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**Imaginary Para-Sites of the Soul:  
Vampires and Representations of  
'Blackness' and 'Jewishness' in the  
*Buffy/Angel*verse**



(1) The role of the “other” in both *Angel* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is complicated and sometimes vexed. Vampires, in the *Buffy/Angel*verse, are “other” – in that, among other things and at its most extreme, it is apparently utterly “right” to kill them – but *Angel*, and latterly *Spike*, blur this distinction. What is the place of the “vampire with a soul,” who slips in and out of images which have, historically, represented a dead(ly) form of the human “other”? What is that “soul,” and how far does it really represent simply “conformity”? These questions are also of moment when considering the shows’ panoply of demon and monster “others.” What are these imaginary para-sites of the soul, - with soulless creatures preying on the “souled” - and what do they have in common with imagined “parasites” in history and the present? How do the shows represent Jewishness, Blackness, and what has come to be represented as normative “sameness”?

(2) The historical image of the vampire has echoed racist stereotypes about “the Jew” and “the foreigner” at different times. As we will see, there are striking parallels between the treatment of the vampire or demon “outsider” in *Angel* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and these stereotypes of the human “outsider.” And, moving into the shows’ treatment of their own human “others,” we will find that there remains a certain uneasiness in the face of the “foreign” or “non-white,” of which the treatment of vampires and demons is merely a symptom. Despite the show’s (for a primetime TV series) rather impressive grappling with all sorts of “difference” and “otherness,” when we look at the characters of *Angel/Angelus*, Charles Gunn and Willow Rosenberg, we will find a lingering preference against the “non-white” or “non-Christian,” which subtly undermines the shows’ message of individual empowerment. In *Angel* and *Buffy*, “multiculturalism” often means homogeneity, and “acceptance” of the “outsider” is often dependent on the erasure of their “otherness.”

**Vampires then and now**

(3) Margaret L. Carter suggests an “overriding difference” “between the archetypal nineteenth-century image of the literary vampire, [. . .], and the vampire as portrayed in much of the fiction of the past two decades.” She notes: “Although the vampire in a Victorian novel might exercise a magnetic attraction or even inspire sympathy, the implied author of such a novel always took it for granted that vampirism as such was evil. [. . .] In novels published in the United States since 1970, on the other hand, the vampire often appears as an attractive figure precisely *because* he or she is a vampire.” Carter concludes therefore that “[ t] his shift in fictional characterization reflects a change in cultural attitudes toward the outsider, the alien other.”

(4) It is hardly possible, though, to analyse the image of “the alien other” by making clear-cut distinctions between attraction and repulsion: a dominant culture will invariably represent and refer to its constructed “other” in ambivalent ways, simultaneously exoticising, idealising and degrading. It is interesting to note that Carter’s analysis here leaves a time-gap; vampire literature appears to leap directly from the 19<sup>th</sup> century to the 1970s. Clearly, this time-gap coincides with a crucial period in the history of the European construction of otherness. 19<sup>th</sup> century images overlapped with, and were an integral part of, racism and antisemitism in its most murderous form in Europe up to 1945. Even today, racialised representations of Jews and “foreigners” or refugees sometimes evoke more or less open associations to vampirism.

(5) The literary and folk image of the nineteenth century vampire in Britain was, as H. L. Malchow, has shown, strongly connected to the racialised construction of “the Jew.” This construction was directed, at that time, particularly against Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe. Jews in Europe were portrayed as “the other within” who nonetheless retained influence on the perception of the “other out there,” “the cannibal,” and vice versa. These “others” were centrally connected through allegedly consuming blood. Like the image of the vampire at that time, Malchow writes, “the Jew” can take a variety of forms. He can be both eternal threat and eternal victim, Judas and the Wandering Jew Ahasuerus, capitalist and sweated proletarian, masculine roué and feminized homosexual, white and black.”

(6) There is no evidence that the producers of *Buffy* and *Angel* are aware of the connections between vampire myth and antisemitism. For instance, in the official *Monster Book*, the chapter “Vampires in Folklore and Popular Culture” makes no such link. And certainly these links have been more potent in European literature than in the American teen culture from which the *Buffy/Angel*verse springs. Nonetheless, cultural production – even while drawing on the liberating potential of vampires – often mirrors, or even reinforces centuries-old stereotypes brought, like the vampire myth itself, from the “old world” to the “new”.

(7) Regine Rosenthal’s analysis of the image of “the Wandering Jew” in fiction and its transfer from Europe to the US is illuminating. She notes that, “by the nineteenth century, the figure of the Wandering Jew is not only widely addressed in European poetry and fiction but has become an integral part of popular culture and literature in America.” Rosenthal discusses examples of fiction drawing on the imagination of a “Wandering Jew,” amongst them Eugène Sue’s French novel *The Wandering Jew*, which was a bestseller in the US.

## Vampires with souls

(8) What, then, do we make of Angel/Angelus emerging out of Hollywood at the turn of the 21<sup>st</sup> century? Having taken this brief journey through the racist use of vampire myth, what could be the role of this figure – the “vampire with a soul”?

(9) On examination, the “soul” of Angel is very similar to “knowledge,” the curse of the “Wandering Jew,” which is a figure invented by Christian/antisemitic myth. The “Wandering Jew” legend probably first emerged in around the year 600. In the story, a man in Jerusalem drove Jesus away from his doorstep when he wanted to rest while carrying the cross to Calvary. Christ cursed the man with the words “I go, but you will walk until I come again!”

(10) According to Hyam Maccoby, variations of the myth occur at different times. Wholly negative versions of the Wandering Jew legend, as Maccoby states, “lacked the positive hope of reconciliation. In those negative versions the sufferings of the Wandering Jew are seen merely as just punishment [. . .]. It was this negative version that gave rise to the nineteenth-century anti-Semitic stereotype, taken up with enthusiasm by the Nazis, of the Jew as a “rootless cosmopolitan.”

(11) However, there is a strong affinity in the coding of Angel, the “vampire with a soul,” with the supposedly “positive” versions of the “Wandering Jew” legend. Maccoby writes that the cursed Jew Ahasuerus was “condemned to live until the Second Coming of Christ. He is always restless and cannot stay in one place for long. He longs for death, but cannot die; even if he throws himself into a river, the waters refuse to drown him. He has long ago repented of his sin, and become a convinced Christian.”

(12) Angel’s soul is first and foremost awareness and knowledge of his own 250-year history: his murders, his guilt, his curse and his need for suffering. And no one, in either series, longs more for death than Angel himself, as he desires to be human, and so longs for mortality. But as we know, he cannot die (and “die” must be read as “become human,” as he can be “turned to dust”; an interesting issue, which we cannot address here in-depth), and for instance at the end of *Angel* Season 3, even “the waters refuse to drown him.” For Angel – as for the “Wandering Jew” – there is at least hope in an old prophesy: he may become human again as reward for fighting “the good fight” for “the Powers That Be.” Angel’s “soul” as a “curse,” his “knowledge” as his “curse,” parallel the “Wandering Jew” of Christian imagining: possessing a soul has condemned Angel to wander, without being able to experience happiness, seeking redemption which is always just beyond his reach.

(13) Angelus is Angel’s name when he appears *openly* in his evil form. These names clearly have religious significance, as well as demonstrating the ambivalence of the vampire, as “double-faced.” The fact that vampires in *Angel* and *Buffy* can change their faces at will also links to images of “the Jew” and the “half-breed,” who are allegedly able to “pass” and change their appearance accordingly.

(14) Angel is not the first vampire to be torn between “good” and “evil.” Anne Rice’s Louis, for example, faces a similar dilemma, and, like Angel, chooses to feed on non-human blood. Louis also kills other vampires, but, in a crucial distinction, Louis is

motivated by revenge, whereas Angel has his "mission from the Powers." This mission is, with the help of his friends, to save souls and the world. This "angelisation" of Angelus has devastating implications for other (less assimilated, less civilised) vampires.

(15) Interesting for a reading of Angel/Angelus as a "positive" reincarnation of Ahasuerus is the romantic image: as Hyam Maccoby notes, Romantic writers (such as Sue), viewed the Wandering Jew "as one more example of the Romantic hero – a wandering hero, isolated from normal society." This reading is particularly striking when applied to Angel: "the Romantics might see the Wandering Jew as guilty of a real crime, but one that had heroic quality, since it introduced him to a new dimension of knowledge beyond the range of ordinary mankind."\*

(16) There is a strong link to Christian imagination and mythology within *Angel*, with Christianity at the same time being viewed as "essentially Western" and "civilised." Hence a remorseful "vampire with a soul" serves "the Powers," which are represented for instance through "the Oracles" - signified as Greco-Roman, read "the cradle of Western civilisation." "The Powers," we assume, as they are "the good ones" are probably also associated with the Christian bibles and crosses that burn Angel's skin if he touches them. There is an even stronger development of that Christian line in *Angel* Season Three and in particular in the last episode: Angel is nailed into a coffin-like box by his own son Connor, which can be read as nailing to the cross of Jesus, and like Jesus, Angel is forgiving even at that very moment. Cordelia rises to the sky with a halo around her head, echoing Christian images of Virgin Mary. There is also a hell in *Angel*, to which the evil law firm Wolfram and Hart seems to have direct links, and an institution where sinners burn eternally, obviously part of the influence sphere of the benevolent "Powers That Be."

(17) At the end of *Buffy* Season Six, Spike becomes the second vampire to gain a soul. Joss Whedon, the show's creator, has stated that he did not want Spike's experience to mirror Angel's. However, even a short way into Season Seven of *Buffy*, striking parallels began to emerge, which suggest the nature of the "soul" in the *Buffy/Angel*verse.

(18) The first of these parallels is the link between possessing a soul and loving Buffy, the blonde, WASP girl, who is both eternally desirable and utterly unattainable (for Angel because, by attaining her, he loses his soul, for Spike because, although she does sleep with him, Buffy repeatedly declares that she does not love him). There is certainly some similarity between this attractive-but-unreachable woman and the figure of the Virgin in Christianity. Buffy is the object of desire of both Angel and Spike – the person for whom they willingly accept the burden and pain of a "soul."

(19) And what is the content of the "soul"? We have already seen that, for Angel, the "soul" is knowledge, the "curse" of insight. But Spike's acquisition of a soul creates another important parallel. Both Angel and Spike, in acquiring a soul, become willing, and even eager, literally to embrace the cross.

(20) In "Angel" (1007), Angel and Buffy exchange a passionate kiss, which Buffy acknowledges was "painful." The viewer becomes aware that it was literally so for Angel, when we see that Buffy's crucifix has burned into his flesh. And in "Beneath

You" (7002), Spike, newly "souled," drapes himself, semi-naked and Christlike, over a large cross in a church. The last image of the episode is of Spike's flesh slowly singeing, as he whispers "Can we rest now?," paralleling exactly the Wandering Jew's desire to achieve "rest" by the figurative embrace of Jesus Christ.

(21) While it is true that *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel* never acknowledge any religious significance to the cross, or, indeed, the soul, these images, taken with Angel's "redemptive mission" certainly lend weight to the idea that having a soul means becoming a Christian.

(22) Is the *Buffy/Angel*verse then a Christian world? This question is a complex one; to answer it fully is beyond the scope of this paper. Certain elements: the power of the cross, the subtle devaluing of non-Christian religion, the specific effects of the soul might suggest that it is. Other elements of the world's mythos would suggest that it is not, as would the active opposition of certain Christian groups to the shows and Joss Whedon's public assertions that he is an atheist. Perhaps it would be more accurate to say that the shows exist within a world which takes a great deal of inspiration from Christianity. After all, the cross is no more a necessary part of the vampire myth than a difficulty with running water: an element which the shows have discarded. In the light of this, it is interesting to consider why the cross has been retained in these "multicultural" shows. And, even if one accepts that Joss Whedon, as *auteur*, has total control over all elements of the shows' make-up, the fact of his atheism need not preclude the *Buffy/Angel*verse from having a religious foundation. It is the nature of culture to influence subtly even those who wish to reject it; atheists have no religion but for many, Christianity is the religion they don't have.

### **Havens of "tolerance"?**

(23) A notion of "celebration of diversity" or "hybridity" is ever present in both *Angel* and *Buffy*. One example in *Angel* is the Karaoke bar "Caritas" owned by the mind-reading demon Lorne, also called "the Host," who came to LA from his "backward" dimension, Pylea, and who tells Angel that he loves Los Angeles, as "it is our place, 'cause nobody really belongs." The Host expresses here a positive - though questionable - notion of a "homeless" conscience in a supposedly post-national, post-everything world. "Caritas" is a sanctuary, rendered non-violent by a spell, where everyone is welcome. But The Host himself is made aware only too often that the dominant (human) society is not altogether hospitable. "Caritas" is, on one hand, a wonderful representation of a utopian place, in which different people come together in peace. On the other hand, the entire setting, the drinks and the songs, reflect a unifying "Western" culture. It looks like a bar. Demons from different dimensions sing 1970s pop. Multi-cultural society, it seems, is celebrated by everyone behaving *alike*.

(24) *Angel Investigations* itself is often represented as a place of "tolerance" and understanding. Cordelia's oft-repeated slogan "We help the hopeless," seems a statement of equality and justice for all. The most striking instance of this is "Hero" (*AtS*, 1009) an episode which specifically examines, and condemns, images of racism in the form of Nazi-costumed demons obsessed with "racial purity" and wiping out the "unclean." Very clearly, these demons and their views are shown to be utterly wrong; Angel and his team move to combat them and save their innocent demon victims. It is interesting to note certain assumptions inherent in this episode, however. The "Nazis" must be defeated, of course. But the "Jews" in this situation,

the demons, are incapable of doing it themselves, or even of assisting in the attempt. Frightened and cowed, they shuffle from one place to another on instructions, needing an outside agency to save them. The premise of *Angel* is, of course, that helping of the hopeless, but these drably-clad, downcast demons do seem peculiarly hopeless, particularly in contrast with more spirited "victims" – Jhiera in "She (*AtS*, 1003)] for example, or Kate in "Lonely Hearts (*AtS*, 1002). While *Angel Investigations* gives a message of "tolerance" by supporting all those in need, some seem to be more in need than others.

### **"Streetwise" and "authentic": Charles Gunn**

(25) Many vampires, demons and monsters possess special bodily abilities, or "sensitivities" which humans don't have. Human characters on the show seem to rely much more on knowledge and abilities acquired by study or research.

(26) One of the few exceptions to that rule, and thus a representation of a human "other," is the character of Charles Gunn, who came from being a prominent member of a street gang to join *Angel Investigations*. Charles Gunn is, tellingly, addressed by his surname, equally tellingly, "Gunn." When Gunn is introduced, he seems, at times, to be viewed with suspicious fear and insecurity, in particular by Wesley and Cordelia. We witness the white imagination of "the black man" – what Judith Butler called "white paranoia" – in its daily normality, not stripped of its degrading power, but at least in "Judgment" (*AtS*, 2001) shown as "embarrassing" for Wesley and Cordelia, as they themselves seem to realise their internalised stereotypes.

(27) Charles is more than once said to be "very strong" and "dangerous," for instance by Holtz's vampire-fighters. They view Charles Gunn as a dangerous opponent, but think he might be vulnerable as they also consider him very "impulsive." In *Angel* Season Three Fred describes the role of each member of *Angel Investigations* to her parents, and here Gunn becomes "the muscle" of the team, a line which develops even further in Season 4: Charles himself bitterly acknowledges that he may not have to offer Fred the intellectuality with which Wesley is depicted, but rather indeed only "the muscle" Nevertheless – or therefore? - it is almost always Charles who has to give the anti-racist "speeches," hence remains a kind of "most authentic other," for instance in "Blind Date" (*AtS* 1021) at Wolfram & Hart:

"Did you just step on my foot? Is that my foot you just stepped on? Are you *assaulting* me, in this haven of justice? Somebody get me a lawyer, because my civil rights have seriously been violated. Oh, I get it. You all can cater to the demon. Cater to the dead man. But what about the *black man*?"

In "There's No Place Like Pirtz Glrb" (*AtS* 2022) Cordelia asks Charles to explain to the Groosalugg what freedom in Pylea might look like: 'It means saying people are free don't make 'em free. You got races that hate each other. You got some folks getting work they don't want, others losing the little they had. You're looking at social confusion, economic depression and probably some *riots*. Good luck!' Gunn is regularly expected to give these explanations, because no-one else could have any idea, let alone experience, of racism, injustice or political change. This is also very obvious in "The Thin Dead Line" (*AtS* 2014):

Charles: "I want you to roll the camcorder, wait for the cops to hassle us."

Anne: "How do you know they will?"

Charles: "Cos we'll be the ones 'walkin-while-black'."

(28) Charles Gunn figures as the streetwise "black macho guy" who acts before thinking, and images of "male strength" are inscribed onto his body. As he is African-American, the "danger" and "impulsiveness" are included in these inscriptions. In the show's version of progressive gender relations, the "shell" of the macho has to be cracked. This is a process which both *Angel* and *Buffy* tend to leave to women, but here it is, significantly, Fred the shy, fragile-seeming, "white" girl from Texas, who takes on the job. Her strengths are precisely the ones Charles allegedly lacks. While he is constructed as "authentic," someone whose knowledge and values come from a life on the street, not from books, she is the science and computer specialist of the team.

(29) Charles is only able to develop when he leaves his street fighting gang more and more behind him, as they have started to fight and kill demons only "for the fun of it." This image is typical of the portrayal of the black street gang whose violence is figured, speaking with Butler, "as 'senseless' or 'barbaric,' thereby mirroring 'the racist production of the visual field.'"

(30) *Angel* is set in Los Angeles, the LA of racist police brutality against Rodney King and the subsequent ascription of police violence onto King himself – he was seen to be "dangerous." Commentators writing about *Angel* have pointed out that the regular references to police brutality result from these experiences. It is therefore telling that not only Charles Gunn, but also his "gang," is represented in this way. Judith Butler writes about the ascription of "aggression" and "danger" by the jury's verdict in the later trial onto Rodney King himself, that it was "the phantasmatic production of 'intention'," that struck her most, an "intention inscribed in and read off Rodney King's frozen body on the street, his intention to do harm, to endanger. [. . .] According to this racist episteme, he is hit in exchange for the blows he never delivered, but which he is, by virtue of his blackness, always about to deliver." Boyd Tonkin notes that the "school and street gangs of above-ground LA became a trigger for national panic only when their Black and Latino variants grew conspicuously larger and tougher than the rest."

(31) In general, *Buffy* refuses to encode its infernal crews with a clear racial identity, a sign of its writers' self-aware approach to the real-world reverberations of caricature in genre art. But neither *Buffy* nor *Angel* escape the less outspoken "racial" encodings; the shows regularly characterise the "other" by the use of "cultural" difference, which is often just another euphemism for "racial."

(32) In this respect the relationship between *Angel* and Gunn is interesting. One wonders, for instance, if the appearance of Gunn in the series does not function to "whiten" the vampire with a soul. Cordelia repeatedly referred to *Angel* as "dark, handsome guy," and the first major "whitening" happens when Charles tells *Angel* "I don't need advice from some middle-class white dude," whom he suspects of "psycho-talk." There seems to be the most mistrust over a long time in the relationship between the two, which may mirror the often present mistrust amongst

or between “others” – Gunn being here the rough black streetfighter - unable, in general, to verbalise his feelings! - and Angel representing another “other,” if we look at his character either in connection with the antisemitic image of Jews as vampires, or, as he said to be Irish, in connection with the racialised images against Irish people. The tension between Angel and Wesley in “Spin the Bottle” (*AtS* 4006) is interesting here (within which everyone at *Angel Investigations* revert to a younger self after a spell goes wrong): Liam/Angel – after having insulted Wesley as “English pig” – makes a connection between Irish and African American experience through histories of being racialized and colonialised and sides with Gunn at that point.

### **Willow Rosenberg: “Kinda gay,” kinda Jewish?**

(33) Willow is, nominally, a Jewish character, but she refers to herself as Jewish on a handful of occasions, and then only fleetingly. For example, in “Bad Eggs” (2012) Willow and Xander discuss a class assignment in which they are each to look after an egg as though it were a baby.

Xander: You gotta take care of the egg. It’s a baby. You gotta keep it safe and teach it Christian values.

Willow: (looks at Xander) My egg is Jewish.

Xander: Then teach it that Dreidel song.

(34) Several points are worthy of note in this brief exchange. In the first place, it is hardly a ringing statement of positive self-awareness for Willow, in the first mention of her Jewishness, to state only that her “egg” is Jewish, rather than declaring that *she* is. In the second, we note that Willow is only drawn into an admission of her ethnicity by mention of Christianity. As we shall see, Willow’s Jewishness often seems to exist in the show as a form of “non-Christian-ness.” Thirdly, Xander’s response points up another theme in the portrayals of Judaism and Christianity: while Christianity is a powerful force, with an underlying substrate of “values” and mystical objects, Judaism has “that Dreidel song.” We wouldn’t expect any more from Xander, the wisecracker, but Willow’s response to his comment is also striking: she smiles, and the conversation moves on. Willow, it seems, is already learning to downgrade her Jewishness in the search for acceptance.

(35) In *Assimilation and American Jews* Lloyd P Gartner notes that “public school . . . is a general surrogate for Protestant denominational education. . . . Jews have vigorously fought this idea, which has been a source of periodic tension, especially during Christmas time.” As we shall see, Willow’s experience is typical in two ways: the milieu in which she finds herself is dominated by those Protestant “Christian values,” and this tends to become a source of tension at Christmas time. Perhaps Willow’s most assertive statement of her Jewishness occurs in the Christmas episode, “Amends” (3010). The Scooby gang are discussing their holiday plans:

Xander: You doing anything special?

Buffy: (shaking her head) Tree. Nog. Roast beast. Just me and Mom



and hopefully an excess of gifts. (to Willow) What are you doing for Christmas?

Willow: (work with me, people) Being Jewish. Remember, people? not everyone worshipping Santa here.

(36) While we may applaud Willow for her stance against the prevailing Christian atmosphere, we are led, again, to wonder why Judaism is presented here purely as a negation of Christianity. While Buffy has her tree, her nog, her roast beast, her mother and her gifts, Willow, apparently, has simply not-Christmas. In one Christian worldview, Judaism is, indeed, simply "Christianity with some parts missing" (most notably Jesus). It is, however, a little surprising to find that *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, a nominally "multicultural" show, seems to subscribe to this view.

(37) More importantly, within the mythos of the show, Willow's position is vitally eroded by *Amends'* Christian message. Angel is plagued by visions from his past: victims whom, as Angelus, he brutally murdered, return to torment him. Over the course of the episode, it is revealed that these images have been summoned by a being known as The First, whom Giles describes as: "Evil, Absolute evil, older than men, than demons." The First tries to persuade Angel to "take" Buffy in order to lose his soul again, which would put an end to the haunting images. Angel struggles with himself and decides rather to commit suicide – by staying in the open until sunrise. At the climax of the episode, as the sun is about to rise, and Buffy is desperately trying to coax Angel indoors, into safety, the sky remains dark, it begins to snow – the Christmas cliché – and Angel is saved.

(38) Despite attempts by the Christian Right, the Buffy mythos resists attempts at characterization in purely religious terms; it would be a mistake to identify this First absolutely with the Devil. However, it is worth reminding ourselves of the comments of Erickson in his essay "Sometimes you need a story: American Christianity, Vampires and Buffy": "As Nietzsche says . . . it was Christianity that established the Devil in the world. . . . Does a demonic presence require at least an implied Christian one?"

(39) Within the context of this episode, the battle being waged is clearly at least partly a Christian one: the snow of Christmas defeats the wiles of Evil. Willow's plea for the equality of non-Christian faiths is utterly undermined. While she is allowed her single declaration of otherness, the message of the episode is of the might of Christmas and hence of Christianity.

(40) The most striking instance in which Willow's Jewishness is pointed up, only to be immediately negated, is in "Passion" (2017). In this episode, Angel has become evil, and is threatening the Scooby gang. As a vampire, he cannot go where he is not invited, and so a ritual of "disinviting" must be performed. The following exchange takes place in Willow's home:

Willow: I'm going to have a hard time explaining this to my dad.

Willow produces a wooden cross, holds it up toward camera, and starts nailing on it with a hammer. Buffy looks on as Willow nails the last of four wooden crosses to the frame around her French windows.

Buffy: You really think this'll bother him?

Willow: Ira Rosenberg's only daughter nailing crucifixes to her bedroom wall? I have to go to Xander's house just to watch *A Charlie Brown Christmas* every year.

Buffy: I see your point.

Willow: (smiles) Although, it is worthwhile just to see Xander do the Snoopy dance.

Buffy and Willow are then shown concealing the crosses behind the curtains – presumably to prevent Willow's father from seeing them.

(41) Several aspects of this scene are noteworthy. Firstly, if we are to take Willow's account at face value, her father clearly holds an extreme viewpoint. To object to one's children "marrying out" may be one thing; to object to their watching *A Charlie Brown Christmas* is quite another. Secondly, Ira Rosenberg's Judaism takes the form of anti-Christianity, rather than of, as far as we can tell, any positive Jewish practice. This would be typical of the portrayal of Judaism within the show. Thirdly, Willow is assimilating, losing even the lukewarm, nominal form of anti-Christian Judaism practised by her father.

(42) One would be tempted to feel that this reading belabours the point a little, were it not that this conversation takes place as Willow is nailing up crosses inside her bedroom, and then concealing them. This behaviour is distinctly reminiscent of Marranos, Jews who were forced to convert to Catholicism, but continued Jewish observance in secret. In his *History of the Marranos*, Cecil Roth describes Jews who, on Friday night "placed the Sabbath light, which they so religiously kindled, inside a pitcher, safe from prying eyes."

(43) Willow has, in fact, become a reverse-Marrano: she appears to be Jewish, but has taken on Christian practices, hiding her paraphernalia. After a fashion, as we have seen, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel* have similar traits: they appear to be "multicultural" programmes, with characters of various backgrounds, but the *Buffyverse* is, in many ways, a distinctly Christian, "white" place.

(44) Willow's Jewish identity is, to say the least, ambivalent. More striking, however, is how very infrequently that identity is mentioned at all. Gartner highlights a phenomenon in which Jews identify themselves in ways that do not touch upon their Jewishness:

To many scientists who are Jews, their identity as scientists makes Jewish interests and connections seem petty and superfluous. There are many who think similarly in the fields of art, music, medicine, and scholarship.'

Willow's identity is centred around her friends (as a member of the Scooby gang), her skills (as a computer expert and a powerful witch) and her sexuality (as we have been told more than once, she is "kinda gay"). Willow appears, however, to be rather less, even, than "kinda Jewish."

(45) What are we to make of this? On one hand: not too much. *Buffy the Vampire*

*Slayer* is not overly concerned with parentage: we never meet Cordelia's parents, or Oz's. Even Buffy's father rarely appears. And religion is not often discussed. Buffy may wear crosses and carry holy water, but her attitude to faith is perhaps best characterised by this exchange with a Christian missionary in "The Freshman" (4001):

Missionary: Have you accepted Jesus Christ as your personal saviour?

Buffy: You know, I meant to and then I just got really busy.

(46) On the other hand, though, certain characters *are* presented as having strong backgrounds or ethnic identities. Giles' Englishness, for example, is unquestionable; he talks about experiences he has had in England, uses specifically English words, eats English food (he and Spike share a fondness for Weetabix) and in "Tabula Rasa" (6008) when everyone loses their memory, Spike and Giles clearly "remember" that they "are English." Considering this, one is forced to question why Willow's Jewishness is quite so slippery and ephemeral.

(47) Bearing these thoughts in mind, we can return to the link between vampires and antisemitic myth. It is noteworthy that the only Scooby gang member (including Buffy, Willow, Xander, Giles, Oz, Tara, Cordelia, Anya and Jenny Calendar) to appear in our world as a vampire is Willow. It is also interesting that, of all the characters we see transformed into vampires, Willow's vampire alter ego is perhaps the closest to the original – it is, in fact, through Vamp Willow that we have our first hint that "regular Willow" may be gay. Could it be that the links between Jews and vampires, between images of "goodness" and "power" and images of Christianity continue to be present even in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*?

(48) Both series place a moving emphasis on individual possibilities of moral choice and responsibility, as opposed to "destiny." For instance, Angel tells Lindsey "You shouldn't believe everything that is foretold!" Even where prophecies are fulfilled, the understanding they give of the world is only partial: at the end of Buffy Season One, the prophecy that Buffy will die is fulfilled. However, the prophecy failed to foretell that she would be resuscitated by Xander using CPR. The notion of "destiny" in the form of foretold prophecies often seems to be only evoked to tell us that they can be overcome. This is a powerful message of individual freedom, independent of either mystical portents or constructed "group destinies," a message which is ambivalently developed further in particular in *Angel's* Season Four. And both *Buffy* and *Angel* take pride in their portrayal of "multiculturalism" - the Scooby gang, Angel Investigations and Caritas are portrayed as havens for the "misfit" or "outsider," where "tolerance" is king.

(49) Despite these elements, troubling undercurrents still exist. We hear of "breeds" and "half-breeds." Literal "non-humans" come from "other dimensions," or from South America, "ancient Egypt," from Pakistan, the Middle East and so on: in other words, "from outside." And vampires do regularly come from England or Ireland, hence "from within." Various "tribes" of demons and monsters have "ancient" and weird cultural practices. "Doing good," for ex-demons, such as Angel, Anya and, latterly, Spike, is inextricably linked to becoming part of a new, acceptable group, and giving up old associations. The weird "tribes" and individuals in *Buffy* and *Angel* have to either drop their cultural habits and history to be assimilated, or remain "other" and face the ultimate sanction of the stake.

(50) And the "correct choices" promoted by both shows seem to be strongly in favour of "the West" or the "Christian West." Crucifixes and holy water save from danger, thereby erasing the histories of the non-Christian "other" in the "West" and relegating many demons, monsters and other "others" into the Western history archives about exotic, oriental, Eastern places, hence into "other dimensions." This leaves the non-WASP characters in *Angel* and *Buffy*, standing on ever-eroding ground, unable to access parts of their own cultural background for fear of being dubbed "evil," but unable fully to assimilate into the homogenous, white Christian world represented by *Buffy*. It seems that even shows that are produced with an ambition to deconstruct racialised "identities," may still reproduce them, unable to escape the internalised forces of the dominant culture.

**Editors' note:** As Mary Alice Money notes of *Angel* in *Fighting the Forces*, "romantics will be pleased that the Byronic hero is not dead. Just undead" (103).

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