of the findings would explain the prevalence of alternative fashion on the vampire characters as a vehicle to store cultural ideas and anxieties. The clothes themselves do not exist only as tangible garments, but contain messages and ideas disseminated by various forces, including mass media, that are communicated to the audience non-verbally (Bernard 27). Weinstock writes that "the vampire is an 'overdetermined' body that condenses a constellation of culturally specific anxieties and desires into one super-saturated form," but this can be expanded to also include the clothing of the vampires and what they represent. In this sense, the clothing worn by the vampires contains these ideas that are understood and transposed to the viewer indirectly. This transposition has the dual function of amplifying the fear invoked, as the vampires become projections of the social fears connoted with alternative fashion, but also of signposting the audience subtly to the ongoing themes expressed alongside vampires. Two themes that are expressed most clearly by using alternative fashion are social anomie and drug addiction, and they will be discussed individually below. These ideas are latched to alternative fashion within the collective cultural consciousness, and thus, when vampires adopt these clothes, they signify our fear of subversion and drug use in a secondary and vestigial manner.

Not only do *Buffy*'s vampires represent social anomie, but generally speaking, vampires represent the loss of social values, being liberated from social restraints, and then becoming the outsider and using malevolent power to subvert social norms. This lack of social values, or anomie, as Émile Durkheim named it, is commonly signified by alternative fashion, because it is the subcultures who incorporate alternative fashion (goth, punk, etc) that often inhabit the fringes of

society (see Serpa and Ferreira). The Birmingham School of Cultural Studies, who were the proponents of much critical thought on subcultures, saw the punk movement as a grassroots expression of resistance and a clear rejection of societal norms (Nilan 116). In order to achieve this, punks and goths were willing to "voluntary[il]y [assume] outcast status" in their ideological assault on the aesthetic values of the dominant classes" (Bernard 41). However, it was the conversion of subcultural signs for subversion and chaos into mass-produced items that gave punk and goth fashion its power. Never before the 1960s was dress used so prominently and effectively as a reflection of dissent, which tended instead historically to take the form of deviant behavior, often sexual. In contrast, the Punk movement converted their clothing into overt denotations of deviance, often of a sexual nature, leading to its being labelled by Wilson as a "subverted, kinky [fashion]" (196). The use of safety pins, for example, was a violent inversion of the traditional expectations within the domestic sphere, and the goth scene used piercings as an expression of self-mutilation intended to demonstrate shock and "contempt for morality" (Arnold 46).

In the same way that Punk was designed to "offend and disrupt social order" (Hebdige 18), vampires in *Buffy* challenge the existing social order. This is demonstrated by the disdain that vampires and demons harbour for humanity. For example, a demon who appears in season two named The Judge is able to burn the humanity out of people and even regards some vampires as "stink[ing] of humanity" because they share affection and human feelings, such as jealousy. The Judge immolates a vampire named Dalton because he pursues earthly knowledge and reason ("Surprise" 2.13, 00:34:17-20). The vampires in *Buffy* see social norms, such as compassion, as a sign of weakness, but ultimately as a restrictive force. When Spike's mother is turned into a vampire, she says "I hate to be cruel. No. I used to hate to be cruel. Now I find it quite freeing" ("Lies My Parents Told Me" 7.17, 00:28:40-48). This line demonstrates how the transformation to vampirism sheds some of the burdens of being human, one being that one cannot always speak one's mind. This character then goes on to attempt to commit incest with her son, one of the most unforgivable and deplorable actions and another demonstration of her dismissal of human values. Moreover, vampires are often perceived as a group who not only abhor the dominant social values of humans, but actively try to challenge and usurp these values with their own. Spike, who

encapsulates the latent rebelliousness of vampires through his typical onscreen depiction smoking cigarettes while adorned in a leather jacket, describes his turning into a vampire as a "profound" experience which acted as a demonstration that he was "through living by society's rules" ("Fool For Love", 00:19:27-30) He adds: "I decided to make a few [rules] of my own" ("Fool For Love", 00:19:30-33). At times, this subversion is comical, such as him smoking beside the "No Smoking" sign outside of the hospital ("The Weight of the World" 5.21); but it also references his use of railroad spikes to torture his victims ("School Hard" 2.3). Similarly, in "Prophecy Girl," after a group of vampires feed upon a number of Sunnydale students, Willow remarks, "It wasn't our world anymore. They made it theirs. And they had fun" (00:21:52-22:06). This line clearly demonstrates subversion and the way humans and vampires are not only engaged in a cosmic battle between good and evil, but are competing for space and place within a finite world. In this sense, the vampires are considered a fearsome outsider group encroaching upon the values of humans (Sayer 146). The final line, "and they had fun," demonstrates the gulf between the values of each group.

By using alternative fashion to transform the vampires into a subculture, the subversive intentions of the vampires are amplified and become more readily accessible to the audience. In this sense, Whedon creates a "uniform" for the undead: an institution, rather than individuals, that opposes the noble protagonists. This type of presentation is not unique within the Buffyverse at all; the suit was adopted most effectively in *Angel* to adorn many of the evil characters as a representation of corporate evil. Not only is there more tension in the notion of unified vampires, but the alternative vampires are more terrifying because they filter through the viewer's concept of alternative subcultures being subversive and violent forces on the periphery of society. It is not only the content of the show which evokes fear, but the subtextual social fears evoked by the presence of alternative fashion. It is fitting that the percentage of alternative vampires peaked in season 4, which aired just months after the goth scene in America was harassed in response to the Columbine massacre (McConnell). It was during this period that gothic culture was perceived and disseminated by right-wing religious groups as a symbol of fear (Spooner 160). But perhaps more unsettling to liberal audiences was the idea that these subcultures would not usurp power, but rather gain

support internally by appealing to vulnerable people who might be converted from their orthodox position. Davis wrote that the Punk movement "[smacked] of subversion from within rather than opposition from without" (184). This was the idea evoked in *The Lost Boys*, where vampires were first transformed into an appealing subculture. Here, the vampires were presented as "cool" and were able to seduce protagonists into life of crime, pleasure and vice (Gelder 103). These pull factors are present in *Buffy* too, particularly in "Lie to Me" (2.7), where a group of Sunnydale students voluntarily try to get bitten by vampires so that they can "ascend to a higher level." The fact that they are willing to sacrifice Buffy in the process demonstrates their challenge to social norms and morality. But perhaps most significant to vampires being presented as a subversive subculture by the use of alternative fashion is that Buffy battles these foes while wearing an eclectic but "predominantly mainstream" wardrobe that thereby defends the social values that they attack (Jarvis and Adams).

Alongside social anomie, alternative fashion is also a signifier to the idea of drug use, and often this fashion is used to represent addiction in *Buffy*. This link between alternative fashion and drug use stems from the 1970s punk movement whose DIY high-octane anthems were strongly associated with the rise in amphetamines (Sampson). Drug use was not only perceived by the punk movement as a means to get "kicks," but to simultaneously challenge social norms on the outskirts of society (Young 71). Alternative fashion thus came to represent cultural taboos particularly in the form of drug abuse, but also sexual deviancy. The latter is not a prevalent theme in *Buffy*, although it does occasionally emerge, for example, via the characters of Drusilla and Darla, who, as Diehl explains, use their "pop-punk gothic aesthetics" as a means to undermine realistic and romantic love and seem sexually deviant (par. 1). More prominent is the theme of addiction to drugs, which is recurrent across almost all seasons. It takes many forms outside of vampires, such as magic, demon possession, and even slaying, but the vampire's dependency on blood, which often represents the source of life, makes it an obvious signifier to addiction. Just as *The Lost Boys* were the burnt out, reckless "casualties of the Republicans' War Against Drugs," *Buffy*'s vampires also crave blood and regard it as a means of sustenance (Auerbach 167). There are numerous instances where vampires are so dependent on blood that they become erratic and desperate. An example of these junkie-types

can be seen in "Pangs" (4.8), where a hungry Spike watches a group of alternative vamps sharing a human one after the other, akin to addicts sharing needles. On the other hand, the muted restraint shown by reformed vampires like Angel parallels him with a recovering drug-addict, one who must resist his urges to drink (Cover 85). In "Angel" (1.4, 00:27:13-15), Darla attempts to coax a clearly tempted Angel into drinking human blood by saying "Just say yes," which Field recognizes as an inverted homage to the Nancy Reagan anti-drug slogan (Field 42).

At times, the set design of these vampire nests is meant to parallel our expectation of crack dens and reinforce the theme of drug use. Blanco writes that "Willy's bar…[serves] as a shadowy 'territorial' place for vampires, drug addicts…and other kinds of outcasts" (4). In "Bad Girls" (3.14), Faith and Buffy raid a vampire nest in which graffiti plasters the walls and mattresses are laid on the floor on which the vampires were sleeping. Similarly, in "Crush" (5.14), Buffy raids a nest of vampires who are inhabiting a cramped, dingy room with a halogen heat lamp. In "Into the Woods" (5.10), Buffy raids a glum and dilapidated building in which humans pay to have a vampire feed from them. It is a clear metaphor for a brothel, but interestingly, Anya and Giles use the language of drugs such as "get off on the rush" (00:19:37-41) and "addictive" (00:19:41-44) to describe the process of feeding. When Buffy encounters the vampire who was consensually feeding from her boyfriend, she is not presented as terrifying, but shivering and gaunt, like a junkie. It is not only the human characters that use the language of drugs when discussing blood; vampire characters also imitate the lexicon of drug users, such as Rookie in "The Freshman" (4.1), who punctuates his lines with "woah" and "dude" and compares Slayer blood to "Thai stick," which is a form of strong cannabis in leaf form (00:24:01-05). Furthermore, vampire blood is also presented as having psychedelic properties, which buttresses its link to drugs. There are instances in which vampires who have recently fed or recently turned into a vampire feel an extra-sensory awareness of the world around them. When Jesse becomes a vampire, he declares "I feel good…I'm connected to everything!" ("The Harvest" 1.2, 00:20:37-43). Similarly, Spike's mother, who is also made into a vampire, remarks "I do feel extraordinary. It's as though I've been given new eyes. I see everything. Understand everything" ("Lies My Parents Told Me" 7.17, 00:28:23-35). This associates the feeding and behavior of vampires with

the use of psychedelic drugs, such as heroin and LSD, the former of which is also associated with the punk movement.

As with social anomie, alternative fashion, which is often a signifier to drug use, is used to signpost the audience to the prevalent theme of drug addiction. In this sense, it is no surprise that Season Six has the lowest percentage of alternative vampires (if anomalies are included) because it was there that Willow became dangerously addicted to magic. The writers wanted to explore drug addiction through a different medium, and temporarily halted the use of alternative fashion to represent drug addiction, so the impact of using magic as a theme to represent drugs was intensified. The following season, "magic as a drug" was less prevalent as a motif, and therefore the percentage of alternative vampires returned.

Conclusion

Buffy has always been a show that placed a great emphasis on not only fashion, but how fashion interacts with identity. A key example of this is the episode "Halloween" (2.6), during which the characters dress up for Halloween and turn into the characters they were portraying. The research for this article has aimed to explore why *Buffy*verse vampires have a specific, and arguably narrow, fashion identity and how that changes what they are representing. The content analysis is sufficient to demonstrate that an intentional link was made between alternative fashion and vampires. It could be argued that this was to project semiotic messages regarding drug addiction and social anomie in order to signpost viewers to these themes and also to enhance the sense of fear evoked by hijacking the anxieties regarding these themes. The research is useful in part because it allows us to understand the relationship between vampires and gothic culture. Holmes describes the relationship as cyclical, in that goths were inspired by vampires and now vampires imitate goths, but this research shows that the relationship is more symbiotic, and that ideas flow both ways (Spooner 167). Just as the show used contemporary fashion to inform the way they would represent their vampires, gothic culture was undoubtedly affected by the vampires in the show. For example, just as the goth scene uses ontological ideas such as Satanism and Paganism to subvert and resist the mainstream, "evil" doers, such as the vampires in *Buffy*,

appropriate fashion in order to resist good (Spracklen). There were fears within the goth community that the popularity of *Buffy* would have a negative and normalizing impact on their subculture. Certainly, the presence of subcultures in the media creates a reflection of an image that is "updated" and "evolving" (Bieszk). This provokes inquisition into how social developments may have changed the look of the contemporary vampire, or whether changes within the goth community, such as its trajectory towards emo, were influenced by popular constructions of subcultures. Interestingly, this paper was written after the announcement of a planned reboot of *Buffy,* raising inquiries regarding the appearances of the contemporary vampires in a possible reboot and how they may reflect social tensions two decades on.

However, most significantly, the research provides an opportunity to reflect and analyze our own social fears. As explored above, vampires have historically been used as a device to symbolize social fears, and this is undeniably the case in *Buffy*, too, a show that was renowned for its allegorical representation of villains. This research forces us then to question why vampires adorned in alternative attire are more effective, terrifying, or believable. At first glance, it might seem that Whedon is forging a deliberate link between the evil characters and these subcultures, but that is reductive and overlooks the grey, nuanced world that these vampires inhabit. After all, Whedon may sometimes elect to uniform his villains, but in the *Buffy*verse, the clothes maketh not the man, nor the monster. Individual choice is the prevalent variable to dictate morality in *Buffy*, creating a vast spectrum of personalities from despicable humans to loveable and docile demons and "sympathetic vampires." Instead, the alternative attire of the vampires acts as a mirror for the audience. It reminds them of the subcultural presence in their own society and of the resentments and challenges within those realms. Importantly, Hebdige describes the resistance of subcultures against the parent culture as an ongoing process that has the potential for amelioration and progress. Deviance and subversion are not inherently "evil," as the presence of vampires might suggest. This presentation is another subversion, befitting Whedon's aim to "undercut viewer expectations" wherever possible (Bieszk). Instead, they can be potential routes for societies to self-reflect and progress. Perhaps then, when we fear a vampire in dark,

ripped jeans, a leather jacket, and spiked bracelets, all we really fear is change.

Notes

¹ Translation of the phrase is by this article's author.

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