

Different Paths to Sympathy

*The case of the vampire characters, Angel and Spike,
in Buffy the Vampire Slayer*



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Abstract In this thesis I look at fictional characters, who are associated with negative connotations and as such could themselves be considered negative, and I examine how they are constructed in order to evoke a sympathetic emotional response despite their negative traits. The focus of my research is on the television show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and its two male vampires, Angel and Spike, who are portrayed in a way that can lead to a sympathetic reading.

The show, created by Joss Whedon, follows the adventures of the eponymous young heroine, who is chosen to protect the world from all types of demons, including vampires. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is largely focused on the fight of Good versus Evil, with Buffy and her allies on the one side and the demonic creatures on the other. Therefore, in the context of the show, one would expect all vampires to be evil fiends that Buffy defeats, and although most of the vampires of the show do play exactly that role, two of them are constructed as sympathetic characters. Angel and Spike become Buffy's allies, instead of enemies, and so despite their vampire nature, which leads to some negative connotations, the audience is largely encouraged to treat Angel and Spike as sympathetic characters.

Using a cognitive approach on emotional reactions to fictions, I will analyze the construction of the two characters in relation to the elements that make a sympathetic reading possible, and then focus on the similarities, as well as the differences, between the two characters' structure to illustrate the different paths that can lead to sympathy. Finally, I will draw my conclusions on what analysis of Angel and Spike can reveal about sympathy towards vampire characters, as well as audience's reactions to fictions.

Introduction

Narratives in prose and film infamously manipulate our feelings
and call upon our built-in capacity to feel with others.
A Theory of Narrative Empathy
(Keen, 2006, p.209)

It is hard to imagine anyone that can engage with a work of fiction and not experience feelings in relation to the fictional world and its characters. As Suzanne Keen states in the quote above, narratives can manipulate the audience's feelings; therefore it seems safe to assume that narratives are structured in ways that aim to evoke specific emotional reactions in their audiences. In this thesis I look at how fictional narratives can trigger a sympathetic reading for certain characters. More specifically, I discuss some of the ways sympathy can be evoked for characters that are associated with negative connotations and as such could be considered negative. The focus of my research is on the television show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and its two male vampires, Angel and Spike, who are constructed in a way that intends them to be perceived sympathetically.

Buffy the Vampire Slayer, created by Joss Whedon, ran for seven seasons, from 1997 to 2003.¹ The show is set in Sunnydale, California, where the eponymous heroine attends high school by day and slays vampires by night. The town is built on a "Hellmouth," an opening to the underworld, and as such it is a magnet for all kinds of supernatural creatures, including, but not limited to, zombies, werewolves and vampires.² The only thing that stands between these creatures and the rest of the world is the Slayer. As the voiceover, explaining the series in its early episodes, states: "In every generation there is a Chosen One. She alone will stand against the vampires, the demons, and the forces of darkness. She is the Slayer." Although this quote emphasizes the solitary nature of the Slayer, Buffy does not really face the supernatural world alone. Rupert Giles, acting as the high school's librarian, is Buffy's

¹ *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* first appeared in 1992 as a film, written by Joss Whedon and directed by Fran Rubel Kuzui. The film focuses on a high school student, named Buffy, who leads a carefree life until she is chosen to fight the vampires preying on the citizens of Los Angeles.

² The initial name of the town reveals its true nature: "The Spanish who first settled here called it 'Boca del Infierno'. Roughly translated, 'Hellmouth'. It's a sort of, um, portal between this reality and the next" ("The Harvest," S01E02).

watcher who is responsible of training and teaching the Slayer what is necessary, both mentally and physically for the fight against evil.³ In addition, early on a group of friends is formed around Buffy who help her in many ways, from taking part in research sessions to casting spells to fight off demons. Willow Rosenberg⁴ and Xander Harris⁵, some of the first students Buffy meets on her first day at Sunnydale High School, constitute the core of this group. However, over the course of the seven seasons of the show additional characters also help Buffy in the fight against evil, such as Cordelia⁶, Oz⁷, Riley⁸, Anya⁹, Tara¹⁰ and Dawn¹¹.

As the show is obviously focused on the fight of Good versus Evil, one would expect vampires to be portrayed as evil fiends the Slayer defeats, and indeed most of the vampires of the show play exactly that role. Multitudes of vampires are merely nameless enemies Buffy literary turns into dust in her patrols in Sunnydale's cemeteries,¹² while a few others are presented as the Slayer's main enemies that spend their nights plotting dark schemes that Buffy has to stop. However, two of the vampires of the show, Angel and Spike, are generally seen as sympathetic and become part of the Slayer's inner circle. Instead of fighting against Buffy like the rest of the vampires and most of the supernatural creatures in the show, Angel and Spike become the Slayer's allies and actively join her in the battle against evil. So, despite their vampire nature, which leads to a series of negative connotations, the audience is largely encouraged to read¹³ Angel and Spike as sympathetic characters. Using an explicitly cognitive approach I will analyze the two vampire characters and trace the ways they are constructed to evoke a sympathetic emotional reaction. Naturally, as it is known from a tradition that can be traced back to Stuart Hall (Hall, 1973), there is more than one reading of a text, as each member of the audience brings a series of different life experiences, which enable different responses. Therefore, one cannot reliably predict audience's responses, as each member of the audience can have a unique reading of the text. However, predicting the viewers' response is not the aim of this thesis, as the focus is not on the audience but on the characters and the elements in their construction that invite a sympathetic response. Although one cannot predict the viewers' exact response to the characters, one can foresee which elements in the characters' construction may potentially lead to sympathy.

Some may question the value of studying a television show that is no longer on the air, however, even though new episodes of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* are no longer being produced, the show is available on DVD and some stations air re-runs periodically, so it

³ Giles is sent to Sunnydale to be responsible for Buffy by the Watchers' Council, a mysterious organization that oversees the line of the vampire Slayers throughout history.

⁴ Willow is Buffy's best friend. Initially a shy, computer nerd, she becomes a powerful witch in the later seasons.

⁵ A childhood friend of Willow, Xander becomes Buffy's friend and right-hand man. Although he never develops any supernatural powers, unlike many of the other core characters, he is an important part of the group.

⁶ The popular girl of Sunnydale High School, Cordelia initially mocks Buffy and her friends. However, she later becomes Xander's girlfriend and a full-fledged member of the group fighting the forces of darkness. She leaves Sunnydale after Season Three, and joins the cast of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer's* spin off, *Angel*.

⁷ Oz, the lead guitarist for the local band Dingoes Ate My Baby, is Willow's boyfriend in Season Three and a werewolf. In the fourth season, he leaves Sunnydale, heading off on his own to seek control over his werewolf side.

⁸ Riley is Buffy's boyfriend for parts of Season Four and Five.

⁹ Former vengeance demon, Anya gets engaged to Xander but is left at the altar. Although she becomes estranged from the group for a while due to her fall out with Xander, she does help in the final battle in Season Seven.

¹⁰ Tara, a witch, becomes Willow's lover after Season Four. She is killed at the end of Season Six.

¹¹ Dawn is introduced in Season Five as Buffy's sister.

¹² According to the show's mythology, once a vampire is killed (staked, beheaded or set on fire) it turns to dust.

¹³ I use the term read to imply the active nature of the spectator that interprets the events on the screen.

continues to exist and can be revisited. Furthermore, the show was a bit hit; although it never achieved huge ratings,¹⁴ it made a big impression on popular culture¹⁵ and won many loyal fans.¹⁶ In addition to being popular among viewers, the show has attracted considerable academic attention and it has been the topic of various conferences and published scholarly works. For instance, David Lavery (co-editor of the first academic book on the show, *Fighting the Forces: What's at Stake in Buffy the Vampire Slayer* [Wilcox & Lavery, 2002]), speaking at the 2004 Slayage Conference on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, noted that 'Buffy studies' 'comprised at least fifty disciplines, methods, and/or approaches' (Lavery quoted in Amy-Chinn & Williamson, 2005; p.276).¹⁷ In addition, according to Sue Turnbull, there are at least twelve serious academic books¹⁸ on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and an (online) international journal, *Slayage* (Turnbull, 2004; para.1); so, although *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is no longer on the air, it has been attracting enough attention, from both viewers and scholars, to remain an interesting case study. It could also be argued that as the show is "complete," one can give a more informed and holistic analysis. From that perspective, the fact that the show is no longer running could be seen as an advantage instead of a disadvantage. Finally, examining earlier shows can provide a foundation for analyzing current television shows, such as this year's vampire series: *Being Human* (Whithouse, 2008-present) broadcast on BBC-3, *The Vampire Diaries* (K. Williamson, 2009-present) on CW and *True Blood* on HBO. Therefore, especially as currently vampire fiction is at present gaining in popularity,¹⁹ *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* remains an interesting show to study.

Although there are a variety of subjects one could study in relation to the show, this thesis focuses on the two re-occurring vampire characters, Angel and Spike and how their construction can cue sympathetic emotional reactions. In Chapter 1, a theoretical framework, which can be used in approaching audiences' attitudes towards fictional narratives, is set. I explain how emotional reactions can be approached from a cognitive perspective and, after defining the emotional reaction of sympathy, I discuss some relatively recent scholarly works dealing with emotional reactions to fictional narratives. Finally, I focus on the work of

¹⁴ The Internet Movie Database reports the following USA ratings for the series over its seven year run: Season One - 3.7 million viewers; Season Two - 5.2 million viewers; Season Three - 5.3 million viewers; Season Four - 5.1 million viewers; Season Five - 4.5 million viewers; Season Six - 4.6 million; viewers Season Seven - 4.1 million ("Buffy Trivia", n.d.).

¹⁵ According to Eric Nuzum, the show has been referred to on other television shows, such as *Will & Grace*, *Charmed*, *Smallville* and *Friends* and was even used as inspiration for sketches on *Saturday Night Live* (Nuzum, 2007, p.189-190).

¹⁶ According to Dee Amy-Chinn and Milly Williamson, at the beginning of 2005, the website Buffysearch.com listed a total of 3973 sites dedicated to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel* (the show's spin off), including 1094 sites dedicated to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* in general, 627 sites featuring fan fiction from the two series and 612 sites focusing on the cast (Amy-Chinn & Williamson, 2005, p.276).

¹⁷ A few examples of the various studies on the show: Leigh Clemons (2006) looks at the aesthetics of fashion in the show, Dawn Heineken (2004) focuses on the fans, Sophie Levy (2003) studies the notions of femininity presented in the show whereas Jana Reiss (2004) and Gregory Stevenson (2003) analyze the moral arguments examined in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

¹⁸ Some of the books in the field of "Buffy studies": *Sex and the Slayer: a Gender Studies Primer for the Buffy fan* (Jowett, 2005), *Reading the Vampire Slayer* (Kaveney, 2001), *Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Philosophy: Fear and Trembling in Sunnydale* (South, 2003), *Televised Morality: the Case of Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Stevenson, 2003), *Why Buffy Matters: the Art of Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Wilcox, 2005), and *Fighting the Forces: What's at Stake in Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Wilcox & Lavery, 2002).

¹⁹ Additionally to the three on-going vampire series, Shelly Freierman reported in December 2009 that vampire themed books were dominating the top sellers titles in the second half of that year (Freierman, 2009). Also, according to *USAToday*, Stephanie Meyer, the author of the *Twilight* saga (Meyer, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008), had sold around 40 million copies of her four books up to the summer of 2009 (Memmott & Cadden, 2009). The *Twilight* series also inspired three movies the latest of which opened in summer 2010 with \$175.3 million sales only in the United States, according to the *Los Angeles Times* (Fritz, 2010).

Murray Smith (1995) on how audiences engage with fictional characters. In Chapter 2, I deal with the framework of knowledge the audience may have in relation to vampire characters, as that can influence their reactions towards the characters in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. More specifically, in this chapter I refer to various examples of vampire characters that are constructed as sympathetic. Additionally, I explain how *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* generally depicts its vampires and I present the methodology I use to approach the characters of Angel and Spike. In Chapters 3 and 4, I analyze the characters of Angel and Spike accordingly and point out the elements of their construction that evoke cue a sympathetic emotional response in the viewers. In Chapter 5, the focus is on the similarities as well as the differences in the construction of the sympathetic image of the two characters. I examine the traits that allow the characters to evoke a sympathetic reading to illustrate the different paths that can lead to sympathy. Lastly, in the Conclusion I discuss how analyzing Angel and Spike can contribute to research about sympathy towards vampire characters, as well as audience's reactions to fictions.

Chapter 1

Narratives and Feelings

This thesis discusses some of the ways television serials, and more specifically *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, cue emotional responses of sympathy towards characters who could be considered negative, as they in many instances are associated with negative connotations. The focus is on the two male vampires, Angel and Spike, that hold re-occurring roles on the show and, thus, as they have more time on the screen more information about them is available for analysis. However, before focusing on the show, a theoretical framework, which can be used in approaching audiences' attitudes towards fictional narratives, must be set. Even though this thesis deals with a television show, the approach I adopt is not limited to the medium of television. Although naturally television has some characteristics that are unique and differentiate this medium from others, scholarly works that deal with emotions created by narratives can be used throughout different media, as many aspects of the basic process of emotionally reacting to fiction are the same regardless of the medium. Therefore, as the basic structure of emotional reactions to fictions can be applied to different media, theories that focus on emotions towards characters on film can be used to approach television characters as well. However, despite the commonalities between emotional reactions to fictional characters that allow the use of film theories on television shows, there are a few differences between film and television characters that should be kept in mind when applying theories, which focus on film, to television narratives.

Firstly, as John Langer suggests, television characters are based on personalities and not so much on the star system (Langer quoted in Fiske, 2003, p.150) unlike their film counterparts that, according to Richard Dyer, rely more on their "real life" presence and not on the characters they portray (Dyer quoted in Fiske, 2003, p.150). So, when approaching the emotional reaction towards a television character, the focus is more on the character herself and the actions and thoughts she appears to have in the series, rather than on the actor that represents the character and the traits that the audience associates with that actor from previous films as well as information about the actor's real life. Additionally, television narratives have significantly more time to be developed; consequently there can be more

changes in the character's story arc that may alter the emotional reactions towards that character. As television shows run for at least one year if not more, there is time for characters to change significantly and for emotional reactions to be even completely reversed, as there is enough time for the audience to get used to the change and accept it as permanent.²⁰ In a film, if a character is introduced as a villain, she rarely has enough time to completely turn around that image, as the amount of time she spends on the screen exhibiting positive traits is usually not enough for the audience to forget the scenes when her evil nature was emphasized.²¹ Finally, unlike films, television series can adapt to the audience's reactions. As the narrative develops throughout the year(s) it can be altered to be in accordance with the audience's emotional reactions. For instance, in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, according to the show's creator, Joss Whedon, the character of Spike was supposed to be killed off and thus only appear in a few episodes, but as the audience reacted positively towards him (M. Williamson, 2005, p.290), instead of leaving the show after Season Two, he became a central character from Season Four onwards.

Despite these significant differences between the media, which should be considered when applying film theories on television narratives, characters of both television and film cue emotional responses in the audience on a similar basis, as, according to Suzanne Keen, all types of narratives have the ability to manipulate feelings and call upon the audience's built-in capacity to feel with others (Keen, 2006, p.209). So, despite the fact that television audiences focus more on the characters than the actors that play them and have more time to acquire information and develop emotions towards the characters, these emotional reactions are depended upon the same built-in abilities, so it follows they are the same in both film and television narratives. Therefore even though the media are different, when approaching the subject of emotional responses the similarities are more salient than the differences and thus a framework based on films can also be used to analyze emotions in television shows.

1.1 Emotions and Cognition

In my analysis of the sympathetic emotions cued by the vampire characters in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, I use an explicitly cognitive approach. As Carl Plantinga and Gregory Smith explain in the introductory chapter of *Passionate Views*, from a Cartesian perspective, mind and body are so clearly separated that taking a cognitive approach on emotional states would seem irrational (Plantinga & Smith, 1999, p.1). However, even though Cartesian coordinates governed the beliefs of many of the scholars studying the process of thought from the 1950s to the 1980s, more recent scholarly works have been increasingly exploring the complex relationship between mind and body, and have been reporting close links between bodily states and thought processes (ibid, p.1-2). So, as the study of cognition begins to consider more and more bodily processes, the clear-cut division between emotions and thoughts seems questionable and thus an approach, which asserts that cognition and emotion work together, does not appear so irrational after all.

²⁰ Usually when viewers are faced with new information about a character that contradicts the opinion they have developed about her until that point, the new information is evaluated in order to be decided if it is permanent and as such should be considered or merely occurring and thereby it should not change the existing impression about the character. If the new data about the traits of character are deemed permanent, the opinion the audience had about her and along with it the emotional reaction towards her will change (Smith, 1995, p.121).

²¹ This does not refer to cases when it is revealed that the evil traits that the character exhibited were some form of an act, but in cases that the character truly changes and reforms which takes significantly more time to occur.

From a cognitive perspective, emotional states have both a physical and a cognitive dimension. The physical dimension is a sensation or a feeling. An emotion, in other words, is connected to some form of physical agitation. For instance, if one is afraid this person might experience shuddering, tingling, muscle tension and/or frozenness. However, as Noël Carroll points out, an emotional state cannot be identified by “being associated with a unique physical state or even a unique assortment of physical states” (Carroll, 1990, p.25). In other words, an emotion cannot only be identified by the bodily state it cues, because the physical state or the assortment of physical states one connects with an emotion are not necessarily universal. For instance, one might feel the hair on the back of one’s neck rising when being afraid, whereas someone else might connect fear with feelings of nausea. In addition, to complicate matters further, one might experience bodily sensations that are connected with emotions without being in an emotional state. In the example of fear, mentioned before, the physical state of nausea was connected with the emotional state of fear, however if one were ill one could experience feelings of nausea without being afraid. Therefore, even though emotions are connected to physical states, it becomes evident that it is not possible to identify them solely based on the bodily sensations they cue.

However, if emotions cannot be identified using the physical states they cause as a criterion, what is needed to identify emotional reactions? As mentioned before, emotions involve not only physical sensations, but also beliefs and thoughts. As Murray Smith says: “Neither merely bodily sensations (as in the Cartesian argument) nor psychic ‘energy’ (as in the Freudian model): they [emotions] are composed of affect and cognition” (Smith, 1995, p.59-60). It is precisely this cognitive dimension of emotional reactions that needs to be considered primarily in order to identify emotions, because this dimension not only plays a role in the emotional reaction, but it is in fact the cause of it. Put differently, it is the cognitive process of a stimuli that leads to the physical state, for instance it is the thought of someone suffering that cues the emotional state of pity. According to Carroll, this cognitive process is not only factual but also evaluative (Carroll, 1990, p.26), as the stimuli that cue emotions are processed and not merely perceived. In the example of pity, it is not merely perceiving the fact that someone is in a negative situation but also evaluating the situation and deciding it is undeserved (it is uncommon to feel pity when someone seems to deserve the negative situation she is in) which leads to the emotional state of pity. Therefore, emotions can be identified as bodily sensations that are the result of a cognitive process, which evaluates the situation that cues the emotion.

An important concept in the cognitive approach towards the emotional process is that of the schema. This concept goes back to Immanuel Kant who in his *Critique on Pure Reason* introduced the term schema as an important part of cognitive processes. A schema can be roughly defined as “a network of the interrelated elements that defines a concept for some individual” (Crockett quoted in Bryant & Rockwell, 1991, p.220). Put differently, schemata are mental sets of information that represent aspects of the world. For example, a schema concerning dogs would be a mental pattern which “can delineate the figure of a four-footed animal in a general manner, without limitation to any single determinate figure as experience, or any possible image that I can represent in concreto” (Kant, 1781). Furthermore, as Smith makes clear, schemata are learned and sustained within a given cultural environment and for this reason they are rather automated and used as if by reflex (Smith, 1995, p.50)²². Even

²² As Smith explains, despite their automated nature, schemata are not entirely fixed but in fact are rather flexible in the sense that they can be re-evaluated depending on the experiences an individual has as each action affords new data (Smith, 1995, p.52). So, for instance, if one is bitten by a dog, this person’s dog schema will be revised to include the new data. But again this process is automated and not conscious.

though they are in fact learned, they become so incorporated in one's identity, that they are transparent to those who use them, as one does not realize one is using schemata to evaluate and categorize the world around her. For instance, when approached by a dog, the dog schema is immediately triggered and one accesses it prior to any cognitive process in relation to the approaching dog.

It follows from the definition of the term that schemata are used to evaluate and understand situations in the world (even though one is not usually aware of their part in the thought process) and therefore they are useful in understanding emotional reactions as well. Cognitive processes are largely based on schemata; consequently the cognitive reaction to stimuli that leads to emotions is based on various schemata as well. For instance, one would experience fear in the event of a truck coming towards oneself; this feeling is based on the knowledge of the truck schema, which among other things characterizes an approaching truck as an object that is dangerous to humans. It is the knowledge that the truck is fearful that cues the emotional reaction. Thus it is through various schemata that one is able to understand and evaluate the different situations one is put in and develop an emotional reaction towards them. So taking schemata into consideration, emotions can be defined as physical reactions due to a cognitive process, which is triggered by a stimulus and based on information available from various schemata.

1.2 Sympathy

Taking the definition presented above into consideration, how can the specific emotion I wish to focus on, that of sympathy, be defined from a cognitive perspective? In general, sympathy is usually defined in relation to a similar emotion, empathy. According to Keen, empathy is a "vicarious, spontaneous sharing of affect" which is the result of witnessing someone else's emotional state, hearing about someone's condition or even reading about it (Keen, 2006, p.208). In other words in the case of empathetic responses, Amy Coplan suggests that, one feels what one believes to be the emotions of others, even though one may experience these emotions less intensely than the target does (Coplan, 2004, p.144). Sympathy on the other hand is the emotional state when one responds emotionally to another's situation. One comprehends the other person and her situation and experiences feelings in response to that situation. So, sympathy involves caring about another individual and unlike empathy it does not involve sharing the emotional state of someone else (ibid, p.145). To make this clearer, Keen provides an example of empathy versus sympathy:

Empathy: I feel what you feel. I feel your pain.

Sympathy: I feel a supportive emotion about your feelings. I feel pity for your pain
(Keen, 2006, p. 208).

In these definitions, empathy is seen as mirroring the emotional experience of another, which implies a reduction of distance between the empathizer and the target of empathy. By contrast, sympathy requires a distance in order to observe, evaluate and then react emotionally towards someone's situation. However this distance is not always so strictly maintained, as empathy can be a precursor for sympathy. When being confronted with someone's situation there can be two ways of approaching it, according to Alessandro Giovanelli: "a purely cognitive perception —an understanding that the other, say, is suffering— and an experiential or quasi-experiential perception —an understanding achieved through the recognition of what the other's suffering may be like" (Giovanelli, 2009, p.85). In other words, when faced with

someone's situation one can understand it on a cognitive level or also go beyond that thought and actually position herself in the other person's shoes to "experience" the situation for herself.

The case of positioning oneself in the place of another and thus experiencing the situation "first hand," which is a somewhat empathetic response (one does not exactly replicate the emotional responses of the other person, it would be more accurate to say she imagines what it would feel like rather than actually feeling it), can lead to the emotional state of sympathy according to Giovanelli's definition of sympathetic responses. Giovanelli argues that: "an emotion is sympathetic only when it arises from the process of empathizing with another and taking on, in imagination, his or her relevant goals" (ibid, p.92). Put differently, imagining what the other person may be feeling and understanding her goals, is essential to a sympathetic response. So, there is first an empathetic response in imagining the other person's emotional state and then a process of understanding of her situation and her goals in regard to that state, in order for one to develop sympathetic emotions. For instance, when one sympathizes with someone in pain, one imagines what the pain would be like, and adopts the sufferer's desire for the pain to disappear, and then having understood and "experienced" the sufferer's situation, feelings of sympathy (such as pity) arise.

Bringing this back to the definition of emotions provided in the previous section, which stated that emotional reactions are the result of the evaluation of stimuli and that this evaluation is based on various schemata, the stimuli that cue sympathy is the situation of another person, and this situation is evaluated and understood through a connection with existing schemata in relation to the target's feelings, desires and goals. It is important to note here that this process of evaluation and understanding of the other person and her situation may lead to antipathy as well, in case the schemata that are used to process the situation have negative implications. For instance, feelings towards someone who is on trial and desires to be found not guilty vary depending on whether this person is thought to be guilty or not. The desire the target is feeling is the same, so an empathetic approach would let one experience the feelings and goals of the accused, but cultural schemata imply that guilty parties should be punished and therefore one would not be able to sympathize with the target's desire to be free if she were guilty of the crime. Therefore, bringing together the cognitive definition of emotions with Giovanelli's definition of sympathy, it could be argued that sympathy is the emotional reaction cued by the situation of another, after this situation has been processed through an empathetic response and an understanding of the other's goals and then has been positively evaluated using schemata.

1.3 Emotions and Fiction

If emotions are physical reactions to stimuli that have been understood and evaluated using various schemata, why should one feel sympathy or any other emotion for that matter in relation to fiction? In other words, can stimuli that are fictional cue genuine emotional reactions? Therefore, before being able to examine how the fictional vampire characters in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* evoke sympathetic emotional responses in the audience, it is crucial to establish the ability of fictional worlds to provoke genuine emotions. So, before I continue with my analysis, I will discuss some relatively recent approaches focusing on the authenticity of emotional reactions to fictional narratives. Looking at recent works on this

issue in the field of cinema,²³ one could categorize the scholars dealing with the question regarding the authenticity of audiences' emotional reactions in two poles. On the one side there are scholars who argue towards the paradox of fiction, according to which audiences have emotional reactions to fictional events because they both believe and do not believe in the reality of these events, whereas on the other side, scholars present alternative explanations as to why audiences emotionally engage with fictions.

Arguing in favor of the paradox of fiction, Richard Allen (1993) disagrees with theorists, such as Jean-Louis Baudry, who argue for a type of cinematic illusion, where the projection and narration aim to conceal the technology and technique of the film production, so that the audience perceives the cinematic image as unmediated reality, but does not reject the idea of cinematic illusion altogether. Allen discusses two different types of the experience of illusion created by films: the reproductive and the projective.²⁴ In the case of reproductive illusion, even though the audience is aware of the medium, it is nevertheless deceived as to its content. In Allen's words: "The spectator believes that what is seen is actuality, unless there is reasonable evidence to the contrary. Reproductive illusion in the nonfiction film trades upon this reasonable belief in the reality of the image" (Allen, 1993, p.32). On the other hand, in the projective illusion, viewers lose the awareness of watching a film and perceive the events "from within" "a fully realized, though fictional, world that has all the perceptual presentness or immediacy of our own" (ibid, p.40). Put differently, projective illusion refers to the instance when the audience does not see the projected image as a reproduction or recording of anything, but instead experiences the events in the fictional space as if they were presented directly before the audience's eyes (ibid, p.41).

Allen presents two ways of experiencing this form of illusion: character-centered and spectator-centered. In the case of character-centered projective illusion, the audience takes up the position of the camera and inhabits the fictional world through an empathetic identification with one or more of the characters of the world (ibid, p.43). In the case of spectator-centered projective illusion, the viewers take up the point of view of the camera and inhabit the fictional world as if they were personally witnessing the events that take place in the world (ibid, p.44). As Allen argues that cinematic illusion is possible and the audience experiences the fictional world as some form of reality, he claims that genuine emotional reactions to the fiction will occur. More specifically in the case of character-centered projective illusion the audience is seen as empathizing with the character(s) in the fiction and therefore sharing the same emotional state as they do.²⁵ Whereas, in spectator-centered

²³ Although the basic structure of emotional reactions to fictions can be applied to different media, there are fundamental differences in dealing with fictional worlds described on paper and fictional worlds presented on the screen. For instance, in films the physical body of a character is a more important aspect in character analysis than in literature. In visual media, such as film, the character's physical appearance is visible whenever that character is on the screen and, according to Cynthia Hoffner and Joanne Cantor, the character's body is the first attribute that comes to the spectator's attention, so physical traits have enormous potential to affect impressions (Hoffner & Cantor, 1991, p.65). In literature on the other hand, even though there can be references to the character's physical traits (some characters' appearance is described, but there are also characters, such as narrators, that are never associated with physical traits), the focus is more on the character's actions and thoughts, so impressions are largely based on different criteria. Therefore, even though there are aspects of the emotional reactions to fictional narratives that are common throughout different media, there are also significant differences, and thus as my analysis is focused on a television show, I chose to implement theories from the field of film and not literature studies.

²⁴ According to Allen, the viewer is seen to switch back and forth between these states while watching a film (Allen, 1993).

²⁵ As discussed previously, in cases of empathetic engagement, one feels what one believes are the emotions of others, therefore viewers will experience the emotions they perceive the characters to be feeling.

projective illusion, the audience is not emotionally identifying with the characters, but is still responding to the fiction emotionally by exhibiting emotional responses appropriate to being an eyewitness of the events taking place in the fictional world.²⁶

Other theorists, such as Noël Carroll (1990), Gregory Currie (1997), Murray Smith (1995) and Ed S. Tan (1995), form the other pole of the debate regarding the authenticity of an audience's emotional reactions and argue that the audience never perceives the fictional world as a form of reality and consequently emotional reactions to fictions are not based on the existence of an illusion but on thought processes. Put differently, these theorists do not believe that audiences can be fooled, either partially or fully, about the nature of the fictional world, and in fact argue that spectators are constantly aware of the representational nature of the fictional narrative. However this does not mean that the emotional reactions that are developed towards characters and situations in the narrative are un-authentic as it is enough for audiences to imagine the fictional world in order to develop feelings about it. In other words, these theorists argue that audiences need not be conceived about the nature of the narrative and perceive it as reality in order for them to experience genuine emotions, as thoughts alone can cue emotional reactions. The path they follow in order to prove this point is rather similar, as they first present theoretical positions that they oppose and then through rejecting these positions provide their own perspective which states that fictional worlds cue emotional reactions in their audiences through thought processes.

More specifically, Carroll in *The Philosophy of Horror. Or Paradoxes of the Heart* (1990) and Tan in *Emotion and the Structure of Narrative Film: Film as an Emotion Machine* (1995), present three theories in relation to an audience's attitude towards fictions: the illusion theory, the pretend theory and the thought theory. The illusion theory argues that the viewer perceives the fiction presented to her as reality and thus she emotionally engages with fiction as she would with real events. Whereas according to the pretend theory, viewers do not believe in the reality of fiction and consequently their reaction is not a genuine emotion but an imitation, the acting out of an emotion. Both these theories are rejected by Tan and Carroll, as being insufficient in describing the emotional reactions of audiences towards fictional narratives. The thought theory on the other hand is accepted by both scholars as being the most adequate to explain the emotional reactions audiences have towards fictions. However, although, both theorists agree that the illusion theory and the pretend theory do not accurately describe the emotional reactions of audiences and accept the thought theory as the best means to approaching emotions cued by fiction, they do so following a different line of argumentation.

Carroll argues on the basis that the illusion and the pretend theory do not correspond with the reactions to fictional narratives that audiences report having. In other words, Carroll argues that the way viewers react to fiction does not correspond either with them perceiving it as reality or with acting out feelings and not genuinely experiencing them. As far as the illusion theory is concerned, Carroll says that if viewers reacted to fictional narratives as if they were real, they would feel the need to take action according to the events taking place in the fictional world. In his own words: "if when reading or viewing fictions we came to be convinced, albeit by deception, that werewolves really existed in our vicinity, it would be difficult to savor the story. One would want to take some practical measures to secure one's life and loved ones" (Carroll, 1990, p.64). Thus, as audiences do not react this way, Carroll states that it is impossible to argue that they are fooled about the nature of the film and so he rejects the illusion theory as unlikely. In a similar way the pretend theory is rejected as the

²⁶ These emotional responses could be sympathetic (or antipathetic) as the audience is reacting to the character(s) and the fictional events of the narrative.

viewer's reactions do not correspond with them acting out feelings instead of truly experiencing them. As Carroll explains, referring to his experience watching *The Exorcist* (Friedkin, 1973): "But I, at least, recall being genuinely horrified by the film. I don't think I was pretending; and the degree to which I was shaken by the film was visibly apparent to the person with whom I was watching the film" (Carroll, 1990, p.74). Therefore both the pretend and the illusion theory seem unlikely to Carroll, as they contradict the experiences he has had watching films as well as the reactions other spectators also have to fictions.

So, having rejected the two previous theories, Carroll argues in favor of the thought theory. According to this approach a mental representation, an insight or an idea – in other words thoughts - are capable of producing genuine emotions just like physical reality (ibid, p.79-80). People have the tendency to be emotionally moved by personalities and situations of other people which is why they are generally moved by stories. However, if these stories turn out to be fabricated, an emotional response does not occur. For instance, one would care about someone's sister being in the hospital, but if one were told there is no sister, the feeling of caring would disappear (ibid, p.61). Although this is a fact for real situations, when it comes to fiction, it does not matter that audiences know the characters and the situations in the fictional world are not real. Acknowledging the fictional nature of narratives enables audiences to not take action in relation to the events taking place in the fictional world, but it does not disable them from having genuine feelings in relation to personalities and situations in that world. As long as the audience is presented with conceptions of things to think about, through entertaining and reflecting upon these thoughts, they can develop feelings about them. Thus, Carroll maintains that audiences can be moved by the contents of thoughts, as "emotional response does not require the belief that the things that move us be actual. We can be moved by prospects that we imagine" (ibid, p.88).

Tan, working from a framework that combines film theory with social and cognitive psychology, argues, like Carroll, against the illusion and the pretend theories to accept the thought theory as the most fitting to conceptualize the underlying dynamics of emotional response during the viewing of the mainstream narrative film. However, unlike Carroll who, as Tan points out, similarly to other scholars in the field, bases his argumentation of emotion authenticity on personal experiences, observations and introspections (Tan, 1995, p.230), Tan bases his analysis of these three theories on a definition of what an authentic emotion is. He states that authentic emotional reactions are those who meet the functional characteristics of emotions (building on the work of Frijda [Frijda 1986, 1988]). Tan uses these characteristics, instead of his personal experiences or observations, to approach the illusion theory, the pretend theory and the thought theory, to reject the first two and accept the third as complying with the criteria of authentic emotions (Tan, 1995, p.232-236). Thus, he also comes to the conclusion that it is through imagination (engagement with a fantasy world) that emotional responses are cued in audiences. He states that even though films use some forms of illusion (such as apparent movement and the illusion of the controlled spectator) what these illusions achieve is not making audiences interpret the fictional world as reality, but creating a vivid fantasy world that is capable of making audiences willingly submit to its illusions in order to fully experience and enjoy the work of fiction and the emotional response it evokes.

Smith and Currie when dealing with the emotional reactions to fiction follow an argumentation structure similar to Carroll's and Tan's as they too first present the theories they oppose, and then through rejecting those they provide their own contribution to the debate about the attitude of the spectator towards fictional narratives. However, Smith and Currie, unlike Carroll and Tan, do not deal with the pretend theory and only argue against claims that

films can create an illusion of reality, partial or otherwise. In *Image and Mind: Film, Philosophy and Cognitive Science* (1997), Currie discusses three doctorines about cinema: transparency, likeness and illusionism and provides counter arguments to these approaches, in order to come to the conclusion that the key term in emotional reactions to fiction is imagination, as it is through imagining that audiences engage with fictional worlds and develop feelings in relation to them. Smith, on the other hand, in *Engaging Characters* (1995) argues specifically against theorists such as Bertolt Brecht and Christian Metz (who state that the diegesis, i.e. the narrative space that compiles all elements of the story, is so compelling that audiences perceive it as a real space) aiming to claim that if audiences imagine that the object exists this opens the way for real emotion to occur.

More specifically, Currie says that: “[f]ilm has considerable powers to engage and to persuade, but these powers are not accounted for in terms of illusion” (Currie, 1997, p.19). According to him the key term in engaging with fiction is imagination, as it is there that the powers of film lie. In order to prove his point, he discusses the doctorines of transparency, likeness and illusionism. According to the notion of transparency, film is transparent in the sense that audiences see through it into a real world, so it functions as a window or a lens (ibid, p.19-20), whereas according to the doctrine of likeness the experience of film is, or can be, like the experience of the real world. Currie partially agrees with both these points of view, saying that transparency has some basis as cinematic and photographic images are naturally dependent on their subject, although this “natural dependence does not take them outside the realm of representation” (ibid, p.77), and likeness could be a defensible version of film realism, in the sense that film does, or can, represent space and time realistically (ibid, p.79), without this meaning that the accuracy of the filmic representation presupposes any delusions in the audience about being confronted with a mere representation and not reality. So, Currie accepts that a film sequence is dependant upon the natural environment, as for instance a tree had to have been there at some point in order for a film capture of the tree to exist, and he realizes that film has the ability to capture reality extremely realistically, however he does not think that either of these qualities of film can create confusion in the audience about the representational nature of cinema.

Having discussed these two doctorines, Currie moves on to present the illusion theory, which, as also mentioned earlier, states that film is realistic in its capacity to create in the viewer an illusion of reality and presentness of the fictional characters and events it portrays. Following a similar argumentation with Carroll against the illusion theory, Currie argues that the phenomenology of audience reactions do not correspond to them perceiving film situations as reality (ibid, p.24) and furthermore illusionism is “at odds with much of the experience of film viewing” (ibid, p.25). According to Currie, audiences do not behave in a manner that would imply that they believe the fictional events to be actually taking place, as they do not wish to take action in relation to the situations taking place in the narrative, but also the illusion theory would imply that audiences would be identifying with the camera in the fictional world, which seems highly unlikely. Identifying with the camera would require them to think of themselves as capable of not being restricted by the physical limitations of their bodies (as camera angles are sometimes impossible for humans to physically access) and be invisible to the characters in the film, which does not correspond with the experience of film viewing. Therefore, all in all Currie comes to the conclusion that it does not seem possible that audiences can perceive the fictional world as reality.

After having argued against the three doctorines, Currie goes back to his claim about the importance of imagination in engaging with fictions. According to him, it is not important for

objects and their representations to share the same properties, it is enough that they appear alike so that the representations can be recognized for what they depict. In that sense it does not matter that the actual tree and the representation of a tree do not share the same properties, as long as the representation is accurate enough for audiences to recognize the tree. In Currie's words: "fictions speak not to belief, but to the faculty of imagination" (ibid, p.141), therefore being able to understand and evaluate the object depicted before them, allows audiences to engage with it, by simulating the process of acquiring beliefs as if the process was about a fact and not a work of fiction (ibid, p.141). So, when viewing the representation of a tree, one will access the schemata in relation to trees and not in relation to fictional trees. Even though this process occurs in the realm of imagination it can cause real feelings (ibid, p.150). After all even in actual situations in order to make emotional contact with people one needs to use one's imagination by positioning oneself to the other person's situation and experiencing some form of emotional identification (ibid, p.158). So, empathizing with characters can be seen as just an extension of this imaginative process.

Finally, Smith starts the presentation of views he is opposed to by stating that for Brecht traditional theatrical form and realist staging techniques effect an 'illusion of reality' in which spectators experience the fictional world as real, through a powerful empathy with the protagonist (quoted in Smith, 1995, p.3). Similarly, Smith presents Christian Metz who argues that at certain moments the viewer drifts into a dream like state, in which the fictional world is experienced as reality (quoted in Smith, 1995, p.42-43). Smith discusses these theories to state that from their perspective audiences respond at once as if they know, and as if they do not know, that they are perceiving mere fiction; they are somewhat aware of the medium at first but once the story starts unfolding they "get lost" in the narrative. But, Smith rejects this perspective as he claims that confusing fiction with reality is impossible, as the audience is constantly aware that fiction is a representation of reality, rather than reality itself (Smith, 1995, p.43-44). In his own words: "texts require recognition as texts, and do not simply 'absorb' the spectator into the diegesis" (ibid, p.43). However, even though he rejects the idea that audiences perceive the film world as reality, Smith believes that the feelings developed in relation to fiction are genuine; they are just based on a different principle.

Therefore, through discussing Colin Radford's proposition, in which he says that emotional responses to events depend upon believing that these events have actually occurred and therefore emotional reactions to fiction are absurd, unintelligible and unmanly (quoted in Smith, 1995, p.55-56), Smith argues that if we imagine that the object exists this opens the way for real emotion. As also mentioned earlier when discussing Carroll's arguments, in actual situations the reality of the situation matters, but in fictions emotional responses are not dependent on the reality of objects and situations. So, Smith agrees with the idea that the fictional nature of the situation does not influence the emotional reactions as it would in a real life scenario and thus regardless of the non-actuality of the events and characters, audiences develop authentic emotions towards fictions. In his own words: "In a response to an actual situation we must believe that the object must exist or have existed. In a response to a fiction text, we merely imaginatively propose to ourselves that the object exists: we do not access the object for its referential validity" (Smith, 1995, p.57). So, Smith also concludes that if audiences can access the fictional object in their imagination, they can develop feelings for it, and thus, even though emotional reactions to fiction are not structurally identical to emotions cued by actual events, they are nonetheless genuine.

To sum up, there are mainly two poles in theories concerning the attitude of audiences towards fictions and the authenticity of the emotions fictional worlds can cue. On the one

hand there are those like Allen who believe that the audience believes what is seen on the screen is (to some extent at least) actuality and thus spectators develop feelings towards fictional narratives in the same way that they would for actual situations. On the other hand there are theorists like Tan who argues that “film creates an illusion not a delusion,” which means that film creates a very accurate simulation of reality but the audience is fully aware that they are watching a staged representation (Tan, 1995, p.230). Thus, theorists that side with Tan claim that even though narratives on films and television shows produce realistic representations of reality (in the sense that the world on the screen is an accurate representation of the actual world), they are nonetheless representations and the audience is aware of their nature. However, these scholars argue that the representational nature of fictions does not stop audiences from experiencing genuine emotions towards them. Even though in real life situations it is important that the events and the persons involved in them are in existence for an emotional reaction to occur, in fiction audiences do not require proof of the fictional world’s existence to develop feelings about it. So, acknowledging the fictional nature of the narrative enables audiences to not take action in relation to the events taking place, but in no way prohibits them from having genuine emotions in relation to it.

From the argumentation presented in this section, it seems safe to assume that the notion that audiences get swept away by the diegesis and partially or totally confuse the fictional world to be actual can be rejected all together. Even though it would be false to suggest that the theorists who argue against cinematic illusion are in agreement in all matters (for instance, Tan and Smith disagree over the extent to which spectators are aware of a controlling narrational presence guiding the spectators’ attention), they all seem to strongly believe that thoughts and ideas that only exist in imagination, can cue emotional reactions. Therefore, although there are differences in their ways of approaching the matter of emotional reactions to fiction, their argument that despite the representational nature of fictional narratives the audiences develop genuine feelings towards them is compelling. Thus, the answer to the question posed at the beginning of this section about whether fictional stimuli cue emotional reactions would be positive and so audience’s emotions towards the characters and the situations in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* are authentic and as such can be analyzed using a cognitive approach towards emotions. Accordingly one can also conclude that audiences do not have to believe in the existence of vampires in order to develop feelings towards the vampire characters of the show, as it is enough for them to imagine that these vampires exist in order to react emotionally towards them.

1.4 Emotions and Characters

Having established that fictional narratives can cue genuine emotional responses and thus even though spectators do not believe in vampires they can develop feelings towards the vampire characters in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, I wish to focus on emotional responses where the stimulus is not the narrative in general but specifically fictional characters. For this purpose I will use Smith’s approach on engaging with characters (Smith, 1995).²⁷ Smith argues that characters are the main focal points of a spectator's emotional attention, and

²⁷ For a different approach on the development of characters in fiction see Boris Tomashevksy’s *Thematics* (1965[1925]) or Chapter 4 of Frank Kermode’s *The Genesis of Secrecy: On the Interpretation of Narrative* (1979).

For a discussion relating to the concept of character consult John Frow’s *Spectacle Binding: On Character* (1986) or Thomas Dogherly’s *Reading (Absent) Character* (1983).

finding notions of identification and empathy incapable of capturing the subtleties of emotional response to characters, he breaks the concept down into three interconnected elements: recognition, alignment and allegiance. Recognition refers to the viewer's construction of a character as a unified person (an individualized and re-identified person in the course of the plot) from the visual and linguistic cues available in the text (ibid, p.116). At this stage the character's embodiment plays a central role; her body, face and voice are registered in the mind of the viewer and connected only to her. Although in visual media, recognition is mostly based on the physical features of a character, language also plays a role, as characters are usually assigned linguistic cues, such as proper names, names that designate social roles (such as 'father'), pronouns and descriptions. So, linguistic cues as well as a physical depiction that belongs to one character are connected to serve as recognition and re-identification agents throughout the narrative.

The next stage, that of alignment, refers to the spectator's placement in relation to the characters, in terms of access to their actions and what they know and feel. In other words, the concept of alignment refers to the narrational processes, which guide the audience's perception through an alignment with a certain character or characters (ibid, p.142-143). With regard to these processes Smith distinguishes between spatio-temporal attachment, which refers to narrative procedures that pertain to the following of a character along her spatio-temporal path, and subjective access, which includes techniques that provide access to a character's mental states. So, put differently, in the case of spatio-temporal alignment audiences follow the character along her spatio-temporal path in the narrative space, whereas in subjective access audiences acquire information about the mental states of the characters. Another way to approach this distinction would be to say that spatio-temporal attachment offers information about actions and behaviors whereas subjective access allows audiences to know the desires, thoughts and feelings of the character(s). In any given narrative, the use of these processes varies but in all cases they interlock to produce a pattern of alignment.

Finally, allegiance is the level at which the spectator morally and emotionally engages with the character. Because mainstream narratives usually provide more information to audiences that is in excess of a character's knowledge of a narrative situation, Smith argues that empathy plays a secondary role to sympathy, since the latter concept is more suited to capture the differences between the mental states of spectator and character caused by the discrepancies in their excess of knowledge. Put differently, according to him as audiences tend to know more about the situations the character is involved in than the character herself, an emotional reaction where audiences mirror the character's emotional state is not adequate to describe emotions cued by characters. So, he proposes the concept of allegiance where the audience develops sympathetic or antipathetic emotional reactions to characters instead of empathetic. Recognition and alignment require only that audiences acquire information and understand the mental states and the traits that make up the different characters, but in the stage of allegiance this information is evaluated and based on this evaluation an emotional response is developed.

Therefore, as Smith explains, allegiance denotes that level of engagement at which audiences react sympathetically or antipathetically towards a character or group of characters, based on the evaluation of the character as representing a desirable (or at least preferable) set of traits when compared to other characters within the fictional world (ibid, p.62). Therefore, audiences use various schemata, which are largely influenced not by real-world standards but by the fictional world, to evaluate the traits that are associated with a certain character in order to decide whether they will respond towards that character sympathetically or

antipathetically. The data that gets evaluated at this stage is the information about the character's mental states and traits, which has been "collected" at the previous stages of recognition and alignment, and the evaluation is based largely on the moral system of the world where the character is placed. So, in other words, at the stage of allegiance, the audience approaches the information it has about the characters and connects them to schemata (that are in accordance to the largest extent to the world of the narrative, but also with some prevailing ethical norms shared by the majority of the audience) in order to form opinions and emotions about the characters.

Taken together, recognition, alignment and allegiance form the "structure of sympathy" that defines the cognitive and affective aspects of character engagement. It is important to note that these structures, although distinct stages, work together. Recognition affects alignment, as the audience's narrative experience cannot be aligned with any particular character until that character has been individualized. Recognition also affects allegiance, firstly because without a sense of a unified character audiences cannot form connections that will lead to emotional reactions. Furthermore, as physical attributes can and often do imply psychological traits (ibid, p.113) recognition also affects the type of emotions audiences may develop as it initially defines the set of traits the character possesses. In other words, audiences may and often do morally evaluate characters based on psychological traits that are attributed to bodily attributes. Additionally, alignment not only affects allegiance as it defines the information the audience has about the characters, but it may also affect subsequent recognitions, as the recognition of a new character may be subject to the effect of mediation produced by alignment with another character (ibid, p.144). Especially in the case where there is no or limited alignment with the new character, audiences will adopt the perspective of the character they are already aligned with and thus their opinion of the new character will be filtered. All in all, the three stages work together in providing the audience with information, which will be used in evaluating the characters using different schemata and developing emotional reactions to them.

1.5 Summary and Conclusion

Adopting a cognitive perspective leads to defining emotions not merely as bodily sensations but as physical reactions which are the result of a cognitive process triggered by a stimulus that is understood and evaluated using information available from various schemata. This definition of emotions is also valid for fictions, as even though audiences are aware that they are faced with representations of reality, they can develop genuine emotional reactions to fictional characters and situations. In real life situations the actuality of events and persons influences the feelings developed, however in fiction audiences can genuinely emotionally engage with situations and characters they know are not actual. Anything that exists in the realm of imagination, such as thoughts and ideas, can cue authentic emotional reactions as the works of various scholars presented in this chapter have shown. These scholars argue that it is not the illusionary nature of some media that can result in authentic emotions developed in the audience by fictions, but the fact that thoughts and ideas can cue emotions. Therefore, it follows that as audiences can imagine the characters and events taking place in the fictional world, they can also develop feelings towards them the same way they develop feelings for actual situations and people.

Especially in the case of emotional engagement with fictional characters, audiences go through three stages: recognition – where the character is constructed as a unified person with

unique physical characteristics and connected to specific linguistic cues; alignment – which refers to narrational techniques that allow audiences to either follow a character along her spatio-temporal path or gain insight about her thoughts and feelings; and finally allegiance – at which stage audiences actually develop feelings for the characters after morally engaging with the characters' traits. At the third stage, the information that has been associated with the character in the previous stages is the stimulus that gets evaluated in relation to various schemata, which mostly rely on the world of the narrative, and not so much on universally accepted morals, to determine what kind of feelings audiences will develop. So, to achieve sympathetic responses the traits, the emotional states and the actions of the character should have been processed through an empathetic response and an understanding of her goals, and then with the use of various schemata been found to be desirable (or at least preferable) in relation to the other characters in the narrative.

I shall use these three stages of engaging with characters to approach the vampires Angel and Spike in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and see what in the traits and actions of these characters in specific acts as the stimulus for cueing sympathetic responses. However before I begin my analysis of the sympathetic vampires of this show I shall briefly discuss examples of sympathetic vampires in fiction preceding the series as these other fictional vampires act as a framework of reference for the viewers of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

Chapter 2

Sympathetic Vampires

The aim of this thesis is to analyze the construction of the two sympathetic male vampire characters of the television show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and see where the sympathy towards them lies, however before focusing on these specific vampires one must briefly go into other instances in fiction where vampire characters were constructed as sympathetic, as these vampires are part of the framework of knowledge audiences can access and use in engaging with the vampires Angel and Spike. Understanding what audiences bring to mind when they are confronted with a sympathetic vampire character is important in analyzing the emotional reactions to the sympathetic vampire characters of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, as the cognitive approach indicates that the framework of knowledge available to the audiences will influence their reactions to fictions. As explained in the previous chapter, emotional states involve both a physical and a cognitive dimension and thus emotions can be defined as physical sensations that are the result of cognitively analyzing stimuli using various schemata. Schemata, we said, are sets of information that define concepts and as such are used to evaluate and understand situations one is confronted with. Therefore, the information one has about sympathetic vampires from other fictions will be part of the vampire schema one has and as such will influence the way one will approach the vampires in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. So, in other words, in order to better understand the spectators' attitude towards Angel and Spike one must first become acquainted with sympathetic vampire characters in literature, film and television.

2.1 Feeling Sympathy for the Vampire

One might expect the natural reaction to a character associated with monstrous traits to be fear, disgust or other negative feelings such as these, however that is not always the case as there are instances when audiences feel sympathetically towards such characters. So, how does one develop sympathetic feelings (which are considered positive feelings) towards characters that are considered partly or totally monstrous? Smith's structure of sympathy,

which was presented in the previous chapter, indicates that in order for characters to be sympathetic they need to have desirable or at least preferable traits. Therefore, despite the fact a character is associated with monstrous traits, if her other traits are seen as desirable or at least favorable, sympathy can occur. Appealing to various schemata, audiences evaluate the traits associated with the character in comparison to the other characters that take part in the narrative. The fact that the cognitive process of evaluation does not rely heavily on a universal set of standards, but the traits are judged mostly in relation to the situations the characters experience and in comparison to others they interact with, allows audiences to feel sympathy for characters that in the actual world may not have been cueing the same kind of emotional reactions. Think of Tony Soprano in *The Sopranos* (Chase, 1999-2007) or Dexter in the television series of the same name (Colleton, Goldwyn & Phillips, 2006-present). In both cases, the protagonists of the shows are more on the immoral side from an actual world perspective as they have on multiple occasions committed crimes (Tony has a leading role in the mafia, and Dexter is a serial killer). However, despite this, audiences develop sympathetic reactions to these characters, even though some aspects of their personalities are in fact to be considered monstrous.

A sympathetic reading is not possible merely in cases of human characters, who despite some monstrous aspects still appear to be exhibiting favorable traits; sympathy can also be cued in relation to supernatural monsters. Traditionally in the horror genre, as the name also suggests, monsters cue the emotional reaction of horror. As Carroll explains, horrific monsters are threatening (either physically, psychologically, morally or socially) and impure (Carroll, 1990, p.43), and as such they are connected with negative emotional reactions, such as fear and disgust. However, there have been examples of supernatural monsters, which can trigger positive emotions and are viewed as sympathetic characters. In the case of vampires specifically, even though much film and literary theory on the subject has emphasized the evilness of Bram Stoker's count Dracula (Astle, 1980; Bentley, 1988[1972]; Jackson, 1981; Jones, 1991[1929]; Roth, 1988; Twitchell, 1985), there is another tradition, which in fact precedes Dracula, and in which the vampire is a glamorous outcast, alluring outsider, rebel and tortured soul. For instance, Polidori's vampires (Polidori, Byron & Mitford, 1819) as well as Carmilla (Le Fanu, 1964 [1872]) were, as Nina Auerbach puts it, "creatures who flourished, not in their difference from their human prey, but through their intimate intercourse with mortals, to whom they were dangerously close" (Auerbach, 1995, p.13). For Auerbach, the lure of the Romantic vampire is found in "intimacy and friendship" (Auerbach, 1995, p.14) and not in its depiction as absolute evil.

So the first vampires, were in fact enchanting companions offering an intimacy and homoerotic sharing and they remained as such until the coming of *Dracula* (1897). Stoker's perception of vampires became so popular that audiences forgot the rogue nature vampires were associated with up to then, and largely adopted Dracula's image as the representation of vampires. As Auerbach explains, the portrait of Stoker's vampire altered the relationship between vampires and humans. She says that Dracula with his animalist tendencies, his mesmerist rather than intimate presence and his tyrant rather than friendly nature, created a distance between vampires and their human prey (Auerbach, 1995, p.7). This monster dominated perceptions about vampires for decades, which led a number of critics to suggest that the vampires in Anne Rice's novels (1976, 1985, 1988, 1995, 2000), Louis and Lestat, were the first overtly sympathetic vampires to be depicted in English fiction (DeKelber-Rittenhouse, 2002, Gelder, 1994; Gordo & Hollinger, 1997; Russo, 2005). DeKelber-Rittenhouse suggests that it is through Rice's works "that we have our first truly sympathetic view of the vampire as self-aware creature capable of choosing not to murder innocents"

(DeKelbe-Rittenhouse, 2002, p.149). It may be that the majority of the audience has connected vampires with ideas of immortality, sensuality, dark romance and power through the works on Anne Rice, however there were various other examples of sympathetic vampires in film and television, who were able to resist their dark urges prior to the introduction of Louis and Lestat.

The television series *Dark Shadows* (Curtis, 1966–1971) was pending cancellation due to poor ratings, however once the character of Collins, a sympathetic vampire, was introduced in 1967 the shows' ratings soared (M. Williamson, 2005, p.292). Similarly, a number of Hollywood films produced at least partly sympathetic vampire characters, such as Bela Lugosi's depiction of Dracula (Browning, 1931). Even though the film was based on Stoker's novel and thus the main character was meant to be threatening and fearful, there was also a certain charm associated with the Count that made him more sympathetic. Lugosi's portrait of Dracula alludes to authority, power, sexuality, and masculinity, which made the character appear appealing in comparison to the other characters in the story, who were everyday figures like the audience. So, instead of being merely a frightful evil monster, in this film Dracula seemed more like an extraordinary "other" and as such could cue a sympathetic response. Sympathetic versions of Dracula were also depicted in *House of Dracula* (Kenton, 1945), where the vampire is seen "longing for release from his vampiric "malady"" (Silver & Ursini, 1993[1975], p.90), and *The Vampire's Ghost* (Selander, 1945), in which Webb Fallon, a reluctant vampire helps a young traveler and later falls in love with the traveler's fiancée (a love which eventually destroys him). Furthermore, in the early 1970s a number of sympathetic black vampire movies – *Ganja and Hess* (Gunn & Noveck, 1973), *Blacula* (Crain, 1972) and *Scream Blacula Scream* (Kelljan, 1973) emerged. These examples show that other vampire characters, additionally to Louis and Lestat, were bringing the figure of the vampire back to the image of an enchanting other, pulling away from the metaphysical monster Dracula represented.

It becomes evident that even though the dark figure of Stoker's vampire, strongly associated with evilness, there were still various instances where a reading of vampire characters as enchanting others was possible. Yet, while the image of the alluring outsider seems to be, as Auerbach puts it, "dramatically generational" (Auerbach 1995, p. 5), especially as the vampire enters the 20th century it is mostly perceived as an antihero, and more specifically the type of antihero several disenchanting generations were prepared to embrace specifically 'because of its curse' rather than in spite of it (Carter, 1997[1988], p.27, emphasis in original). In other words, it is not that 20th century audiences embraced vampires because they merely choose to neglect the traits associated with vampiric nature, but in fact vampire characters were appealing because of these traits. For instance, in the late 1980s Margaret Carter suggested that "[t]oday, creators of fictional vampires often choose the Romantic path of identification with the 'alien' supernatural being, rather than with the superstitious majority bent on excluding and destroying him or her" (Carter, 1997[1988], p.28). She argues that contemporary audiences find the vampire's traditional outsider status very appealing. Carol Senf, similarly states that "the changing attitudes towards authority and toward rebellion against authority have [...] led to a more sympathetic treatment of the vampire" (Senf, 1988, p.150).

Thus, it seems that from the 20th century onwards vampires escaped the metaphysical status appointed to them by Stoker and became again alluring others. More specifically, Jules Zanger identifies two central shifts in the genre of vampire fiction that led to the vampire's deposition from metaphysical status to an outsider and as such a more sympathetic character.

First, the new vampire “tends to be communal, rather than solitary as was Dracula” (Zanger, 1997, p.18). Dracula resided in a castle far away from other humans and isolated from other supernatural creatures,²⁸ whereas 20th century vampires tend to find their home in cities amongst humans and form groups (families or covens) with others of their kind. Consequently, instead of the appropriately narrow range of emotions displayed by Dracula—”hunger, hate, bitterness, contempt” (Zanger, 1997, p.22)—the new vampires’ “communal condition permits them to love, to regret, to doubt, to question themselves, to experience interior conflicts and cross-impulses—to lose, in other words, that monolithic force possessed by Dracula, his unalterable volition” (Zanger, 1997, p.22). Secondly, the vampire’s motives became domesticated and individualized rather than grand evil schemes. The vampire’s acts are now “expressions of individual personality and condition” rather than “cosmic conflict between God and Satan” (Zanger, 1997, p.18). As far as Zanger is concerned, “[t]his new, demystified vampire might as well be our next-door neighbor” (Zanger, 1997, p.19).

In other words, the “new vampire” is an outsider but not a monster; it has ties of family and friendship and its actions are driven by motives very much like those that drive human behavior, and therefore the vampire is in that sense humanized. So, vampires largely return to their first image, which represented an alluring otherness (something strange and unfamiliar but yet appealing), and their vampiric traits are mostly seen as misfortunes they did not invite. Stripped of their metaphysical nature and capable of human thoughts and emotions, these vampires’ killer traits are seen as something imposed on them and not a result of a choice made freely and knowingly. This association leads to a further sympathetic response, as from that point of view vampires are seen as innocent because they did not invite vampirism, and thus they suffer due to tragic circumstances outside their control. The sympathy provoked by the fact that this type of vampires is usually seen as fighting against their “misfortune” by resisting their urges (or at least show remorse for their evil tendencies) is especially evident in fans, who state that this significantly adds to their sympathetic viewings of characters:

Fan A: the vampire type that I like—is the romantic type...you know he was a soulful creature ... it was the romance of it.

Fan B: they’re human but they have this problem. They happen to be a vampire. Like in *Forever Knight* you know. He’s trying to become human again.

Fan C: And all of a sudden you realize that this is not a monster, or if he is, then we all are. And again, he’s just a lonely, lonely sad, beautiful creature. Again, I root for the monster. I can’t help it. (Anonymous fans quoted in M. Williamson, 2003, p.102)

To sum up, starting off as an enchanting rogue figure and then being presented as an incarnation of evil only to return to its affiliation with enchanting otherness, the portrait of the vampire in fiction has undergone many changes throughout time. In the 20th century the image of the vampire largely emerges as that of the antihero, a figure capable of human thoughts and emotions that fights against the misfortunes fate has brought upon its path. Restored as part of society but still not fully accepted by it, these vampires, being able to experience human emotions struggle with issues of sexuality and love, friendship and betrayal, guilt and remorse; they form relationships both with humans and with each other and seek to accomplish very human goals. This humanization makes the vampire a more ambiguous creature that does not by default fall under the binary rules of good and evil. As a result, audiences adopt more sympathetic views on the vampire, who is perceived as no longer

²⁸ In the novel, even though Dracula has a faithful minion from the beginning of the story and turns one of the other characters into a vampire later in the plot, he is not seen wishing to develop relationships with them and clearly prefers his solitary nature.

merely threatening but also alluring. An enchanting outsider, who offers the appeal of intimacy and eternal life, draws upon the audiences' feelings of sympathy towards the outcast and is able to cue complex emotional reactions.

2.2 *The Vampires in Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

Having briefly discussed so far instances where vampires were presented as sympathetic and referred to the image connected to vampires in the 20th century, it is time to look at the vampires of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and see where they stand in relation to this framework of knowledge. Although the vampires of the show are 20th century vampires, and as such partly draw on conventions of alluring outsiders, the show mixes elements from more than one vampire mythology and adds a few new perspectives of its own. As a result, all in all Buffy's vampires are a blend of the old, the new, and the original, which allows the writers flexibility in creating vampire personalities and discussing a diverse set of issues through the vampires in the show. The evil vampires portrayed in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* rely heavily on the myth surrounding the figure of Dracula. For instance, even though, the show does not mention religion to be the source of Buffy's powers,²⁹ religious items are used in fighting vampires. As Stacey Abbott remarks: "Joss Whedon's vampires seem to make a return to a pre-modern representation of vampirism" (Abbott, 2001, para.1).³⁰ So, drawing on pre-modern vampire myths, crosses and holy water can hurt the vampires of the show, although the source of these objects' power, Christianity, is almost completely ignored, as the show avoids explicit religious references.

Furthermore, (initially) the show returns to binary distinctions between good and evil and all vampires are defined as pure evil because they lack a human "soul."³¹ As a result of binary notions of good and evil, a clear distinction between two poles is established: Buffy and her friends on the one hand and the soulless vampires (and other supernatural soulless creatures) on the other. As the vampires Buffy fights against are soulless, they have more in common with the ruthless blood-sucking fiend Dracula than with the alluring outsiders of the 20th century vampire myths. They seem incapable of human emotions and are mostly driven by their need to accomplish some grand evil scheme (like bringing hell on earth). Showing no remorse in their need for blood, they relentlessly pursue human prey (South, 2001, p.96). As Giles, Buffy's watcher, says to the rest of the group in one of the first episodes:

The books tell that the last Demon to leave this reality fed of a human, mixed their blood. He was a human form possessed—infected—by the Demon's soul. He bit another, and another ... and so they walk the earth, feeding. Killing some, mixing their blood with others to make more of their kind ("The Harvest," S01E02).

²⁹ In fact, as viewers find out in the last season, the first Slayer was created by letting a demon enter the girl, so the source of the Slayer's power is one would say rather demonic and not holy ("Get It Done," S07E15).

³⁰ Abbott in *A Little Less Ritual and a Little More Fun: the Modern Vampire in Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (Abbott, 2001) discusses, among other things, Buffy's cross and comes to the conclusion that while the presence of the crucifix in the show seems to maintain the association of vampires with evil, religious items are merely used as weapons of the Slayer's arsenal and do not carry Christian meanings.

³¹ In later seasons, the idea of vampires as creatures purely evil because they lack a soul seems to become less and less central, as the show moves from a black and white distinction of good and evil into gray areas. In the first seasons, it seemed as though the characters who had a soul were always prone to do good, however as most of the central characters have a taste of the bad side in later seasons the idea that those with a soul are not capable of evil is challenged, so the clean distinctions of good and evil no longer stand and consequently the idea that those without a soul are incapable of good is questioned as well.

So, all in all the vampires of the show are purely evil, remorseless fiends, because once created they are stripped of their humanity and even though they may sometimes look human, they have no soul.

The notion of the soul, introduced as early as the second episode by Giles in the above statement, is crucial in the show's mythology, and especially in the first seasons it is used as a criterion in separating good from evil characters. As Giles' statement about the first vampire suggests, the show's notion of the "soul" is influenced by the Platonic idea of the soul as an entity separate from the body. In other words the show treats the soul and the body as connected but clearly separate entities, which allows for the soul to leave a body and another (demon) soul to inhabit it. Additionally, the show connects this idea of the soul as a separate entity with identity, so the vampire identities are presented as un-connected to the identities the victims had before becoming vampires. In fact, when one is turned into a vampire, the soul, together with the human identity and conscience, leaves the body to be inhabited by a second "soul," that of the demon. This is made even more clear later in the same episode, when Xander continues to impute some of his friend's Jesse's identity to the vampire Jesse and Giles immediately corrects this misconception:

"Now you listen to me. Jesse is dead. You have to remember that when you see him you're not looking at your friend. You're looking at the thing that killed him" ("The Harvest," S01E02).



Figure 1: One of the evil vampires in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

So the notion of the soul clearly separates vampires from humans, and in order for this distinction to be even clearer vampires can easily be distinguished from humans by their ugly "game faces" (the term "game face" is a term used by the main characters in the show and it refers to the following characteristics: ridged foreheads, yellow eyes, and large fangs). Even though vampires have the ability to look human at will, especially the purely evil vampires of the show rarely do. This reinforces their demonic status and helps maintain the binary distinction of good and evil. On the other hand, as Abbott has also pointed out, the show has "gradually disembedded itself from these traditions in order to create a modern vampire and slayer, both independent and self reliant" (Abbott, 2001, para.2). For instance, the first "Big Bad" (show terminology that refers to the main villain that Buffy fights throughout each

season) that Buffy had to face in Season One, is the Master, a vampire physiognomically inspired by *Nosferatu* (Murnau, 1922), whose only goal is to bring forth the apocalypse by opening the portal to hell. Whereas in Season Two the vampires Spike and Drusilla, who are introduced as Buffy's main enemies, are modeled after Sid Vicious of the punk rock group The Sex Pistols and his girlfriend Nancy Spungen and are romantically involved. Their relationship blurs the binary distinction of good and evil, as firstly it shows they are capable of complex emotions and furthermore on many occasions it acts as the motivation behind their actions.

Therefore, even though the show's vampire mythology is initially largely influenced by Dracula and consequently the majority of its vampires are presented as soulless evil fiends, a few of the show's undead characters demonstrate many qualities Zanger ascribes to the "new" vampire such as moral ambiguity and complex emotions (Zanger, 1997, p.21-22). Despite the fact that *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* introduced vampires as vicious creatures that kill relentlessly without any remorse and whose primal aim is to ensure chaos and mayhem, some of the show's vampires evolve into characters able to form relationships and experience complex emotions, and prove to be driven by more complicated (and much more human) motivations than the need for blood. In the end, the show uses elements from different vampire mythologies to create its own antipathetic and sympathetic vampires. The two primary recurring male vampire characters, Angel and Spike, are those that make the shift from antipathetic evil fiends to sympathetic complex characters possible, and thus analyzing these two characters will be the focus of the next two chapters.

2.3 Approaching the Sympathetic Vampires (Methodology)

The vampires presented in the previous section, those soulless remorseless fiends that seek blood and chaos, are better understood as what Smith refers to as stick figures and not characters (Smith, 1995, p.111). Stick figures are agents that have a body, face, can speak a natural language and so forth but do not possess a particular recognizable body, face or idiolect which would serve to distinguish them from other human agents in the minds of the spectators (ibid, p.111). It follows that in order for someone to be considered a character, for Smith, she must be able to be individualized (possessing traits that would clearly distinguish her from other human agents in the narrative) and re-identified (ibid, p.110). The majority of the vampires in the show, even though they are discriminable individuals (discrete agents that are persistent through time) in the eyes of the audience, they cannot be known as individualized characters, simply because viewers cannot tell if they have seen this particular agent before or whether she is simply another member of the same class (ibid, p.116). Put differently, even though most of the show's vampires have characteristics that separate them from other human characters (such as their "game faces"), they are not associated with unique characteristics, so they all simply fall under the category "vampires" and usually become nothing more than creatures Buffy fights and kills during her patrols throughout the city.

Naturally the show has some vampires that are characters and not mere stick figures, and some of these vampire characters are even sympathetic. It is on these characters that I shall focus my analysis. According to Smith, when engaging with characters one develops an emotional response through what he calls "the structure of sympathy" (ibid, p.5). As discussed in Chapter 1, there are three stages that constitute the structure of sympathy: recognition, alignment and allegiance. In recognition the character is initially assigned traits, which the audience corresponds to analogical ones found in persons in the real world (until

this is explicitly contradicted by descriptions in the text) (ibid, p.82). These traits construct the character as a unified person that can be re-identified throughout the narrative. Following recognition is alignment, the stage where the viewer is placed in relation to the characters, in terms of access to their actions (spatio-temporal attachment), as well as to their thoughts, feelings and desires (subjective access). In this stage the audience further associates the character with traits that this time correspond to her actions, thoughts and emotions.

Finally, allegiance is when the audience develops a moral and emotional engagement with the character through assessing the character traits that have been associated with her. It is important to stress that this assessment does not rely mostly on a universal set of standards that can also be applied to real life situations, but the traits are largely judged in relation to the situations the characters experience and in comparison to traits assigned to other characters in the narrative. However, informed audiences, i.e. those that have been acquainted with similar characters in other fictions facing analogous situations, will also use the framework of knowledge they have previously developed in approaching the traits connected to the characters. The stage of allegiance is the one where the emotional reactions are actually developed. If the character traits that have been assigned to the character in the stages of recognition and alignment are deemed desirable or at least favorable through the process of assessing them, a sympathetic response will be cued (in the opposite scenario there is an antipathetic response towards the character).

Crucially, each of the stages of engaging with characters does not work in isolation, but the stages work together and especially recognition and alignment are essential for allegiance to take place. The stick figures of the show are not individualized and as such cannot be re-identified and therefore there is not stage of recognition for them. As a result one cannot talk about sympathetic (or even antipathetic) reactions towards one of these agents. However the characters of Angel and Spike become re-occurring characters and as such they stay on the show for a much longer period than any other vampire. This allows for the three stages of the structure of sympathy to take place and therefore an analysis of the traits that are associated with these vampires in order to cue a sympathetic response in the spectators is possible. Furthermore, as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is a series that was running for seven years, there was enough time for the characters of both Angel (who appears from Season One to Three) and Spike (who is introduced in Season Two but becomes a permanent member of the cast in Season Four) to undergo various changes and it is interesting to see how these changes cue alterations in the audience's emotional reactions towards these characters.

In approaching the sympathetic male vampire character of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and the emotional reactions towards them I use Smith's three stages of engagement. I first look at the stage of recognition, where I examine the episode, which introduces the character in the show, to see how both the physical traits that are assigned to him and the linguistic cues that accompany him (such as proper names, names that designate social roles, pronouns and descriptions) are used to associate the character with certain traits. As at the stage of recognition the character is individualized and re-identified, especially in visual media, the physical appearance –the body the face and the voice– plays a rather important role as it serves as the main means of separating the character from others. Furthermore, physical characteristics exert an important influence on the perception of the traits of the characters, as research has shown that people tend to associate certain physical characteristics with specific character traits (Hoffner & Cantor, 1991). The same can also occur with linguistic cues, as they too can be associated with certain traits (Bower & Forgas, 2000). Therefore, in the episode the character is introduced he is already associated with specific character traits that

the audience can assess and decide if they are favorable or not, and, thus, develop an initial emotional response. So, after describing the traits that the introductory episode assigns to the characters, I explain how these traits can be perceived as desirable (or at least favorable) and as such can evoke a sympathetic response towards the character.

As the show was on the air for seven years, it is impossible to analyze every instance of alignment with the characters of Angel and Spike. So, after analyzing the introductory scene for each character, I focus on the most important examples of spatio-temporal alignment and subjective access. In other words, I look at parts of the plot where the audience learns significant details about the characters' actions as well as their thoughts and emotions, either by being spatio-temporally aligned with them or through spatio-temporal alignment with other major characters, such as Buffy. Through these details the viewers will assign further traits to the characters and after deciding if these new traits are desirable or not, they will adjust or reinforce the emotional response they had developed towards the character in the stage of recognition. Allegiance can shift as the traits associated with the characters can be revised or even rejected based on later information; therefore the twists in the plot are significantly important in maintaining a sympathetic emotional response towards the characters. Especially in a show that runs as long as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, there is plenty of time to present the audience with new data that could completely alter their perception of a certain character, so in my analysis I will deal with various changes in the characters' story arc that can shift allegiance towards them.

Finally, as these vampire characters, although part of the main cast, are not the protagonists, it is important to note Buffy's and other main characters' attitude towards them. As Tan and Fjida indicate, to a large extent the viewer shares in the feelings of the protagonist (Tan & Frijda, 1999, p.52), therefore Buffy's reactions towards Angel and Spike will influence the audience's emotional reactions towards these characters. So, when approaching the emotions these characters can cue, I do not focus only on the parts of the plot that reveal the actions and the thoughts, emotions and desires of Angel and Spike, but also refer to instances where viewers learn about Buffy's actions, thoughts and emotions towards these characters, as her positive opinion can lead to a sympathetic response. Additionally, as Carroll explains, the reaction of surrounding characters affects the audience's perception of the character (Carroll, 1999, p.30), therefore the feelings the other main characters, mainly Giles, Xander and Willow, who form Buffy's core group of friends and allies, are also important in analyzing the audiences' emotional reactions towards the two vampires. Consequently, my analysis does not only deal with the traits assigned to Angel and Spike at the stages of recognition and alignment but will also take into account the way these characters are perceived by the core characters and the protagonist as their opinions can influence the audience's view on these vampires.

Chapter 3

Angel - The One with the Angelic Face

Angel is the first sympathetic vampire of the show, as his character is introduced as early as Season One. The sympathetic feelings towards him are largely based on his association with character traits that are considered desirable, as well as on his acceptance by Buffy and her friends. Angel's character is introduced in the very first episode of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, "Welcome to the Hellmouth," and even though he is rather ambiguous initially, throughout the show Angel is largely connected with traits that have positive connotations, and thus can lead to a sympathetic reading of the character. As explained in previous chapters, the first character scenes are part of the stage of recognition at which the character is initially assigned traits that the audience links to analogical ones found in persons in the real world (until this is explicitly contradicted by descriptions in the text) (Smith, 1995, p.82). These traits construct the character as a unified person that can be re-identified throughout the narrative. Also, it is based on these traits that the initial emotional response will occur. The audience will examine and evaluate these traits to decide whether or not they are desirable (or at least favorable) in relation to the other characters and emotionally react accordingly. This first impression will be either reinforced or altered, based on the information that the audience will gather throughout the show at the stage of alignment, when the viewers learn about the character's actions and emotional and mental status. All in all, Angel is mostly associated with traits that are desirable and as such present him as a sympathetic character, even though at times he is also connected to some negative traits, as he is after all a vampire and therefore his character has a monstrous side.

3.1 A Handsome Stranger

At the stage of recognition the physical appearance –the body the face and the voice– plays a rather important role, as especially in visual media it is the main element used in re-identifying the character. These characteristics, though, do not only serve in establishing the character as an individual that can be re-identified throughout the narrative, but also associate

the character with traits that are used in evaluating her at the stage of allegiance. Physical characteristics, and especially attractiveness, exert an important influence on the perception of the traits of the characters. As research has shown, physical attractiveness is perceived as connected to socially desirable personality traits (Hartfiend & Sprecher, 1986 quoted in Hoffner & Cantor, 1991, p.66).³² So, characters that seem attractive will also be seen as possessing character traits more favorable than other, less attractive characters and thus the attractive characters would be seen as more sympathetic. Studies have also shown that physique or body type is related to personality judgments as well, and that, for instance, muscular athletic people were perceived as stronger, more self-reliant and more likely to be leaders (Wells & Siegel, 1961 quoted in Hoffner & Cantor, 1991, p.66).³³ These characteristics are also desirable, and therefore those that will be connected with traits such as these will be considered sympathetic.

It follows that if the character of Angel is considered generally attractive and in possession of physical traits that are associated with characteristics such as strength and leadership, he will tend to be seen as a relatively sympathetic character at the stage of recognition. In fact, various scholars believe that Angel is frequently portrayed as “dark and handsome” (Wilcox, 1999, p.16); “a real beauty” (Owen, 1999, p.27); “a Prince Charming” (Levine & Schneider, 2003 p.307); and “a school girl’s fantasy” (Jarvis, 2001, p.262), and he is consistently presented as one of the most masculine characters on the show (Owen, 1999, p.27).³⁴ It appears then that the character of Angel is considered attractive and masculine and, therefore his physical appearance can associate him with desirable traits. According to the previously mentioned studies about the relation between physical appearance and character perception, Angel’s attractive and muscular appearance will portrait him as someone possessing positive character traits and as a strong person one can rely upon. Thus, at the stage of recognition, where the body the face and the voice of the character play a rather important role, the associations that can be made based on his physical appearance would invite a sympathetic reading of the character.

³² As Hoffner and Cantor point out, studies have shown that the same behavior is evaluated differently when an attractive or unattractive person performs it (Hoffner & Cantor, 1991, p.66). However, one should keep in mind that even though it seems most people are inclined to associate positive traits with attractiveness, there will be some instances when that will not be the case.

³³ Hoffner and Cantor refer to studies that examine the connection between physique and personality judgments and come to the conclusion that some body traits are associated with specific character traits (Hoffner & Cantor, 1991, p.66-67). Although that can be accurate for most viewers, there will be cases when physique will not strongly influence the perception of characters.

³⁴ Apart from the various scholars that mention the characters’ attractiveness, in the extras of the DVD edition of Season One of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* the show’s creator, Joss Whedon, explicitly states that David Boreanaz was chosen to portray Angel mostly because the women in the casting crew said they found him attractive (Whedon, 1997).



Figure 2: Angel in his introductory scene

Adding to the physical image, the stage of recognition also includes linguistic cues that assign traits to the character. Therefore, the dialogue at the introductory scene of each character is also important in revealing certain traits about the character. The first time that Buffy and the audience meet Angel, he follows her into an alley, and as she has never seen him before the situation seems dangerous and she attacks him, thinking he's planning to harm her.

Angel: Ah, heh. Is there a problem, ma'am?

Buffy: Yeah, there's a problem. Why are you following me?

Angel: I know what you're thinking. Don't worry, I don't bite. ("Welcome to the Hellmouth," S01E01)

At this stage the audience (as well as Buffy) know nothing about Angel and therefore, apart from his physical appearance, the first dialogue between the two characters has significant potential to affect impressions about Angel (at least at the stage of recognition). Especially the phrase "I don't bite" is rather significant, as it has various implications in the show's context. Generally, "I don't bite" is a commonly used phrase to imply one means no harm, but at the same time in the world of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* it could also signify not being a vampire, as biting is highly associated with vampiric urges. So, Angel by using this specific phrase introduces the idea that he is not a danger to Buffy and thus her initial reaction towards him was mistaken. He, also, implicitly acknowledges the fact that vampires exist and he is not on their side.

At the same time however in the context of the series, someone approaching the Slayer in a dark alley would most likely be a foe rather than a friend,³⁵ so even though Angel implies that he is on Buffy's side by differentiating himself from vampires, his character remains rather ambiguous as he is associated both with traits that could lead to a sympathetic reading and with traits that carry negative connotations. The ambiguity of his character is reinforced later in the dialogue, as despite the fact that Angel gives Buffy information which would help her

³⁵ In real life situations a girl approached by an unknown male in a dark alley is naturally cause for alarm as his intentions might be harmful, but especially in the world of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* the protagonist usually gets attacked by various demons if she is found walking alone in dim lit streets. Therefore, as Angel first approaches Buffy in a dark alley, this classifies him as a potential enemy.

stop a certain group of vampires, he remains rather cryptic about who he is and what his intentions are.

Buffy: Who are you?

Angel: Let's just say...I'm a friend.

Buffy: Yeah, well, maybe I don't want a friend.

Angel: I didn't say I was yours. ("Welcome to the Hellmouth," S01E01)

Although the social status "friend" has positive correlations that could be seen as one of the character's positive traits, which have the potential to cue a sympathetic emotional response towards him, his last remark, "I didn't say I was yours," reinforces the ambivalence of his character. In his introductory scene, Angel uses phrases such as "I don't bite" and "I'm a friend" that could associate him with favorable traits, however he is also in possession of traits that have negative connotations (as he follows the protagonist into a dark alley and he seems reluctant to reveal information about himself), so he can still potentially prove to be dangerous. Therefore, even though Angel's physical appearance invites a sympathetic reading of his character, the linguistic cues associated with him at the stage of recognition are rather ambiguous, and thus more information is required for a sympathetic emotional response towards Angel to be developed.

In addition to physical appearance and linguistic cues, to complete the stage of recognition, the character is connected to a name. In the case of Angel, the name is revealed not on the first encounter with Buffy, which ends with his cryptic statement about him being a friend, but later in that episode, after the information he has given her on their first meeting has been indeed proven useful, and thus the implication that he intends to help Buffy in her fight against evil has been confirmed.

Buffy: Sorry you had to wait. Okay. Look, if you're gonna be popping up with this cryptic wise man act on a regular basis can you at least tell me your name?

Angel: Angel.

Buffy: Angel. It's a pretty name. ("Welcome to the Hellmouth," S01E01)

Names do not only serve to identify characters but also to connect them with various connotations. As Gordon Bower and Joseph Forgas explain, words have numerous associations, some of which are pleasant, some unpleasant and many neutral in tone (Bower & Forgas, 2000, p.106), therefore it follows that making assumptions about the possible meanings attributed to each word is hard. However, despite the numerous assumptions one can make about the meanings associated with each word, it seems safe to assume that Angel's name adds to the character's ambivalence, as it carries both positive and negative connotations. In the Christian tradition, for instance, angels generally have positive associations, but in the context of the show one might also think of dark or fallen angels, concepts that lead to rather negative connotations. So, although there seems to be an invitation of seeing Angel's name as one that carries positive connotations, because through Buffy's comment, "It's a pretty name," the audience is reminded of the pleasant meanings of the word "angel," the name could still be interpreted using the unpleasant connotations that are associated with the term "angel." Thus, it seems that the character's name also contributes to the ambiguous image Angel is associated with in the stage of recognition.

On the basis of these very first attributes of the character made available to the viewers, they will appeal to schemata related to person-types, and draw information based upon their cultural knowledge. This process will enable viewers to produce hypothetically fuller versions of the characters than the text, taken as an object, actually puts before them (Smith, 1995, p.120-121). In other words, they will attribute traits to the character based on the information

they have acquired from the text, even if that information is not so complete. As Jonathan Glover puts it: “we ascribe beliefs in objects in clusters, often going well beyond any evidence we could explicitly use” (Glover quoted in Smith, 1995, p.121). So, Angel based on his physical characteristics, the linguistic cues provided in the dialogue with Buffy in the first episode and his name, will be associated with schemata that have both positive and negative connotations. As the character is connected with traits that can lead to a sympathetic reading – such as attractiveness, masculinity as well as his classification as a possible ally of Buffy’s (he provides information that proves to be useful) – but also with traits that could be read as rather negative – he provides very little information about himself and his motives, and his name does carry some negative connotations – it is too soon to assume that the feelings developed towards him will be sympathetic. Thus, although it seems that the idea of a sympathetic emotional response towards his character is entertained, as he possesses some traits that seem desirable (or at least favorable), his character remains rather ambiguous at this stage.

3.2 A Vampire with a Soul

At the stage of recognition the information associated with Angel is rather ambivalent and therefore he could be read either as a sympathetic character or an antipathetic one. It is possible that his physical attractiveness could make some viewers more inclined to a sympathetic reading, but all in all the ambiguity of this appearance in the first episode would mostly lead to mixed feelings towards his character. The stage of alignment, where the audience will acquire information regarding Angel’s thoughts, feelings and actions, can reinforce or possibly alter this first impression, as naturally the initial schemata associated with the character may be revised, or even rejected, based on later information. As discussed in Chapter 1, especially in the case of television shows, because they run for at least a year, there is enough time for changes in the character’s story arc that may alter the emotional reactions towards that character. So, even though at the stage of recognition Angel was presented as rather ambiguous and as a result some viewers could be prone to an antipathetic reading of his character, a sympathetic response will still be possible if he is associated mostly with positive schemata at the stage of alignment.

Alignment with the character is not possible for a few episodes, as Angel does not make an appearance in episodes two to six, but he returns as the focus of episode seven, which is entitled after him. In this episode, although initially he is connected to favorable traits that could lead to a sympathetic reading of the character, any positive schemata that are associated with his character are challenged when both Buffy and the audience learn of his vampiric nature. Because of his absence from the show for a few episodes, for some viewers this is their first acquaintance with the character. So, in the beginning of the episode, to reinstate some positive traits about the character before the revelation that he is a vampire, Buffy tells her close friend Willow that she has been having romantic dreams about Angel. As explained in the previous chapter, viewers tend to be influenced by the protagonist’s opinion of other characters (Tan & Frijda, 1999, p.52), thus the fact that Buffy seems emotionally interested in Angel would make even the viewers who have not seen episode one consider him as a potentially sympathetic character rather than an enemy.

As the episode continues, the character is further associated with traits that could again make Angel be perceived as sympathetic. Additionally to Buffy’s romantic interest in him that could influence the viewers’ opinion of the character, he is presented as an active ally in the

battle against evil.³⁶ In his first scene in this episode, Angel helps Buffy fight off an attack from a group of fierce vampires, and they go back to her house seeking shelter.³⁷ Angel (after Buffy's invitation) spends the night there,³⁸ and, even though there are romantic implications, nothing explicit happens during the night. This instance again encourages a sympathetic reading of the character, as not only does Buffy obviously trust him – a fact that could influence the audience, as she is the protagonist –, but also he is willing to risk his life for her, which would probably make him seem in possession of desirable traits. However, later in the episode, any positive associations made in relation to Angel's character are challenged, as he is connected with the vampire schema. When Buffy returns from school the next day, Angel is still hiding in her room and they kiss for the first time. But, Angel interrupts the romantic moment and pulls away, and when he turns to face Buffy (and the audience) again, it is revealed he is a vampire, as he has his “game face” on.

A worried Buffy questions her watcher the next day: “Can a vampire ever be a good person?” to which Giles, re-affirming the mythology of the show about vampires as evil soulless fiends, responds that:

A vampire isn't a person at all. It may have the movements, the memories, even the personality of the person that it took over, but it is still a demon at the core. There is no half-way (“Angel,” S01E07).

As discussed in the previous chapter, the vampires of the show are generally seen as one-track-minded blood-lusting monsters, and thus Buffy, seeing no way for Angel to be good and assuming his previous helpful behavior is some sort of act, is forced to tell Giles about finding out that Angel is a vampire. Later in the episode, Giles, having acquired this new information, identifies Angel after researching his sources as a watcher:

Giles: There's mention some two hundred years ago in Ireland of, of Angelus, the one with the angelic face.

Buffy: They got that right. (“Angel,” S01E07)

Even though some of the previously acquired information about the character is reaffirmed (his attractive physical appearance and his name), his status as a friendly ally to Buffy in the fight against evil is questioned as he is identified as a 240-year-old vampire and his vampiric nature contradicts any desirable traits connected with his character so far.

Although Angel's ambiguous image in episode one allowed for a sympathetic reading of the character, if he was connected with more positive traits via his thoughts and actions, and in the beginning of episode seven the character could be read as a sympathetic one, the term “vampire” that is now connected to Angel has negative and threatening connotations. Every time the audience is faced with new information about the character, the newly acquired data are evaluated and associated with various connotations that re-affirm or alter the emotional response the audience had towards the character up till that point. The new set of information

³⁶ In his introductory scene in episode one he provides Buffy with information that helps her defeat a group of vampires, and thus it is implied that he could be her ally, however in episode seven this idea is taken one step further as he actually fights by Buffy's side.

³⁷ According to the vampire mythology of the show, vampires cannot enter anyone's home unless they are invited. So, when Angel and Buffy reach her house chased by the vampires, Angel hesitates at the doorstep until she explicitly tells him to come in. This could be interpreted as a hint about Angel's vampiric nature, but as the moment of hesitation lasts only for a few seconds, it is doubtful many of the viewers would have read so much into it.

³⁸ As he is injured from the fight, he is invited to stay over, but, although Buffy and Angel share a room, he sleeps on the floor next to her bed.

that connects Angel with the evil characters of the show leads to negative evaluations of the character, as the rest of the vampires in the show (at least the ones presented until that point) are soulless, ruthless killers. So, even though it seemed that a positive image of Angel could be constructed, as a character in possession of some positive traits, the schemata he was associated with are re-assessed in relation to the new information and this re-evaluation results in an emotional change, not only in the audience, but also in Buffy who decides to fight Angel and kill him, as she would with any other vampire.

However, during their fight it is revealed that there is something special about him that distinguishes Angel from the other vampires: he has a soul. Despite what the audience had learned about vampires until that point in the show, Angel seems to contradict the schema that has been established about vampires as soulless fiends. He says:

For a hundred years I offered an ugly death to everyone I met. And I did it with a song in my heart. And then I made an error of judgment. Fed on a girl about your age. Beautiful. Dumb as a post, but a favorite among her clan. The Romani - Gypsies. It was just before the turn of the century. The elders conjured the perfect punishment for me. They restored my soul. When you become a vampire, the demon takes your body. But it doesn't get the soul. That's gone. No conscience, no remorse...it's an easy way to live. You have no idea what it's like to have done the things I've done, and to care. I haven't fed on a living human being since that day ("Angel," S01E07).

The fact that Angel has a soul is one of the major influences in the feelings developed towards him, as it helps contradict the negative connotations associated with the vampire schema.

The presence of a soul clearly separates him from the other vampires of the show whose soulless nature was rather stressed in the first episodes. The vampires Buffy fights in the first episodes are single-minded killers as their "soul" is that of a demon, thus the fact that Angel has a human soul positions him somewhere in between humans and demons. The lack of a human soul renders vampires less than, or at least different from people, as the soul is also connected to identity. On the other hand, as Scott McLaren points out, the presence of a soul "carries the potentiality for personhood" (McLaren, 2005, para.10) which means that Angel, although still in possession of some vampire traits (such as strength or the need for blood to survive), has the potential to be considered a person. When the audience learned that Angel was a vampire, any sympathetic feelings towards him would have been questioned, as they were not in accordance with the new schema the character was associated with. However, soon after the revelation of his vampiric nature, the character provides information that diminishes the previous negative associations. So, his having a soul positions Angel away from the rest of the vampires and the negative connotations they are associated with, and makes it again possible for a sympathetic response to the character to occur.

However, besides opening the way for a sympathetic reading by separating Angel from the other vampires, the presence of a soul has other connotations as well. Angel, when he first reveals his having a soul to Buffy and the audience, stresses both the fact that he is suffering for crimes he has committed in the past and that he has been resisting his urges to feed on human prey. Suffering, in general, tends to result in a sympathetic response in audiences, thus the fact that Angel mentions that he is feeling guilt and remorse for what he has done can evoke sympathy. His vampiric nature is not seen as his fault, as it is something that happened to him (McLaren, 2005, para.10) and not a result of a choice he has made on his own free will. So from that perspective the ensouled Angel is not responsible for what the demon Angel did and therefore the feelings of guilt and remorse he is experiencing can be seen as a

misfortune that is causing him suffering. As audiences take pity on characters that are suffering due to their misfortune (Caroll, 1999, p.26; Tan, 1996, p.247), a sympathetic response to Angel is likely. Additionally, as Milly Williamson has noted: “reluctance to kill (or at least a tortured conscience about not being able to resist it) is a key component in vampire fans’ sympathy with the vampire” (M. Williamson, 2005; p.291). The need for human blood in the vampire genre is presented as extremely powerful, so those that resist are perceived as possessing more preferable traits and as such are sympathetic.

So, the reference to Angel’s tortured conscience and his absence from hunting humans, not only can evoke a sympathetic emotional reaction due to experiencing suffering but also calls upon the schemata audiences have developed about sympathetic vampires by appealing to the same elements that have made other vampires, such as the ones created by Anne Rice, sympathetic. After all, as Tan explains, it is not only factual knowledge that schemata consist of, part of the schemata is also the affect that has been attached to the schema by previous experiences. In his own words:

[w]hen someone fits into an existing person schema, then not only the meanings that are inherent in the schema are invoked but also the affect that has been attached to the schema by previous experience (Tan, 1995, p.168).

So, by evoking associations to other sympathetic vampires the producers³⁹ wish to transfer the affect attached to that schema to Angel’s character. This connection to the schema of sympathetic vampires is made even more explicit later in the show, in a scene in the episode “School Hard” in which Angel pretends to be evil to trick another vampire, Spike. He says referring to the Slayer: “She’s cute. Not too bright, though. Gave her the puppy-dog “I’m all tortured” act. Keeps her off my back when I feed!” The phrase “I’m all tortured” act, can be seen as a reference to Louis, the lead character in *Interview with the Vampire* (Rice, 1976), as he is a rather well known vampire character (especially to a contemporary audience of fans) that was tormented by his vampiric nature. Spike’s response makes the reference even clearer: “People still fall for that Anne Rice routine. What a world!” (“School Hard” S01E03). So, it becomes evident that the existence of a soul acts as a source of torment and resistance against vampiric urges, and as such creates associations between Angel and other sympathetic characters in order for this character to be read as sympathetic as well.

3.3 Relationships with Others

However, these initial associations are not enough to maintain sympathetic feelings towards Angel throughout his presence on the show. Apart from physical appearance and linguistic descriptions that carry various connotations, actions are also an important source of traits that the character is assigned and in the case of Angel already from the scene in which he describes how he got his soul back (an instance of subjective access as it reveals the characters thoughts and feelings) his actions are defined as desirable (or at least more favorable) in comparison to other similar characters in the narrative, as he is presented as different from the other vampires. In other words, the fact that Angel is attractive and masculine and, although a vampire, he is clearly different from the soulless demons in the show (as he carries the potential for personhood and does not attack humans), which is information that is associated with the character on the first two episodes he appears in, are

³⁹ In this thesis, I use the term ‘producers’ to refer to those that infuse the show with meanings.

traits that could evoke a sympathetic response. However, the producers do not stop there and there are more elements in the stage of alignment which present Angel as a character with desirable traits that would evoke a sympathetic response. First and foremost, Angel is accepted by Buffy and her close group of friends and allies.

Buffy who is the protagonist, influences the audience's positive emotional responses towards Angel, because, as also explained earlier, to a large extent the viewer shares in the feeling of the protagonist (Tan & Frijda, 1999, p.52). Buffy being the protagonist means that most of the time the viewers are aligned with her and consequently they will have access to her thoughts and feelings about the other characters through subjective access. As her feelings towards Angel are positive, the audience tends to see him as someone possessing favorable traits and, thus, a sympathetic character. Furthermore, Angel is accepted by the Scoobie Gang (Buffy's group of allies that actively help her in the fight against evil are referred to as the Scoobie Gang after the animated television show about teenage ghost chasers, *Scooby Doo* [Ruby, J. et al., 1970-2001]) and, as Carroll explains the reaction of surrounding characters affects the audience's perception of a character (Carroll, 1999, p.30), therefore the opinion of Buffy's friends, who form the group of core characters in the show, regarding Angel will influence the way the audience sees him. So, as Buffy trusts Angel and treats him as a valuable ally (even before she gets to know him well) and her friends develop sympathetic feelings towards him, the audience is invited to share these feelings and perceive his character as sympathetic. This is especially important in the case of Angel as in the show the audience is rarely spatio-temporally aligned solely with him; most of his scenes are with Buffy or one of her friends, so his character is largely defined by his relationship with the core characters of the show and thus their opinions will be an even larger influence on the viewers' emotional reactions towards Angel.

Adding to the sympathetic reaction that is cued by the opinion of the other characters towards him, Angel has been helping Buffy in this battle against evil since their very first meeting and continues to play that role as long as he is part of the show. As the world of the show especially in the first seasons is based on a clear distinction between the poles of good and evil, the fact that he helps Buffy positions him on the side of the "good guys" and this alliance with Good also encourages a sympathetic response towards his character. As Tan says, audiences tend to consider good guys as sympathetic (Tan 1996, p.168), so when Angel is seen as part of the good guys a sympathetic emotional response towards his character is possible. Furthermore, fighting alongside Buffy also means that he helps the protagonist achieve her goals; another characteristic that Tan says helps make characters sympathetic. According to Tan, audiences are delighted when the protagonist's goals are reached and they feel positively towards the other characters that help accomplish that goal (ibid, p.181). As Angel is one of the characters that Buffy relies on to achieve her goals, it follows that the audience will be prone to feel sympathy towards him. So, all in all, it becomes evident that by helping Buffy in the duty fighting the forces of darkness, Angel is associated with schemata that could trigger sympathetic responses.

Furthermore, Angel is not only someone who helps Buffy in her sacred duty, like her faithful friends Willow and Xander or her watcher Giles; he also occupies a special place where her emotions are concerned. As he is a vampire and she is the Slayer, there is a star-crossed lovers aspect to their relationship. As Giles points out in "Out of Mind, Out of Sight": "A vampire in love with a slayer, that is kind of poetic" (S01E11). In general their romantic relationship is one of the main focuses of the first seasons and again it helps in presenting Angel as a sympathetic character. As mentioned previously, the audience's feelings tend to be affected

by the opinions of the protagonist, and thus the romantic feelings Buffy has for Angel, make him appear sympathetic at the eyes of the audience. Additionally, audiences tend to wish for happy endings. Having a romantic belief in a just world they eagerly welcome signs that this belief is well founded after all (Tan & Frijda, 1999, p.161). So, in the case of the star-crossed lovers of the show, audiences wish for a happy ending to the relationship despite the obstacles that are presented. In that sense, they foster sympathetic feelings for Angel by empathetically imagining what it would be like to be in a relationship that seems doomed and adopting his goals wishing for happiness despite the odds. Not only the opinion of the protagonist presents him as someone with favorable traits, but also the star-crossed lovers schema along with the viewers' belief in justice trigger an empathetic response that could lead to sympathy.

3.4 A Twist in the Plot

A crucial issue to consider in analyzing sympathetic responses to this character is a twist in the plot, which for half a season makes him an extremely antipathetic character. So far the majority of the traits associated with the character have been leading towards a sympathetic viewing of Angel, however in the middle of Season Two his character undergoes a major change that comes in opposition with the positive traits connected to the character up to that point. As previously mentioned, Angel has a soul as the result of a curse cast upon him. However, one of the conditions of this curse, which neither he nor Buffy know until too late, is that he must be miserable; if he experiences "one moment of true happiness... that soul is taken from him" ("Innocence," S02E14). So, a sexual encounter with Buffy is enough for him to experience a moment of happiness and consequently become once more one of the most vicious vampires. Apart for the symbolic implications emphasizing the dangers of sex (according to Rhonda Willcox, the evil Angel represents the boy who changes his attitude and no longer calls after a night of passion [Willcox, 1999]), Angel's dramatic reversal poses questions in relation to the viewer's feelings towards his character. Up until that point Angel is presented as a character portraying various desirable traits and as such audiences tend to react sympathetically towards him, but when he loses his soul and is turned into Angelus (to create a differentiation between the good and evil side of the character, the soulful vampire is called Angel, while soulless he prefers to be called Angelus) he becomes obsessed with hurting Buffy (both emotionally and physically) and thus depicts a number of antipathetic traits.

Angelus is as focused on Buffy as Angel was, only, while Angel was aiming to protect and love her, Angelus is interested in tormenting her. So, throughout the second part of Season Two, Angelus seeks many ways to make the protagonist feel miserable, from writing in blood "Was it good for you, too?" over one of the bodies he knew Buffy would find, to drawing sketches of her and her mother while they were asleep and leaving them by the bedside for Buffy to find in the morning. In his quest to cause as much pain and suffering to Buffy and her friends as possible, Angelus comes across the statue of a demon, named Acatla, which can open a portal to hell. Even though Buffy is having a hard time to separate the feelings she has for him and to realize that, as he is evil again, she has to treat him as any other vampire, so when she learns of his scheme of bringing hell on earth she realizes she has no other choice but to kill him. At the same time that Buffy is confronting Angel, her friend Willow is trying to curse him again so that he can get his soul back and no longer be a threat. Although the ritual is successful and the soul is restored, this occurs after the ritual to open the portal has begun and Angel's blood that was used to open the gate is the one thing that can stop the process. A devastated Buffy kisses her disoriented lover (at that moment Angel has no

recollection of what has been going on) goodbye and plunges a sword through him, which causes Angel to get sucked into the hell dimension, which was about to open, and disappear (“Becoming – Part 2,” S02E22).

If the character’s appearance on the show had ended there, viewers would probably be left with mixed feelings, as a character that was generally presented as sympathetic through continuous associations with traits that seemed desirable or at least favorable, became antipathetic because he was connected with traits that carried negative connotations; and then he simply disappeared from the show at the end of the second season without resolving the contradictions of the feelings towards him. However, early in the next season, at the spot where the statue of Acatla used to stand a naked Angel falls out of the light to lay on the floor, sweaty and trembling (“Faith, Hope & Trick,” S03E03). In the next episode, while Buffy is patrolling, she gives chase to someone she sees running through the trees and is shocked to find out that someone is Angel. They fight, and Buffy manages to knock him out. She then takes him back to his place and chains him down, as he is feral and animalistic, like a wild animal.⁴⁰ By the end of this episode, Angel comes out of his animalist stage and is his old soulful self again, however he is clearly depicted as even more tormented than before (as a result of his experience in the hell dimension) as he is shown trembling in his sleep (“Beauty and the Beasts,” S03E04). In this way the character of Angel returns to the show and audiences have to (re)evaluate all the data about him to adopt a new attitude towards him.

3.5 Returning as a Hero

Being back on the show and the presence of his soul are not enough to reinstate the sympathy towards him. Naturally the audience having fresh memories of all Angelus’ evil deeds that have resulted in a shift in allegiance as the new traits associated with the character carried negative connotations, can not feel sympathetically towards Angel immediately when his character is re-introduced in Season Three. As discussed earlier, when audiences are confronted with information that is opposing the associations already made in relation to a character, this information is evaluated in order to determine whether or not it should affect the emotional reaction towards the character. In other words, when new data about a character are revealed, audiences evaluate this information in order to decide whether or not it is merely occurring and thereby should not be allowed to affect the schemata that have already been connected to the character (Smith, 1995, p.121). Therefore, in the case of Angel, audiences must decide if his evil nature is occurring and as such should be ignored, which would probably result in the sympathetic feelings developed towards him to resurface. So, the desirable (or at least favorable) traits that had been associated with the character before the shift in allegiance must be reinstated and presented as permanent characteristics, in order for the audience to be able to disregard the negative traits that were associated with the character for a while and thus reestablish a sympathetic response towards Angel.

The creators of the show have already begun reminding audiences about Angel’s desirable traits in the last episode of Season Two, entitled “Becoming,” where, before the end of the episode when Buffy kills Angelus, viewers get a glimpse of how Angel first saw Buffy. A

⁴⁰ As audiences learn in the first episode of the third season (“Anne,” S03E01), time seems to work differently in other dimensions. So, although Angel was away for what seemed to the other characters like a couple of months, it is implied that he spent centuries tortured in the hell dimension he was trapped in, which explains why he was not like his former self when he first ran into Buffy.

friendly demon named Whistler approaches a really weak Angel, who in order to resist his urges is staying away from people and is feeding on animals, and takes him on a ride to watch with him the first meeting between Buffy and her watcher. Buffy, still unaware of her calling, is getting out of school, a typical and rather superficial teenager. As her friends walk away, an older man approaches her and informs her she is chosen to save the world from vampires. In the next scene, Angel and Whistler are still following Buffy who is at a cemetery fighting a newly awakened vampire. Confused and frightened, she barely wins the fight only to return home to another stressful situation: her parents arguing. As Angel, through her bathroom window, watches Buffy burst into tears, he decides then and there to change his life in order to help her.

Whistler: She's gonna have it tough, that Slayer. She's just a kid. The world's full of big, bad things.

Angel: I wanna help her. I want...I wanna become someone.

Whistler: God, jeez, look at you. She must be prettier than the last Slayer. This isn't gonna be easy. The more you live in this world, the more you see how apart from it you really are. And this is dangerous work. Right now, you couldn't go three rounds with a fruit fly!

Angel: I wanna learn from you. ("Becoming – Part 2," S02E21)

This scene re-affirms all the positive traits that are associated with Angel's character throughout the show. First of all, he is immediately presented as significantly different from the rest of his kind as he has a soul and he fights to resist his vampiric urges. This could trigger both the schema of pity (feeling sorry for those who are suffering as a result of situations that are not their fault) and of sympathetic vampires (vampires that try to hold on to their human nature and do not give into the monster by resisting the urge to feed on the blood of humans), that both can act as cues for sympathetic responses. Furthermore, as soon as Angel sees Buffy and realizes how fragile she can be, he feels the need to protect her and is willing to fight against his own kind in order to keep her safe. In this case, the hero schema is triggered, as Angel is presented as a protector who altruistically goes against his nature. This schema also tends to cue a sympathetic response, as heroes are usually perceived as fighting for good and audiences are naturally inclined to feel sympathy for those on the good side. Finally, implied in the instance presented above is Angel's romantic interest towards Buffy, when Whistler says that she must be prettier than the last Slayer. So, the possibility of a relationship between them is assumed, as Angel does not deny the presence of the attraction Whistler implied. Triggering the audience's need for happy endings, once Angel is seen as the protagonist's object of affection, he could be seen as sympathetic as that would open up the possibility for a happy ending in the relationship (Buffy ending up with someone who is seen as antipathetic would probably not be considered a happy ending).

Therefore, all in all, this instance depicts Angel as a protector and lover as well as someone who is willing to go against his nature for altruistic reasons, in other words as someone representing the essentialist definition of good. As his attractiveness and his masculine characteristics reaffirm this image, the audience appealing to all of these desirable traits is invited to remember the sympathetic emotional reaction that had been developed towards his character even before Angelus is defeated and Angel returns. This way the audience could be more open to reinstating a sympathetic reading of the character in Season Three. Additionally, as soon as Angel is back on the show Buffy immediately accepts him back and after a while the rest of the Scoobie Gang treat him as they used to, which means that, as discussed earlier, the audience will tend to feel sympathy for Angel again affected by the opinions of the rest of the characters and especially Buffy's as she is the protagonist. Therefore, it becomes evident

that most of the positive traits associated with the character before his turning evil are reestablished, which would mean that the audience will probably be perceiving his evil nature as something occurring and thus will be able to react to the character sympathetically again. However, the producers in order to make sure sympathetic feelings towards Angel are reinstated do not merely reestablish the schemata that had made the character sympathetic in the past (such as they sympathy from the other characters, his positioning with the good guys and his love interest with Buffy) but also appeal to a new schema.

In “Amends” Angel is tormented by visions of his human victims and the guilt becomes so unbearable that he decides to end his life (already the show is appealing to the schema of pity and creating a sympathetic reaction to Angel for his suffering). So, he goes to a hilltop waiting for the sun to rise (in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* exposure to sunlight causes a vampire to burst into flames) where Buffy finds him and insists that despite what he has done in the past he has the power to do good, to make amends for his sinful ways. As she tries to convince him to take cover and he tries to make her see that there is no other way, it starts snowing preventing the sun from shining on Angel (“Amends,” S03E10). As the show is set in almost always-sunny Sunnydale, snow is seen as a divine sign that Angel can be good, resist his vampire nature and fight against the forces of evil. So there is an appeal to a new schema, which connects Angel with good, not merely because he does good but also as divine powers seem to protect him. At the same time, through Buffy’s pleas the audience is invited to see the difference between the evil character and the soulful one. She is able to love Angel because he has a soul, despite all of the evil things Angelus has done to her, and therefore the audience is also invited to treat Angelus and Angel as two different characters. In other words viewers are encouraged to see the evil traits associated with the character in the second half of Season Two not merely as occurring and as such disregardable in the emotional response towards him, but even completely unattached to Angel, and so unrelated to the process of evaluating the character. His return from hell and his miraculous rescue from the rays of sun in “Amends” re-enforce that separation and put Angel back on a path as a fighter of darkness on the side of Buffy; a position that aims to permanently reinstate the sympathetic feelings towards him.

This is a position that Angel occupies for the remaining time that he appears on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, as after Season Three it appears that his character had become so sympathetic to the viewers that the producers thought they could create a spin-off series where he would be the protagonist. It seems that the image of a vampire that fights against evil to atone for his sins, was rather appealing to audiences, as it was decided that a new show focused on Angel’s adventures could be a success. The new series, entitled *Angel*, follows Angel to Los Angeles, where he sets up Angel Investigations, an agency that aids people with supernatural-related problems. *Angel* ran for five seasons and its creation as well as its relatively long running time re-affirm the fact that Angel was a rather sympathetic character, as it appears he had enough fans to justify the decision of producing a new show in which he held the main role.

3.6 Summary and Conclusion

Angel occupies the position of the sympathetic vampire in the first three seasons of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Although he is introduced as a rather ambiguous character, the hope that he can turn out to be a sympathetic one is entertained even from his introductory scene. In the first episode the producers make sure to associate Angel with enough positive traits that he is

not read as antipathetic, even though there are still some elements of his character that could be seen as negative (for instance he is rather cryptic and his motivation is not clear). Furthermore, almost immediately after his introduction to the show (on the second episode in which he appears) it becomes evident that he will become Buffy's love interest, a position that would allow for a sympathetic reading of the character mostly based on the fact that the protagonist's opinion tends to influence the audience. However, shortly after Buffy expresses her interest in him, the possibility of a relationship between her and Angel is questioned when it is revealed that he is a vampire. Even though at first that could lead to antipathetic feelings towards the character, shortly after the revelation, Buffy and the audience learn that Angel has a soul and a sympathetic reading is made possible again. Furthermore, as he is clearly different from the other vampires and carries the potential for personhood, he is able to occupy the position of Buffy's star crossed lover.

As he enters the show mostly as the protagonist's love interest, Angel's character is to a very large extent defined by his relationships with the other characters. Mostly because of his relationship with Buffy, he becomes accepted by her group of friends. As a result he tends to be seen as sympathetic, because the other core characters and the protagonist, whose opinion usually influences the audience's perception, accept him and hold a positive opinion of him. Additionally to having a romantic relationship with Buffy and being accepted by her and her friends as a positive character, he helps the Slayer and the Scoobies in the fight against evil, a fact that can lead to a sympathetic reading of his character, as audiences are inclined to feel sympathy towards the "good guys." As Angel is a vampire, he is much more powerful than humans and thus he can truly aid Buffy in combat, whereas her friend usually provide other kinds of help, such as vital information on how to kill specific demons. Therefore, Angel plays a rather important role in relation to Buffy as he becomes romantically involved with her and also can physically protect her in a fight; he fulfills the role of protector and lover.

Therefore, all in all, it seems that in seasons One and Two Angel holds the role of a vampire with a soul, who becomes the protagonist's love interest as well as her ally in the fight for good to prevail. But, all these elements that are associated with the character are challenged once he loses his soul and turns into Angelus, as Angelus is almost the exact opposite of Angel. As a result the character is associated with various negative traits that lead to an antipathetic reading, however, after Angel's return in Season Three, a sympathetic reading of the character is reestablished. This is achieved by encouraging the audience to see Angel and Angelus as two different characters, and thus stop the antipathy felt for Angelus from being transferred to Angel's character. In order to make this point clear, apart from reinstating the relationship between Buffy and Angel as well as his position as her ally, a new schema is introduced. Angel is not only presented as someone who helps Buffy, but also someone who is as valuable as she is in the fight against evil, as his life is saved by divine intervention when he tries to commit suicide. Consequently, it seems that Angel during his last season in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* plays the role of what can be described as a true hero.

Chapter 4

Spike - An Unlikely Hero

Initially, Spike's sympathetic appeal is not emphasized, as at that stage of the show the role of the sympathetic vampire was already occupied by Angel – a vampire with a soul, on the path for redemption, who loves and is loved by Buffy. However, once Angel left the show, it seems that another sympathetic vampire had to be introduced and Spike was chosen to fulfill that role. While sympathetic emotional reactions for Angel are mostly triggered because he is accepted by the rest of the show's main characters, whose opinion influences the audience, and he is a champion for good (being part of the “good guys” that are usually seen as sympathetic especially in narratives of good versus evil), Spike is a more ambiguous character and his alliances with both the Scooby Gang and the forces of Good and Evil are not so clear cut, so sympathy for him is based on appealing to different schemata. Initially when the character is introduced in Season Two, the audience is given the impression he will be the Big Bad of that season and as such his character would be read as antipathetic. However, as Angel loses his soul and becomes the main threat to Buffy, Spike begins to take on a different path, which will eventually lead him to become the most popular character (alongside Buffy) by the seventh and final season of the show (M. Williamson, 2005, p.298)⁴¹. So, using once again the structure of sympathy (Smith, 1995) I will analyze the path of the second male re-occurring vampire in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* that evokes sympathetic reactions.

4.1 A Vampire with Traces of Humanity

In the first stage of the structure of sympathy, recognition, Spike is actually connected with schemata that can cue mixed emotional reactions as he is depicted as primarily evil but there

⁴¹ Interestingly, according to a biography of Joss Whedon by Candace Havens, Spike's character was “killed off in the original scripts” (Havens, 2003, p.43). However, it appears that the audience unexpectedly liked the character enough to make Whedon decide to “make last-minute changes that saved... [one] of the show's most popular characters” (ibid, p.43).

are also some traces of humanity in him. The script for his introduction scene in “School Hard” (S02E03) (which precedes the opening credits) reads:

[Cut to a small park and playground that night. A classic 1958 Dodge Desoto FireFlite crashes through the ‘Welcome to Sunnydale’ sign and screeches to a halt. Spike gets out and strolls over to the curb. He takes a deep breath and lights a cigarette.]

Spike: Home, sweet home.

Such an entrance associates the character with the image of the 1950’s rebellious bad boy and as bad boys of that period were seen as cool, there is something alluring in Spike’s presence. This allure could open the way to a sympathetic response. At the same time, however, when he gets out of the car he has his game face on which immediately associates him with the soulless selfless blood-sucking image of the evil vampires on the show that the audience has been encouraged to link to antipathetic feelings up to that point. So, even though there are some traits associated with the character that could be clarified as attractive (and as such could lead to sympathetic responses), he is clearly labeled as evil (and as such antipathetic as indicated by the associations made so far within the world of the show).



Figure 3: Spike with his “game face” on in his introductory scene

If left at that Spike could probably have just been categorized as a stylish and witty villain, however, early on the fact that this vampire has not completely lost touch with his human side is emphasized. Especially in the first seasons, all evil vampires always have their game face on in order for their alliances with Evil to be made clear immediately. The same goes for Spike in his introduction scene, but, in a later scene in that episode, as soon as his vampire lover Drusilla⁴² enters the room he changes back to his human face and his tone of voice softens as he speaks to her. This change illustrates the care and concern he feels about her. So even though his nature is depicted as primarily evil, there are indicators of some measure of humanity in him. The humanity in Spike is made even more explicit later in Season Two, when The Judge, a demonic character that plans to “separate the righteous from the wicked and burn the righteous down,” finds Angelus to be purely evil (“There is no humanity in him”) but he almost burns Drusilla and Spike, as they “stink of humanity” and “share

⁴² Later in the season it is revealed that Drusilla was almost killed in Prague by an angry mob, which left her sickly and weak, and Spike, her lover of over a century, brought her to Sunnydale trying to restore her health (“Lie To Me,” S02E07).

affection and jealousy” (“Surprise,” S02E13). Therefore, all in all in the stage of recognition, Spike is associated largely with schemata that would probably trigger antipathy (vampire, villain, soulless), but there is a glimpse of a part of him that is still human and could trigger a sympathetic response.

4.2 *A first Step in the Path Towards Sympathy*

The first stage of emotional engagement with Spike’s character would probably cue mixed emotions, as even though he is generally connected with the vampire schema, which in the world of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* carries negative connotations (and as such would lead to antipathetic feelings towards the character), he still seems to be in possession of some characteristics that come in opposition with what is known about the soulless vampires in the show. Thus, there seem to be ways to develop a sympathetic approach towards Spike. Moving on to the second stage of the structure of sympathy, alignment, which concerns information about the character’s actions and emotions, Spike’s evil persona begins to alter slowly in relation to Buffy and the way for a sympathetic response is paved, initially at the end of Season Two when, for personal reasons, he helps her defeat the evil Angelus. Angelus is responsible for turning Spike’s lover, Drusilla, into a vampire and for centuries Angelus and Darla (the vampire that turned him) along with Spike and Drusilla had created their own kind of family and were living and hunting together. So, when Angel turns evil, the first thing he does is to seek out Drusilla and Spike to join forces. However, as Spike is physically weak after a serious accident⁴³, Angelus takes charge. This makes Spike rather agitated and jealous, especially because Angelus openly flirts with Drusilla and teases Spike about his physical disabilities that were the result of his injuries. So, when Angelus plans to awaken the demon Acatla and open the door to a hell dimension, Spike (having regained his strength) offers to help Buffy stop him in exchange for letting him and Drusilla get out of town unharmed.

Already the fact that Spike and Angelus are in the same group encourages audiences to compare the two characters, and as Angelus is truly evil, he makes Spike appear almost harmless.⁴⁴ This helps the audience see Spike more sympathetically when he helps Buffy, as his image as a villain has been downgraded when Angelus took over. Furthermore, as Tan explains, the audience wishes for the protagonist’s goals to be reached and thus feel positively towards the other characters that help accomplish that goal (ibid, p.181). Therefore, as Spike in this case is helping Buffy, his character will appear more sympathetic in the eyes of the audience, based on Tan’s previous statement. Even though, through alignment with the character and more specifically via subjective access, viewers are aware of Spike’s thoughts and emotions, and consequently they know that Spike’s motivation in helping Buffy achieve her goal is in fact selfish (as what he truly wants is not to save the world but have Drusilla back), still at that point the traits he is associated with can be considered preferable in relation to the rest of the vampires in the show. With Angel wishing to suck the world into hell and Drusilla eagerly helping him, Spike is the only re-occurring vampire at that point that exhibits traits that could cue a sympathetic response. Clearly there is nothing heroic about his actions (as heroes are supposed to have altruistic motives). However, one does not need be in

⁴³ Spike was almost killed trying to restore his lover into full health. Buffy and her friends interrupted the ritual restoring Drusilla, and during the fight part of the church, the ritual was taking place in, collapsed on her and Spike. Although Drusilla was unharmed and the ritual was successful, Spike was left paralyzed from the waist down (“What’s My Line? Part 2,” S02E10).

⁴⁴ This is emphasized by the fact that at this point in the show Spike is physically incapable of causing much harm as he is in a wheelchair.

complete moral allegiance with a character to feel sympathy, as Smith has illustrated in *Engaging Characters* (1995), in order to evoke a sympathetic response, it is enough for a character to have preferable traits when compared to the rest of the cast, so even though Spike is no hero, in relation to the rest of the vampire characters, who are clearly evil, a sympathetic reading is possible in his case.

4.3 You Shall Not Kill

Even though in Season Two Spike's character has some traits (his ability to feel love for Drusilla and his alignment with Buffy in the fight against Angelus) that could allow for a more sympathetic reading of the character as they associate him with traits that are favorable, he is generally presented as a villain. Spike, who got this name from torturing his victims with railroad spikes, was a rather fearsome killer for centuries and he even managed to kill two of Buffy's Slayer predecessors – one in 1900 during the Boxer Rebellion in China and another in New York in 1977 – a task that is considered especially difficult. However, when the character returns in Season Four (after his deal with the Slayer in Season Two, he takes Drusilla out of Sunnydale but he returns there after his vampire lover breaks off the relationship) a series of events leads up to him being unable to attack humans. The Initiative, a government shadow project whose purpose is the study and harness of supernatural beings in order to create a new type of soldier, a human and demon hybrid, captures Spike. Composed of scientists and commando trained individuals, the Initiative implant anti-violence chips to neutralize the demons they capture so that they do not pose a threat to humanity anymore. So, even though Spike manages to escape from the underground lab he is being kept, any attempt at violence against “any living creature [produces] intense neurological pain” (“The Initiative,” S04E07), therefore he is rendered incapable of harming humans.

The fact that Spike is no more a threat to society as he is unable to feed off human prey, differentiates his character from the rest of the soulless vampires. Even though Spike does not have a soul, like Angel, which would prevent him from doing evil, he is nonetheless rendered incapable of doing evil deeds and thus his association with the vampire schema is lessened. Additionally, it is not long before Spike's character is separated from the other demonic characters even more. Spike realizes, in a moment of self-defense, that his inability to cause physical harm is only restricted to humans and thus he can attack vampires and other demonic creatures without any painful consequences because of the chip. So, he decides to take his pent-up aggression out on other supernatural creatures and in that sense ends up helping Buffy in her fight against evil once again. Although, just like the previous time when he offered his alliance to Buffy against Angelus, the motivation behind his good deeds is selfish, and the audience is aware of that as they have access to this emotional and mental state through alignment with him, he is undoubtedly fighting on the side of the “good guys.” Therefore, the audience is invited to align him with characters that have favorable traits in comparison to other characters in the narrative and through allegiance develop a sympathetic response towards him. Even though his motivation does not make him precisely part of the “good guys” and is rather ambiguous morally, his character is not presented as someone whose actions are evil but instead fights against those who do, and so the audience is encouraged to see him as sympathetic.

4.4 *Fighting the Good Fight, but from the Margins*

The neutered status of Spike opens a new approach to the character. Apart from his selfishly motivated but still positive joining the forces of good that invites a sympathetic response as it presents him as a character with at least some favorable traits in comparison to the rest of the vampires and other demonic creatures in the show, the chip allowed the members of the Scooby Gang to no longer consider Spike a threat and thus socialize with him. However, as everyone knows Spike's alliance with Good was the result of a series of events that were not his choice, even though he is more involved in the group, he is not fully accepted as a member of the Gang initially. In Season Four, when he starts consistently fighting against the forces of evil and not for them, his character is mostly seen as a misfit, someone who is out of place everywhere. The demons reject him as his inability to attack humans has led him to fighting his own kind, which is seen as unforgivable by them. But even when Spike rejected by the demons turns to the only humans who know of his true nature, they cannot fully accept him either as they do not trust him.

So, he can neither participate in vampire society, as he is seen as a traitor, nor can he join human society, because the Scooby Gang does not find his motivation pure enough to accept him as one of their own. For instance, in "The I in Team" there is a suggestion that Spike might be more than an occasional helper and could prove to be something more, but the idea is rejected:

Giles: Thinking about your affliction - as well as your newly discovered ability to fight only demons. It occurs to me - and I realize it's against your nature - but have you considered there may be a higher purpose-

Spike: Aagh. Made me lose count. What are you still doing here?

Giles: Talking to myself, apparently. ("The I in Team," S04E13)

It seems that the Scoobies would be willing to accept Spike if they thought his motivation was something other than letting off steam fighting demons, but it is not yet time for his character to be part of the Gang and so the idea of him serving a higher purpose is rejected. So Spike remains in the margins: permanently in the group but still not part of it.

According to Carroll, the opinion of the surrounding characters affects the audience's emotional reactions (Carroll, 1999, p.30) and, thus, one would expect the audience to be skeptic towards Spike despite the favorable traits that may be associated with his character. However in the case of Spike, his rejection by the surrounding characters (both the core characters and the various demonic stick figures that appear throughout the show) appeals to a different schema that can trigger a sympathetic response. His marginalization appeals to feelings of sympathy in the audience, because, as Gwyn Symonds explains, it is easy for audiences to sympathize with the character "who is the underdog, who is on the outside trying to get in, whatever the moral baseline he starts from" (Symonds, 2005, para.9). So even though the audience is aware of Spike's ambitious motivations, as through subjective access the viewers have acquired information about Spike's mental and emotional status, his situation as an outsider invites an empathetic response as audiences can imagine what it would be like to experience his condition. As Currie explains, in order for someone to make emotional contact with people, she needs to use her imagination and position herself to the other person's situation to experience some form of emotional identification (Currie, 1997, p.158). As discussed in Chapter 1, when empathizing with characters the audience is able to use a similar imaginative process, even though viewers are aware that the characters on the screen are not actually in these situations. Therefore, as, according to Giovanelli's definition

of sympathy (Giovanelli, 2009), sympathy is the emotional reaction cued by the situation of another, after this situation has been processed through an empathetic response and an understanding of the other's goals, in the case of Spike audiences, by empathetically imagining themselves as outsiders and adopting Spike's wishes to fit in and be accepted, are able to sympathize with his character.

Additionally to a sympathetic response due to empathetically engaging with the character, Spike's outsiderdom can also trigger sympathetic emotions, as it is associated with other sympathetic vampires in fiction. Previous sympathetic vampires such as the ones in the works of Anne Rice are presented as outsiders trying to fit in; unable to be part of the human world they once belonged to and seeking a place in a supernatural society⁴⁵. The viewers that are familiar with the vampire genre should be able to recognize this common ground between Spike and other sympathetic vampires and this will encourage them to develop sympathetic feelings towards his character. As Tan points out, when a character fits into an existing person schema, then not only the factual knowledge that is inherent in the schema is invoked but also the affect that has been attached to the schema by previous experiences (Tan, 1995, p.168). So, when Spike appears to be sharing attributes with other sympathetic vampires and thus appeals to that schema, as the sympathetic emotional response is also part of the schema, once it is evoked the audience will be prone to develop sympathetic feelings towards the character who is associated with that schema.

4.5 The First Relationships: Joyce and Dawn

Although Spike, from Season Four onwards, is consistently presented as someone who never fully fits in neither in the supernatural world nor among the humans, he slowly develops some relationships with the rest of the characters. As the viewers have on many instances spatio-temporal alignment and subjective access to Spike's character, they are able to gather information about his interactions with other characters as well as his emotional responses in relation to these interactions. His first emotional attachments are with Buffy's mother, Joyce, and younger sister, Dawn. Despite Joyce and Spike's rocky first encounter in "School Hard," when Buffy is attacked by Spike during a parent-teacher night at her high school and her mother fights him off with an axe threatening him to stay away from her daughter, they quickly settle into an amiable relationship once the vampire is not longer considered a threat. For instance, when Spike first comes back to Sunnydale in Season Four, it is in Joyce that he confides about his break-up with Drusilla ("Lover's Walk," S03E08). Spike and Dawn, meanwhile, become something of a duo in Season Five as Buffy asks Spike to protect her sister from the deadly god, Glory (Dawn is the object of Glory's pursuit as she is really a mystical key which opens the portal to Glory's world and has been given human form by its protectors). Although Spike initially accepts in order to please Buffy, his relationship with her sister cannot be dismissed as merely an attempt to impress the woman for whom he is developing romantic feelings. This is made explicit later in the show, as, after Buffy's death at the end of Season Five, Spike continues to protect Dawn, even though there is no one left to impress. Additionally, in the beginning of Season Six they chat about Dawn's disaffection with school and play cards, so it becomes obvious that he is not only her "baby-sitter" because Buffy appointed him that role, but also a sincere friendship has developed between

⁴⁵ In *Interview with a Vampire* (Rice, 1976), for instance, Louis, one of the main vampire characters, feels so excluded from the human world that he sets on a journey to find other vampires like him in order to gain a sense of heritage and belonging.

them (“Bargaining Part 1,” S06E01).

The information the viewers have acquired about Spike’s character from his relationship with Joyce and Dawn associate him with traits that could be seen as favorable and as such could strengthen the sympathetic response towards his character. The fact that Spike is able to develop friendships with humans and experience emotional connections make him more sympathetic as it separates him from the soulless vampires in the show were presented as purely evil single-minded killers, and thus, unable to experience emotions. Even from the episode in which he was introduced Spike still had some traces of humanity, as he was seen loving and caring for his vampire companion, Drusilla, so when he also becomes emotionally attached to Buffy’s mother and sister, it seems that Spike is able to experience a wide range of human feelings. This shows that even though he has no soul, he is different from the purely evil vampires and as such he exhibits more favorable traits when compared to the rest of the supernatural characters which would lead to a sympathetic emotional response. Furthermore, according to Smith, audiences tend to feel sympathy towards those who adopt thoughtful, generous or solicitous behavior towards physically and socially weaker characters (children, the old, the sick, the oppressed) (Smith, 1995, p.190). So, when Spike takes care of Dawn who is seen as someone in need of protection, he appears sympathetic. Therefore, all in all, as a result of his relationships with both Joyce and Dawn the viewers are able to experience a sympathetic response to his character as through alignment with Spike they learn of his favorable actions and feelings.

4.6 Falling in Love with the Enemy

Even though Spike does not have a soul, his relationships with Drusilla and then Joyce and Dawn show that he is capable of experiencing human emotions. This is taken one step further when during the fifth season he realizes he is in love with the Slayer. Even from Season Four, a sexual tension was starting to build up between the two characters. For instance, in “Something Blue” (S04E09), Willow casts a spell that goes wrong and results in Spike and Buffy falling in love with each other. Once the spell is broken Spike and Buffy go back to verbally abusing each other, however the seed of a possible relationship has been planted in the minds of the audience. Spike’s erotic fascination with Buffy is developed further when Faith (another Slayer who is more on the dark side), who inhabited Buffy’s body as the result of a spell, cannot resist taunting him: “I could ride you at a gallop until your legs buckled and your eyes rolled up. I’ve got muscles you’ve never even dreamed of. I could squeeze you until you popped like warm champagne and you begged me to hurt you just a little bit more” (“Who Are You?,” S04E15). Spike’s lust for Buffy, although subtle as first, even results in him hiring someone to create a Buffy-bot in the beginning of the fifth season, a robot that looks and talks like Buffy, which he uses for fulfilling his sexual fantasies for a couple of episodes (“I Was Made For Loving You,” S05E15; “Intervention,” S05E18).

Even though initially it is the sexual attraction Spike has developed towards Buffy that is emphasized, in Season Five it becomes evident that what Spike feels is not merely lust and it is implied that he fosters deep feelings for Buffy. In an effort to make a positive impression on her, he regularly assists her on patrols and responds consistently to her requests for his help in protecting Dawn throughout the season and finally when she dies he is clearly devastated. Therefore, by the sixth season it is generally accepted that Spike actually loves Buffy, as the audience has seen, through spatio-temporal alignment, his actions at the time of and after her death—a time when, unlike the other Scoobies who were looking for a way

to bring her back, he considered her gone for good — realize that he could not have been merely motivated by lust. His feelings for Buffy are made even clearer when Willow, Xander, Tara, and Anya cast a spell, which brings Buffy back from the dead, and Spike confesses to her:

Uh—I do remember what I said. The promise. To protect her [Dawn]. If I'd 'a' done that, even if I didn't make it, you wouldn't have had to jump. But I want you to know I did save you—not when it counted, of course, but after that. Every night after that. I'd see it all again. I'd do something different—faster, more clever, you know. Dozens of times, lots of different ways. Every night I save you (“After Life,” S06E03).

So, this instance of subjective access reveals Spike’s deep remorse and grief for letting Buffy down, which illustrate that he deeply cared for her. Finally, a few episodes later, in “Dead Things” (S06E13) the audience’s assumptions about his feelings, based on Spike’s previous actions as well as his remorseful statement about being unable to save Buffy, are explicitly confirmed through another character when Tara tells Buffy, “He does love you.”

As discussed in the previous section regarding Spike’s relationship with Joyce and Dawn, his ability to experience human emotions differentiates him from the other soulless vampires in the show and depicts him as a character with favorable traits. According to Smith (1995), characters exhibiting favorable traits are sympathetic so it follows that Spike will probably be seen as sympathetic due to his ability to feel. This is taken one step further when the character falls in love with Buffy. The audience already knows that Spike is capable of love from his relationship with Drusilla, as through alignment with the character it has been made obvious that Spike deeply cared for his vampire lover. However, his relationship with another vampire does not carry the same significance for his character as falling in love with the Slayer does. The information the viewers have about his past show that his character was a really vicious vampire prior to Season Four that like all other vampires both feared and wished to kill the Slayer. So, falling in love with Buffy opposes his vampiric nature and as a relationship between them would also come in opposition with Buffy’s calling, it seems that their pairing is doomed from the start. Thus, Spike’s affection for Buffy not only shows that he is capable of feelings, but also appeals to the schema of “star-crossed lovers.” As explained in the previous chapter this schema can lead to a sympathetic response as audiences wish for a happy ending despite all odds, and as a result they would wish for Spike’s feelings to be returned after being convinced - by insight into the character’s emotional state through subjective access - that he loves Buffy.

Buffy, however, repeatedly rejects this belief. Even though, in Season Six, when she comes back from the dead and she is feeling emotionally detached, she confides in Spike, feeling that they share a connection she cannot have with the rest of the Scoobies (as he experienced death himself and can identify with her feelings and what it means to come back from that), she still is more interested in using him to fill her emotional emptiness than accepting the possibility that his feelings for her may be genuine. Her friends brought Buffy back as they were afraid that, like Angel in similar circumstances, she has been suffering in a hell dimension (when Buffy kills Angel at the end of the second season he is trapped in the hell dimension Angelus was trying to open). Indeed Buffy seems withdrawn and unresponsive, which her friends believe to be the result of the torturous experiences she had to endure. However, the real reason Buffy feels detached is that in fact she was in heaven; she had finally found peace and being back in a hard and violent world is what seems like hell. Spike is the only one to whom she confides her secret and with that a relationship between them begins to form. The intimacy forming between them reaches its peak when in a desperate

attempt to “feel,” (“Once More, With Feeling,” S06E07) Buffy sleeps with Spike (“Smashed,” S06E09). Then, as much as Buffy says she is disgusted with her attraction towards him, she keeps going back for more.

The same way she was willing to use him as a confidant who would listen to her fears and insecurities without passing judgment, she was able to use him to “feel” in a period she felt emotionally numb. However in episode after episode, Buffy refuses to acknowledge that Spike as well can be “feeling.” When Spike sees the opportunity to profess his love to her, she quickly stops his admission, completely rejecting the idea that he is capable of experiencing any genuine emotions.

Buffy: Please! Spike, you're a vampire.

Spike: Angel was a vampire.

Buffy: Angel was good!

Spike: And I can be too. I've changed, Buffy.

Buffy: What, that chip in your head? That's not change. Tha-that's just holding you back. You're like a serial killer in prison!

Spike: Women marry 'em all the time!

Buffy: Uhh!

Spike: But I'm not like that. Something's happening to me. I can't stop thinking about you.

Buffy: Uhh. (*turns away*)

Spike: And if that means turning my back on the whole evil thing....

Buffy: (*turns back*) You don't know what you mean! You don't know what feelings are!

Spike: (*offended*) I damn well do! I lie awake every night!

Buffy: You sleep during the day!

Spike: Yeah, but.... (*through his teeth*) You are missing the point. This is real here. I love....

Buffy: Don't! (“Crush,” S05E14)

The instance presented above illustrates that even though Buffy is able to see Spike as someone who does not need to die as he does not pose a threat to humanity and he can be a powerful ally in battle, as well as someone who can confide to and seek sexual release in, she is unwilling to believe that he can alter his nature; that he is capable of change. As the chip is seen as the reason he is holding back, Buffy thinks it is merely the fear of (physical) punishment that is keeping him from reverting to his old ways and thus there has really been no change in his nature. In other words he is still evil, he just cannot give into his instincts merely because an outside force is not allowing him to. When Spike tries to imply that his vampiric nature does not necessarily mean he is incapable of being good by referring to Angel, Buffy makes sure to point out that Angel had a soul, thus he was considered to be “good” and able to experience human emotions because the presence of his soul made that possible. As Spike does not have a soul, his good actions are not seen as enough proof that he can truly be good. In other words, for Buffy, the absence of a soul does not allow for human potential (Olson, 2008, para.25), so Spike cannot be experiencing anything truly human such as emotions.

Buffy’s rejection of Spike’s ability to change works in two ways: on the one hand, it is another possible trigger of sympathetic reactions towards the character, while at the same time it aims to remind audiences that Spike is still a soulless vampire. Even though usually audiences to a large extent side with the protagonists and share their feelings towards other

character(s) (Tan & Frijda, 1999, p.52), having seen Spike's struggle to do good and to develop emotional attachments with humans, viewers would probably not adopt Buffy's point of view merely because she is the protagonist, and in fact Buffy's rejection of Spike's feelings as genuine would lead to a sympathetic emotional response rather than an antipathetic. Although audiences are aware that what is evil about Spike is not an attractive or moral trait in the world outside the screen, such awareness is not necessarily incompatible with audience empathy for his struggle to be a better man. Alignment with Spike has illustrated that he has been altering his behavior and going against his nature, mostly because of Buffy's presence in his life. As he is a vampire and as such he has no soul, experiencing human emotions and fighting on the side of good are not things that are natural for Spike and thus he has been struggling to be a better man; he has been going against his nature. The fact that Buffy, who is the main reason for this struggle, refuses to acknowledge it, leaves Spike fighting with no allies. Thus, when viewers approach this situation, by empathetically imagining Spike's battle against his nature and adopting his goals to change and be accepted by Buffy, they should develop a sympathetic response towards his character that is seen as struggling to change while no one supports his endeavors.

However, despite any sympathy towards Spike that has been the result of his association, from Season Four onwards, with traits that had positive connotations and as such presented him as a favorable character, he is still a soulless vampire and Buffy's rejection of his ability to change aims to remind that to the audience.⁴⁶ Viewers have witnessed Spike's various good deeds and his emotional reactions and have heard his declarations of love towards the Slayer. For instance, in the musical episode "Once More, with Feeling" (S06E07) (in which a magic spell makes the characters sing their innermost feelings) he sings to Buffy: "I died so many years ago; you can make me feel as though it isn't so." So, there is overwhelming information that has associated Spike's character with sympathetic traits. Although he was introduced as a villain, his story arc from Seasons Four to Six has painted a different image of him. Joining the fight against evil while still maintaining his outsiderdom and then being accepted by some of the cast and showing that he is capable of emotional attachments and even love have been instances emphasizing the character's humanity despite his vampiric nature. Therefore, as the audience has been seeing more of Spike's "human-self," his ability to do evil has been almost forgotten and Buffy's reaction to his love declaration, serves not only as one more means to create sympathy towards his character, but also as a reminder that even though Spike has been on a path that allowed viewers to sympathize with him, he is still a monster at heart as he does not possess a soul.⁴⁷

4.7 Crossing the Line Between Human and Monster

Once Buffy is sufficiently recovered from the trauma of her death and resurrection and no longer needs Spike, she breaks off the relationship. Even though at first the end of the relationship could create a sympathetic response in those viewers who can empathetically

⁴⁶ Symonds refers to a series of concerns in relation to the impact on the audience of the sympathetic portrayal of Spike's character. As Spike became in the eyes of the audience a "cool" representation of evil, there was worry of the negative effect empathy for the character might have on the real life motivations of female viewers (Symonds, 2005, para.6). This would explain why the producers were trying to remind the viewers that Spike was still a monster at heart and diminish the possibility of a sympathetic reading of his character.

⁴⁷ It seems that the producers were planning to give Spike a soul in Season Seven, so they needed to remind the audience of the character's monstrous side in order for the reinstating of his soul to be seen as more of a necessity in his path towards becoming a hero.

imagine Spike's heart-broken feelings, it also results in an action that for the first time in both the fifth and the sixth season so clearly reminds audiences of the monster inside Spike. In Season Six's "Smashed" (S06E09), when he finds out he can physically hurt Buffy and therefore thinks that means the chip is no longer working, he does try to attack someone the attempt fails as in fact the chip is still functioning (it just does not recognize Buffy as she has been resurrected). Despite this attempt to return to his evil ways, he seems less than enthusiastic about the act itself. So, even though viewers are partly reminded there is still an evil side to Spike in that episode, they have not seen him kill any human since Season Four's "Harsh Light of Day" (S04E03) when, in his pre-chip days, he kills the owner of the Magic Box. Thus they are invited to forget/ignore this incident as throughout Seasons Five and Six Spike continuously allies with the forces of good. In other words, although there have been indications that Spike is still soulless and as such his core remains evil, because most of his actions and thoughts are not evil, his sympathetic side can be seen as dominant. However, when Buffy breaks off their affair, he tries to rape her⁴⁸ showing that he is still more than capable of being the vampire the viewers were introduced to in Season Two.⁴⁹

His representation as a sympathetic character is significantly affected when he attacks Buffy. Even though his attack was rather human in nature, in the sense that it was motivated by human desires, it is still also monstrous as it was forceful and dangerous. Even though Buffy's rejection of Spike's ability to change had been aiming to keep audiences aware that there is still an evil side to Spike, the attempted rape scene acts as a really strong reminder that Spike is still a vampire, so he is always torn between the monster and the human; it is human desires that have led him to become monstrous again. Both the attempted rape scene and the scenes that follow it, where Spike horrified rushes back to his underground crypt where pacing up and down he asks himself back to back questions: "What have I done?" and "Why didn't I do it?" ("Seeing Red," S06E19), stress the fact that part of Spike is still a monster, but at the same time they also emphasize the humanity in him. His attack is not supernatural and his reaction to it is also more human than monstrous, as he is so shocked by his actions that he ultimately concludes that in order to live with himself after what he has done he must accept that he is a monster, because only a monster could do what he tried to (Smith quoted in Abbott, 2005, p.332). Therefore, like when the chip was first implanted and Spike started helping Buffy and the Scoobies in the fight against evil, the dual nature of the character as a vampire that tries to do good is presented here. Just like other sympathetic vampires before him, Spike is presented to struggle between his nature and his desire to change.

4.8 On the Path to Redemption: Getting Back His Soul

At a certain point Spike's love for Buffy was presented as the reason that allowed his character to cross over from the evil side; even without a soul he continuously fought on the side of the "good guys." From Season Five onwards, he is presented as someone who would approach choices from a perspective that was basically good rather than from one that was basically evil, and even after the rape scene he is not portrayed as a remorseless monster but

⁴⁸ Crucially, Spike and Buffy's relationships have been violently sexual all season. Both of them had said "no" during their encounters in various episodes while the other partner proceeded. This allows for the attempted rape scene to be interpreted as "taking their usual game too far" as well, which diminishes the negative reading of Spike's intentions.

⁴⁹ Again this would be in accordance with the effort to counteract the sympathetic feelings developed for the character by reminding audiences that despite Spike's appeal he is not essentially good, as he does not have a human soul.

as someone shocked by the monstrous desires in him. That is not to say that audiences ignore his evil deeds completely or forgive and forget the attempted rape, but because his character is more ambiguous than the binary distinctions between good and evil and he does show remorse and desire to change, audiences are invited to be lenient in judging Spike.⁵⁰ So, despite the fact that he still has an evil side, a sympathetic reading of the character is possible. He may not be the definition of good as Angel was, but despite his vampiric nature he possesses traits that are at least preferable and he exhibits some virtues such as strength, patience and bravery. He started off as a villain and by Season Six he had become someone willing to go against his nature in order to do good. In light of this transformation, not only does he win some of the viewer's sympathetic reactions, but also in the final episode of the sixth season, the producers of the show reward his character with a soul.⁵¹

Although Angel had mentioned how painful it is to be a vampire with a soul and therefore feel guilt and remorse for all murderous actions one has done, Spike is actually seen being tormented by the memories of all of those he has killed throughout his long life to such an extent that he is driven half mad. Season Seven finds Spike hiding in the basement of the Sunnydale high school talking to himself⁵² and being only loosely in touch with the reality around him. When Buffy finds him there, their conversation barely makes sense and although an episode later, in "Beneath You" (S07E02), Spike shows up on Buffy's doorstep suggesting that he has regained his sanity and can be of assistance to her, this turns out to be far from the truth. While helping Buffy, Spike accidentally injures a human, which results in him fleeing in horror at what he has done and retreating to the confines of a local church. Buffy finds him there and he explains in cryptic terms that he regained his soul so that he can never hurt her again and truly be a good man, but was shocked to face the horrors of his past actions as a vampire. Crucially, the final image of this sequence, Spike's plea as he drapes over the altar crucifix, begging for solace and comfort while his skin begins to burn, portrays Spike as a tragic suffering figure.

Audiences are inclined to feeling sympathy towards suffering (Carroll, 1999, p.26; Tan, 1996, p.247) and Spike is so clearly tormented by his evil past, that the sympathetic response towards him is re-enforced, based on new information. Up till now his character can be read as sympathetic, as he has been developing emotional attachments to people, which separated him from the other soulless vampires of the show, and has been struggling to do good even though it was against his nature and no one supported his efforts. Quite on the contrary, despite offering both his help and his companionship to Buffy, she accepted him only as a useful "tool" and rejected his potential for personhood arguing he was incapable of changing and unable to experience true emotions. Adding to this image of the outcast that tries to fit in despite his otherness, the presence of a soul makes him a more tragic figure, as again he is alone against a sea of obstacles that he has to fight against. Being driven half mad by guilt and remorse emphasizes his torment and thus cues a sympathetic emotional response towards him. Furthermore, Spike is presented as someone who chose to have a soul wishing to be rid of his evil nature completely, so the audience is invited to take this into consideration as well when developing an emotional reaction towards his character. Even as a monster he not only

⁵⁰ After all, as explained in Chapter 1, viewers are invited to be in moral agreement with Spike within the relational structure of the fictional world in order to perceive him as a sympathetic character, which does not mean that sympathy for his character would not imply acceptance of his behavior in a real life setting.

⁵¹ After attempting to rape Buffy, Spike, horrified by his own actions and intentions, heads to a remote area of Africa, where he seeks out a legendary demon shaman and undergoes the Demon Trials, a series of grueling physical challenges. Proving his worthiness by surviving the trials, Spike earns his soul back ("Grave," S06E22).

⁵² Later in the season it is revealed that Spike was not actually talking to himself but he was seeing visions of the First, a being manifested from all evil in existence that can assume the form of any person who has died.

partially went against his nature by fighting against evil and being able to experience emotions but also he choose to fully deny his vampiric ways and achieve redemption, therefore even before having a soul he exhibited various desirable traits which according to Smith's structure of sympathy can lead to a sympathetic response towards his character.

Finally, in Season Seven, the presence of his soul allows for Buffy to develop a sympathetic approach to Spike as well, which tends to reinforce the sympathetic responses towards him in the audience. Naturally when she first sees him after the assault, she is still appalled by him, but as soon as she realizes he got his soul back for her, her feelings start changing. Witnessing his rambling in the church and learning that all this was done so that she would forgive him and finally find a place in her heart for him, slowly starts to change Buffy's perception of him. So, later in the season when it is revealed that Spike was under the control of the First (the Big Bad of that season that can take the form of people who have died) that had turned him into a sleeper agent and was making him kill again, Buffy decides to help him rather than kill him. Spike initially has no memory of his actions and after he discovers what he has done, he begs Buffy to stake him. She responds: "you're alive because I saw you change. Because I saw your penance... You faced the monster inside of you and you fought back. You risked everything to be a better man... I believe in you, Spike" ("Never Leave Me," S07E09). So, finally Buffy affirms that even though he physically looks like the man who was capable of tremendous evil, he is no longer that man; he has changed and the presence of his soul can redeem him. Therefore, finally having Buffy's vote of confidence, Spike is accepted as part of her life and instead of an outsider, becomes a valued friend and ally willing to sacrifice himself to save the world, and the audience is invited to sympathize with him with no restraints, as he is now truly part of the "good guys."

4.9 Summary and Conclusion

Spike entered the show as a villain and through a path of many changes exited as a sympathetic hero. Even though his character was different than the other antipathetic vampires from the start, as he was in possession of some human traits, it was only after Angel left the show and the spot for a sympathetic vampire character was available, that Spike returned to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and was associated with traits that could cue a sympathetic emotional response. As Spike does not have a soul like Angel did, the introduction of the chip is what helped separate him from the other vampires, and opened the way for a more sympathetic reading of the character. From that point on Spike is able to socialize with the rest of the characters and develop emotional relationships with them, upon which his sympathetic image is largely based. First his marginalization by those he wished to accept him and then his unreturned love for the Slayer appealed to audiences and made them more inclined to feeling sympathy for Spike. Not good enough to be loved by Buffy or win the trust of her friends and no longer evil enough to go back to his previous ways, Spike inhabits an outsidersdom that seems to appeal to audiences. Through empathetically engaging with his character, viewers tended to relate to his outcast nature and as a result feel sympathetically towards his struggle to fit in somewhere. As one fan says illustrating this point: "Why relate to Spike? Spike is the ultimate outcast. He does not fit in anywhere and is struggling to find his place in the world" (Laura, n.d.). So, Spike's status as an outsider and rejected lover encouraged viewers to care, as it seems the emotional situation he was in, was one they could empathize with.

Although, when the character was first re-introduced in Season Four, it was his position as an

outsider that was emphasized, later in the show Spike appeals to other schemata that can cue sympathy as well. His inability to hurt humans and his romantic feelings for Buffy open the way towards a total change in his character; from an evildoer to a fighter of evil. Spike emerges as a character that fights against his nature and wishes to change. This emphasizes the fact that even though demonic in nature his humanity was not completely lost; a fact that seems to have appealed to viewers and encouraged them to see him as a sympathetic character. For instance a fan says:

A chipped Spike can still be a dangerous Spike. But time and time again he allied himself with the Scoobies when he could have chosen to ally himself with the demon world... and love is blind. If anyone completely embraces that fact, it is Spike... Spike the demon is full of humanity (Serina quoted in M. Williamson, 2005, p.292).

However, after having stressed his humanity for almost two seasons and associated him mostly with positive traits, the producers reminded audiences of Spike's monstrous nature by having him attack Buffy. Although the attack was rather human in nature, it still was a reminder of the character's ability to do harm, as he does not possess a soul.

The reminder that Spike is still a soulless vampire leads to the last big change in the character's story arc, as at the end of Season Six he embarks on a journey that results in the reinstating of his soul. Apart from appealing to sympathetic feelings due to the experiencing of guilt for his past sins, as a soulful vampire Spike can also be finally accepted by Buffy as a friend and equal. Although he and the Slayer do not continue their sexual relationship in Season Seven, Spike does have the role of her romantic interest in that season, as the protagonist clearly values his help and trusts him. He also still holds the position of a fighter against the forces of evil alongside Buffy. Thus, even though he entered the show as a villain, in Season Seven, Spike is portrayed as a sympathetic vampire with a soul, who suffers for all the bad he has done while he was evil and seeks redemption by trying to change. Selflessly offering his help at Buffy's side he becomes an unlikely hero in the battle against evil.

Chapter 5

Different paths to sympathy

So far I have looked at how the characters of Angel and Spike are connected with traits that could cue a sympathetic emotional reaction. Up until this point, I have been analyzing the characters in isolation, however I shall now focus on the similarities as well as the differences in the construction of the sympathetic image of those two characters. In recognition, the first stage of the structure of sympathy, it seems that both characters portray an ambiguous image, as they are associated both with traits that could be read positively and with traits which could lead to an antipathetic reading. However, at this early stage a sympathetic reading of Angel seems more possible than a sympathetic reaction towards Spike. Even though the latter exhibits some positive traits, he is immediately associated with the vampire schema (as in his introductory scene he has his “game face” on), which in the context of the show carries heavily negative connotations. Moving past the first stage and onto alignment, initially Angel is largely constructed as a sympathetic character, as he soon becomes Buffy’s object of affection as well as an ally in her battle against evil, whereas Spike is shown as a villain whose aim is to kill the protagonist. So in the first seasons, it is Angel that portrays the sympathetic vampire character. However, as soon as Angel no longer occupies the position of the sympathetic vampire, Spike is chosen to fulfill that role, both temporarily when Angel turns into Angelus and then permanently once Angel leaves the show at the end of Season Three. As *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* ran for seven seasons, there is enough time for both the characters undergo various changes in order to encourage a sympathetic reaction. Although in most cases the characters appeal to various different schemata, in the end they both aim to accomplish the same result: being perceived as sympathetic by the majority of the audience.

5.1 The Role of Appearance

As discussed in Chapter 3, the physical appearance of characters can influence the audience’s opinion of them, as research has shown that especially attractiveness is associated with socially desirable personality traits (Hartfiend & Sprecher, 1986 quoted in Hoffner & Cantor,

1991, p.66). In the case of Angel it seems that the producers wanted to use the positive connotations of attractiveness in order to make the character appear sympathetic. Joss Whedon, the creator of the show, explains in a commentary of the first episode of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* that he was not sure David Boreanaz was the best choice for the role of Angel, however as the women in the casting team found him rather attractive, Whedon decided to cast him (Whedon, 1997). It follows from the creator's statement that he was consciously looking for an actor, who would be considered desirable, to play the role of Angel. Additionally, Angel although a vampire himself is (especially in the first season) usually portrayed with his human characteristics and rarely has his "game face" on. The vampire "game faces" are rather unattractive, as they include ridged foreheads, yellow eyes, and large fangs, therefore as it seems that Angel needs to appear attractive, his physical appearance is closer to the human characters rather than the vampires. Finally, the emphasis in the character's handsomeness is made explicit in episode seven of Season One, when Giles says that the vampire Angelus got his name due to his angelic characteristics.⁵³ It appears then that, even though every viewer might not consider David Boreanaz to be handsome, the producers of the show were aiming for Angel's character to be considered physically attractive and thus possibly thought to be in possession of positive traits because of his appearance.

Although it seems safe to assume that Angel's character largely relies on his attractiveness, in the case of Spike, even though his character is not unattractive, handsomeness is much less emphasized. For instance, especially in the second season when Spike is still to be considered mostly an antipathetic character, he is usually seen with his "game face" on, which makes him rather unappealing. However, even though the character construction in Spike's case does not rely on physical attractiveness, it does not mean that some other aspect of his appearance is not stressed in order to present the character as appealing. Throughout his participation in the show Spike has one look, which would most fittingly be described as that of the "bad boy." He is modeled after Sid Vicious of the punk rock group The Sex Pistols, and one could describe him as a black-leather-wearing punk with peroxide blond hair. The car he drives (a classic 1958 Dodge Desoto FireFlite) as well as the fashion choices made for his character (Spike almost always wears a black leather coat⁵⁴) associate him with the rebellious bad boy image, which has a certain appeal to some members of the audience, even though it also has some negative connotations. As the actor who performs Spike, James Marsters, puts it:

I became that unhealthy boyfriend that many girls have in their life, the bad boy who might be really sexy and dangerous and gets their sexual stuff firing, but the girls end up getting burned by it (Interview with James Marsters quoted in Symonds, 2005, para.6).

So, in relation to appearance, unlike Angel who is associated with socially desirable traits via his attractiveness, Spike's character aims to become appealing using the possible positive effects of the bad boy schema.

⁵³ When Angel was human his name was Liam, however in the Watcher books that Giles consults Angel is referred to as: "Angelus, the one with the Angelic face" ("Angel," S01E07).

⁵⁴ In the last season, it is revealed that the leather coat, which could be seen as Spike's trademark because he almost always wears it, was loot from the second slayer he killed, Nikki Woods ("Lies my parents told me," S07E17).



Figure 4: Angel's masculine appearance versus Spike's "bad boy" looks

5.2 Vampire Schema (Sympathetic Vampires)

Having looked at Angel's and Spike's appearance, it seems that both vampire characters are constructed in such a way that their appearance is associated with schemata that could have positive connotations and therefore lead to a sympathetic response. Additionally to using associations with reference to elements in their appearance, Angel and Spike are linked to other characters that are constructed as sympathetic in an attempt to cue sympathy in the audience. As discussed in Chapter 2, the existing knowledge that the viewers will have about vampires will be part of their framework of reference and will thus influence the way they approach the vampires in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Tan explains that when someone fits into a schema, not only factual knowledge is evoked, but also the affect that has been attached to the schema by previous experiences will be cued (Tan, 1995, p.168). Therefore, it follows that if Angel and Spike exhibit traits that remind the audience of other sympathetic vampires, they will appeal to the affect associated with those vampires. Although both vampires make use of such associations, they do not necessarily appeal to the same type of sympathetic vampires.

Angel's soul seems to relate him more with the long line of vampires whose sympathetic image relies on their reluctance to give in their vampiric nature. As mentioned in Chapter 3, the show explicitly makes a correlation between Angel and Louis, the tormented vampire in Anne Rice's novels, in episode "School Hard" (S01E03). Even though this is the most obvious attempt to evoke the sympathy created by another vampire, as there is explicit reference to Anne Rice in the show's dialogue, Angel's character shares traits with more sympathetic vampires than Rice's Louis. For instance, as a champion for good, Angel resembles Saint-Germain, the hero of *Hotel Transylvania* (Yarbro, 1978), who is dedicated to doing good and who, according to Leonard Wolf, was "the noblest of the sympathetic vampires who began to appear in fiction in the 1970's" (Wolf, 1997, p.2). Angel's alignment with good in the fight against evil to seek redemption for his past sins, not only associates the character with Saint-Germain, but also is very similar to Nick Knight's story. Nick Knight, the protagonist of the television series *Forever Knight* (Cohen & Parriott, 1992-1996), is wracked with guilt for centuries of killing others, and seeks redemption by working as a cop

on the night shift. In a similar way, Angel decides to help Buffy in her sacred duty in order to seek atonement for his evil past. It becomes evident from these examples (and one could find more) that Angel's storyline has various points in which one could find traces that possibly connect his character with other sympathetic vampires who also attempt to go against their nature and fight for good to prevail.

Spike on the other hand, seems to fulfill the role of the rebel vampire that hides its suffering and would have more traits associated with the Byronic hero⁵⁵ rather than with the essentialist definition of good that Angel represents. As Williamson explains, fans recognize in Spike the vampire rebel "because of Spike's stark outcast status that has marked him as a creature of pathos" (M. Williamson 2005; p.298). Unlike Angel who seems to wear his heart on his sleeve and shows no attempt to hide his brooding nature, Spike is the one that can be read as trying to conceal his emotional status. His rebel punk rock image and his secret suffering links him to the sympathetic vampire Lestat (another of Rice's characters) who experiences a moment of rock-star fame in an attempt to defy the pain of his existence as neither dead nor alive, good nor evil in *The Vampire Lestat* (Rice, 1985). Additionally, Spike shares common traits with the Byronic hero, which Peter Thorsley describes as someone who does not incorporate the normal "heroic virtues," but, instead, possesses many dark qualities (Thorsley, 1962, p.187). In addition to Thorsley's description, Atara Stein defines the Byronic hero as a character who embodies "defiance of society's rules and institution," as well as someone who is "a loner and an outcast" (Stein, 2009, para.3). These Byronic hero attributes, as described by Thorsley and Stein, could be linked to Spike's character,⁵⁶ as, although he is one of Buffy's allies in the fight against evil, he is still seen in possession of dark qualities, and his status as an outsider trying to fit in is rather emphasized in his storyline. Thus, to sum up, Spike's character is based on the figure of the rebel vampire and the alluring outcast, who although in possession of some dark qualities could still cue sympathetic feelings in the audience.

5.3 *More Human than Monster*

Another technique used to provoke a sympathetic reading of the characters of Angel and Spike is separating them from the soulless, evil vampires in the show; as well as associating them with traits that would be perceived as human rather than monstrous. Both Angel and especially Spike almost constantly move in the space between human and monster. They are not human, as their vampiric traits, such as their inability to go out in the sun, are always

⁵⁵ Polidori's Lord Ruthven, the first literary vampire to captivate the popular imagination, was modeled after Byron and for some time there was deliberate confusion about the authorship of the work as many publishers attributed it to Byron (Auerbach, 1995, p.7-8; M. Williamson, 2005, p.293-294). According to Williamson, the confusion about the authorship of *The Vampyre* combined with the nineteenth century's love for Byron and his works "contributed deeply to the association between rebellion and a doomed but glamorous outsiderdom which marked the Romantic idea of vampirism" (M. Williamson, 2005, p.293). Therefore, one could argue that Byronic images seem fused with the idea of sympathetic vampires (as explained in Chapter 2, the first vampires were glamorous outcasts, alluring outsiders, rebels and tortured souls - modeled after the Romantic idea of vampirism -, and this is the image that throughout time most sympathetic vampires return to).

⁵⁶ One could argue that some of the Byronic hero's attributes could also be linked to Angel's character, because as a vampire he does not embody the normal "heroic virtues." However, Angel is presented as an essentialist definition of good, because of his soul, and thus his dark qualities are not so emphasized. Also in Angel's case his outsiderdom is not so obvious, as he has a romantic relationship with Buffy and is accepted by her group of friends and allies. Therefore, although there can be a link between Angel and the Byronic hero, it seems that Spike's character is more modeled after that image.

present, but still they have enough human traits that they cannot be classified as truly demonic either. Any self-respecting vampire is totally amoral and ruthless, as evidenced by Spike's earlier cruelties, not to mention Angelus' acts of calculated viciousness. In that sense, both Spike and Angel are different from the other wicked vampires, as they are able to feel emotions and they more or less come to represent the side of good. At the same time, they reveal an unexpected vulnerability that aims to counteract some of their less attractive traits and associate them more with humans rather than with demons. In *The Watchers Guide* Christopher Golden and Nancy Holder explain the differences between demons and humans:

What makes them human is their capacity for feeling emotion; what makes them demons is their inability to change; their emotions don't grow or lead to good as human emotions can. [...] In Whedon's universe, at least, there seems to be a continuum running between the opposite poles of human and demon; in other words, some demons are more human than others, and some humans behave like demons. Or, to put it another way, what makes us humans is our capacity to change, to feel emotions, to choose good over evil (Golden & Holder, 1998, p.138-139).

Both Angel and Spike, in accordance to what Golden and Holder say about the elements that are associated with humanity, appear capable of experiencing emotions and seek to change and redeemed themselves from the sins of their past. So both characters, although they go about this in different ways, wish to disassociate themselves from the vampire schema and the negative connotations it has in the context of the show, and to appear much closer to their human side than their demonic one.

In order to achieve this, in the case of Angel the presence of his soul plays a rather important role. In the first few episodes, the soulless nature of vampires is rather stressed. Through Giles, Buffy's watcher, the audience hears many times that according to the show's mythology, when someone is turned into a vampire their soul leaves the body and a demon takes over. In this way the show wishes to draw attention to the fact that vampires have no soul, so, when Angel's vampiric nature is revealed, the presence of his soul will immediately differentiate him from the other vampires and allow for a sympathetic reaction towards him to be possible. At the same time, Angel's soul aims to separate him from his "alternative persona" Angelus. When Angel, after a night of passion with Buffy, is stripped of his soul, he becomes a demon even more cruel than most of the vampires in the show. By exhibiting a variety of undesirable traits, an antipathetic reading of the character is invited at this stage. However, when the soul is reinstated and Angel returns to the show in Season Three, the audience is urged to see Angel and Angelus as two different characters and not transfer the antipathetic feelings developed towards Angelus to Angel. What allows for this separation is the soul, because in the context of the show the presence of a soul represents an essentialist definition of good. As Whedon has said in an interview:

Soulless creatures can do good and souled creatures can do evil, but that the soul-free are instinctually drawn toward doing evil while those with souls tend to instinctually want to do good (Herc & Whedon, 2001).

So, because he has a soul and thus is prone to doing good, Angel is seen as both different from all the other vampires in the show, and even with his alternative persona, Angelus.

Furthermore, Angel's soul allows him to be perceived as more human. According to Golden and Holder, the characteristics that separate humans from demons are the capacities to change, to feel emotions, and to choose good over evil (Golden & Holder, 1998, p.139). Angel's character exhibits all these characteristics because he has a human soul. Firstly, as explained before, in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* those that have a soul are more inclined to

doing good than evil. It follows that the ensouled Angel will be drawn to doing good, and thus can be seen as exhibiting characteristics that make him more human-like, and less of a soulless demon drawn towards evil. Second, because of his soul, Angel feels guilt and remorse for the evil deeds he has committed as a vampire and wishes to change and to seek redemption. As the ability to change is considered a human characteristic, Angel's character by appearing capable of change is associated with humanity. Last but not least, Angel is presented as being able to feel love. Almost from the first time he sets eyes on her, Angel appears to fall in love with Buffy and they develop a romantic relationship early in the first season. The audience sees Angel care for Buffy and via subjective access they know his feelings for her, which again link him more to the human characters rather than the demonic ones. Because Angel exhibits all three characteristics, which according to Golden and Holder are those that define humans, his character is associated with traits that would be perceived as human rather than monstrous.

Spike's character is also separated from the other vampire characters and is seen in possession of traits that could be classified as human, however the producers use different ways than in Angel's case to accomplish this. Although in his introductory scene Spike is clearly labeled as a vampire, as he has his "game face" on, he is also associated with traits that differentiate him from the rest of the soulless vampires. As early as his first appearance in the show, Spike is seen caring for his vampire lover, Drusilla, as he reverts to his human face and his voice softens as soon as she enters the room ("School Hard," S02E03). This aims to show the audience that Spike, even though he has no human soul, has not completely lost touch with his humanity completely and thus he is different from the other vampires. This aspect of Spike's character is emphasized at the end of Season Two, when Angel turns into Angelus and as Angelus joins forces with Spike and Drusilla, thus allowing the audience to compare the two male vampires. When seen in relation to Angelus, who has no traces of humanity, and, instead, is shown capable of calculated cruelty, Spike appears almost harmless, which opens the way for a more sympathetic reading of the character.

Furthermore, when Spike returns in Season Four, his ability to experience human emotions (caring for Joyce and Dawn, falling in love with Buffy) and his siding with the forces of good are emphasized in order to create distance between his character and the rest of the vampires. Additionally, as he can no longer hurt humans because of the chip, he is clearly labeled as different. In episode "Pangs" (S04E08), for instance, Spike says: "Spike had a little trip to the vet, and now he doesn't chase the other puppies anymore," so his separation from the other demons is made explicit. However, this separation is made even more obvious once Spike regains his soul in Season Seven. As (at least part of) the audience should be more familiar with ensouled vampires from the case of Angel, when Spike gets his soul back he appeals to schemata that Angel had been associated with (such as suffering) in order for his character to draw on the positive feelings associated with having a human soul. So, all in all, Spike by appearing able to experience human emotions even as a demon, by siding with Buffy and her friends in the fight against evil and by finally getting a soul, he is presented as clearly different from the rest of the demon characters in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

Although Spike's character is presented as different from the other vampires, he is still seen doing some pretty unpleasant things (such as killing people in Season Two) and even attempting to rape the protagonist. However, despite the various negative traits associated with Spike's character, he does perform actions that seem to raise the possibility that he can be better than his vampiric nature would suggest. Even before he has a human soul, he repeatedly tries to do good. Despite his natural inclination towards evil, due to his vampiric

urges, he (eventually) allies himself with Buffy and the Scoobies. Therefore, it follows that his character can be seen as capable of change and capable of choosing good over evil. He, also, exhibits in many instances his ability to feel a wide range of emotions. Thus, Spike is seen as being in possession of the characteristics that are associated with humanity, as defined by Golden and Holder (Golden & Holder, 1998, p.139), so although soulless he is not truly vampiric. His strong efforts to seek redemption by conquering his internal demons and morally transforming his life, as well as his love for Buffy position him closer to the human characters than the demonic ones. Thus, it appears both characters are differentiated from the soulless, evil vampires in the show, and associated with traits that would be perceived as human rather than monstrous; Angel mostly because of his soul and Spike due to his humanity and his exertion to be redeemed.

Crucially, this is reinforced by the fact that no Scooby character, including Buffy, is perfect or without internal conflict, including moral indecisiveness. Just as in real life, characters on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* are capable of doing stupid, sinful, immoral, harmful, and offensive things. For instance, some of the core characters have committed murder; Giles kills Ben (the human that the god Glory uses as a vessel in Season Five) to ensure that Glory will no longer be a threat to Dawn and the rest of the Scoobies (“The Gift,” S05E22) and Willow takes Warren’s life in an act of revenge after he kills her girlfriend, Tara (“Villains,” S06E20)⁵⁷. Additionally, there are human characters, which despite their soul, are able to act in ways that make them almost indistinguishable from vampires, such as the Slayer Faith (another Slayer is called when Buffy dies),⁵⁸ who joins the forces of evil in Season Three by serving the Big Bad of that season. However, despite committing immoral acts, the characters seek redemption through penance, forgiveness and the making of amends. So, the presence of characters, besides Angel and Spike, who struggle to choose between good and evil, narrows the gap between vampires and humans as all characters seem to struggle with moral decisions. As all of the show’s characters have in some way flirted with the dark side, it is easier for the vampires to be seen as sympathetic, once they too exhibit some traces of humanity and seek to change their evil ways.

5.4 Love Schema

Another aspect that is used in both of the vampire characters’ construction to cue sympathetic emotional reactions is their relationship with Buffy. Because the Slayer and vampires are mortal enemies, the fact that Angel and Spike form a relationship with Buffy appeals to the schema of star-crossed lovers. One could assume that an appeal to this schema is successful as it is used in both characters’ storyline: in the first seasons with Angel and then again in the later seasons with Spike.⁵⁹ However, although both vampires develop a relationship with

⁵⁷ In an attempt against Buffy’s life, Warren accidentally shoots Tara (“Seeing Red,” S06E19), causing Willow, consumed by anger and grief, to seek vengeance (“Villains,” S06E20).

⁵⁸ Although Buffy is revived, because she has been dead another Slayer was “activated,” which results in the existence of two Slayers at the same time.

⁵⁹ In between her relationships with Angel and Spike, Buffy dates Riley, one of her fellow college classmates. However, a human boyfriend does not seem to be as good of a match with her as vampires can be. Vampires not only know Buffy’s secret calling from the start, but they also can actively help her in battle, as they are physically strong enough to stand by her side. Additionally, Angel and Spike are creatures that are neither truly human nor completely demonic, much like the Slayer (Buffy is not exactly human due to her supernatural powers and at the same time her powers are demonic in origin – as explained in footnote n.29 – so in that sense she can be seen as a creature somewhere between human and demon), and as such they seem to work better with Buffy’s character.

Buffy and the star-crossed lovers aspect is present in both cases, the relationships formed are rather different. Buffy is around sixteen years old in the first season, so because of her young age her relationship with Angel is kept largely platonic.⁶⁰ On the other hand, her relationship with Spike when Buffy is more mature⁶¹ is mostly sexual. It is only in Season Seven that Buffy exhibits feelings for Spike other than lust.⁶² Additionally, in Angel's case Buffy trusts and relies on him even before she gets to know him well. As audiences tend to be influenced by the protagonist's opinion (Tan & Frijda, 1999, p.52), it follows that the viewers will be prone to seeing Buffy's love interests as sympathetic characters, as the protagonist views them positively. Therefore, as Angel plays the role of Buffy's romantic interest, he will tend to be seen as sympathetic. In Spike's case, although he professes his love for Buffy, she refuses to accept his ability to experience human emotions. Thus, Spike's character can cue sympathy because of his rejection, which also further reinforces his position as an outcast (another schema that, as discussed in Chapter 4, is used in evoking sympathy for Spike). Overall, it seems that although the relationships are different in nature, and rely on appealing to mostly different schemata, they tend to produce similar results in the audience's reactions.

However, the relationship between the vampires and Buffy works in other ways as well. Love is important for the storyline of the vampire characters, as it is for love that they undergo change.⁶³ Angel was merely surviving without feeding off humans, but as soon as he sees Buffy for the first time he decides to change his life for her and to battle evil by her side. So, Angel's motivation to redeem himself is presented as being inspired by seeing Buffy and wishing to help and protect her. It is because of Buffy that Angel wants to make atonement for Angelus' deeds, to "become someone" as he tells Whistler ("Becoming – Part 2," S02E21). Furthermore, his love for the Slayer quite literally redeems him from hell itself, as in "Beauty and the Beasts," when Angel initially returns from the hell dimension in a feral, animalistic state, it is recognizing Buffy that restores his sanity (S03E04). So, it becomes obvious that Angel's love for Buffy is presented as the reason behind major changes in the character's story arc. Similarly in Spike's case, he is presented as someone with no moral compass, however he repeatedly allies himself with the forces of good out of love for the woman whose affection he seeks. So, it is Spike's love for Buffy and his continued contact with her that brings out the human in him. Even though Spike's love relationship with Buffy is more sexual than the one between Buffy and Angel, the importance of his love for her as his motivation to change and become a better man is not lessened by the relationship's carnal nature. His desire to become someone she will accept as her equal is what puts him on the path that transforms him into a sympathetic character. So, in both Angel's and Spike's character construction, love is presented as the force that motivates the characters to change and results in them moving away from their vampire urges, and thus associating themselves with traits that can be seen as positive.

⁶⁰ Although the characters do share a night of passion halfway into Season Two ("Surprise," S02E13), it causes Angel to lose his soul, and thus, despite getting back together in Season Three, Buffy and Angel do not share another sexual encounter in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

⁶¹ Buffy is in her early twenties at that point in the show, but she has been through a lot, such as the death of her mother that leaves her in the position of the single care-taker of her teenage sister, Dawn. Thus, it seems more natural that a relationship in this stage of her storyline would not be kept at a platonic level.

⁶² For instance, in episode "Touched" Buffy spends a night in Spike's arms with no sexual implications and this is the first time the two characters share such intimacy (S07E20).

⁶³ It seems that love between vampires and humans is an aspect used in many cases in the vampire genre. Especially the latest vampire fiction, such as the *Twilight* saga (Meyer, 2005, 2006, 2007, 2008) or the television series *Vampire Diaries* (K. Williamson, 2009-present), largely focuses on love relationships between vampires and humans and in many cases romantic relationships with humans are presented as motivation for the vampires to be better or go against their kind.

5.5 The “Good Guys” Schema

The show is heavily based on a separation between good and evil, as after all it is focused around the life of the Slayer, the one girl that is chosen to fight the forces of darkness. Even though there are instances when the lines between the “good side” and the “bad side” are blurred, as at times the “good guys” make wrong decisions and act immorally, all in all the world of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is based upon the distinction between good and evil. Buffy and her friends represent the “good side” and throughout the series they fight all kinds of demons, which form the “bad side.” As Tan explains, audiences tend to consider “good guys” as sympathetic (Tan 1996, p.168); therefore, it follows that if any of the characters align themselves with the protagonist, then the viewers will be inclined to developing sympathetic feelings towards them. In Angel’s case this happens almost immediately, as, although his character is a bit ambiguous at first, he soon becomes Buffy’s boyfriend and trusted ally in battle. So, the audience is to a large extent invited to treat Angel as being on Buffy’s side, and thus react to him as someone who should be seen as sympathetic. Even when Angel turns into Angelus and then joins the “bad side,” viewers are encouraged to see Angel and Angelus as two different characters – one fighting alongside Buffy and the other one against her – so the appeal to the “good guys” schema is still applicable in Angel’s case. Therefore, despite the fact that Angel could be associated with the “bad guys” schema through Angelus, the character is largely presented as an essentialist definition of good because of his soul, and thus seen as an agent of the “good guys.”

Spike on the other hand, has a more complicated relation to the “good guys.” Initially he is introduced as a villain, but his alliance slowly changes to Buffy’s side. His first acts that could be read as helping Buffy are selfishly motivated, so the “good guy” schema is not completely triggered, but, once Spike regularly starts fighting alongside Buffy, he is seen more as one of her allies. However, it is important to note that although Spike sides with Buffy and her friends against other demons, his motives are always questioned. The show tries to imply that even though Spike is choosing to do good, the motivation behind this choice is not altruistic but selfish. Wishing to have Drusilla all to himself or attempting to impress Buffy, there always seems to be an ulterior motive in his fight against evil. Additionally, unlike Angel, who is presented as different from Angelus, the evil deeds that Spike has done are seen as part of his character. Therefore, although Spike helps Buffy and consequently allies himself with her, which partially appeals to the “good guys” schema, he is still a demon, so it is not until he finally gets a soul that he is fully accepted as one of the “good guys.” Overall, both characters are presented as being on the side of good in order to evoke a sympathetic reaction; however, although Spike begins to appeal to the “good guy” schema, as soon as he starts aiding Buffy, he does not fully represent this persona until the last season; whereas Angel exhibits all the traits associated with this schema from the first season.

5.6 Information

Finally, it is important to note one more key difference in relation to the construction of the two characters, which is not strictly related with the ways of creating sympathy for Angel and Spike, but has to do with the amount of information that is made available for each character. Angel’s presence in the show is significantly shorter than Spike’s, as Angel is appears in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* for three seasons, whereas Spike has a regular role in the show for

five. Additionally, Angel's character is largely defined by his relationship with the other core characters with only a few scenes where the audience is aligned solely with him (in most of his scenes either Buffy or one of her friends are also present). Whereas viewers are in many cases given information about Spike's character through spatio-temporal alignment with him alone. So, one could argue that in Spike's case more changes in viewers' emotional reactions towards him are possible, because his prolonged presence on the show and alignment with his character allows the audience to have much more information about him.⁶⁴ In fact, Spike is able to go through a variety of changes as a character, and even though he is introduced as a villain his storyline includes enough redeeming qualities in the final seasons to completely reverse the initial antipathetic emotional reactions towards his character. Angel also goes through a stage, where he could be read as antipathetic when he loses his soul. In his case though, as he did not stay on the show for more than one season after he returns from the hell dimension, the producers instead of trying to win back the audience (as in the case of Spike) wish to separate his character from the alternative persona, Angelus. Therefore, it seems safe to say that, as the amount of information that is available about Spike is much more than there is about Angel, Spike's character can appeal to more schemata - even contradictory ones at times - and thus can evoke a variety of emotional reactions and go as far as to reverse some of the emotions initially felt towards him.

5.7 Summary and Conclusion

Looking at the various traits that these two male vampire characters have, with an aim to evoke sympathy with the viewer, one could argue that the emphasis is on making the vampires appear as human as possible. The differentiation from the other supernatural characters and their ability to feel emotions, as well as their desire to change and go against their nature, even their relationship with the protagonist are all elements of the character construction that make Angel and Spike appear to have more in common with the human characters of the show than with the other vampires. Especially as most of the core human characters at some point in the show are seen struggling with moral decisions and many of them commit sinful or immoral acts, the conflict of the vampire characters between their nature and their desire to change does not separate them from humans. In fact it can be perceived as one of the similarities between Buffy and her friends as well as Angel and Spike. As, according to Keen, humans can relate most readily and accurately to those who seem like them (Keen, 2006, p.214), audiences will be more likely to relate to the characters of Angel and Spike because they exhibit so many human traits. So, in other words, after examining the sympathetic traits these vampires are associated with, it could be argued that the different schemata that Angel and Spike are linked to aim to make them more relatable characters by presenting them as individuals the audience can empathetically engage with.

Furthermore, by comparing the construction of the two characters, one can see that although both characters play the role of the sympathetic vampire in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, they do so by different means. First, it is Angel who is chosen to fulfill that role, but, as soon as he leaves the show in Season Three, Spike's character, which was introduced as a villain in Season Two, undergoes a series of changes that evolves into a sympathetic character.

⁶⁴ As a result of being spatio-temporally aligned with Spike's character, in some cases the audience has more information about him than the rest of the cast, which explains why viewers are not so largely affected by the opinion of the rest of the characters in their reaction towards Spike, whereas in Angel's case the surrounding character's opinion is rather influential.

Crucially, despite the fact that Spike replaces Angel, the producers do not replicate Angel's story but find new ways to make Spike into a sympathetic character. So, although both characters play the same role, they do so by very different means. In relation to appearance for instance, even though both characters appeal to elements that could result in a sympathetic reading, different approaches are used in each case, as Angel relies on his attractiveness and Spike appeals to the "bad boy" schema. Throughout the show, even when both Angel and Spike appeal to the same schema, it still is not by following the same path. For example, both of them develop a relationship with the protagonist, which triggers the star-crossed lovers schema, but Angel's relationship with Buffy is much more like a high-school crush, whereas Spike and Buffy's relationship is to a large extent sexual. Therefore, by looking at the two characters and comparing the ways in which they are constructed to evoke a sympathetic response, one can realize that different strategies are used to achieve the same results. Putting Angel and Spike in relation to one another, the differences between their construction strategies are greater than the similarities.

Conclusion

This thesis dealt with how certain fictional characters can evoke sympathetic feelings. I focused my analysis on the television show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and two of its male vampires, Angel and Spike, and implementing Smith's structure of sympathy, I illustrated some of the ways that characters, which could be seen as negative, are constructed as sympathetic. Although Angel and Spike are associated with the vampire schema that carries negative connotations and could make them antipathetic (as many other vampires in the show are), they are presented in a way as to invite a sympathetic reading. Angel's sympathetic image relies heavily on three elements: his attractive physical appearance, his relationship with Buffy and his having a soul (which aligns him with the "good guys" and allows the potential for personhood). In other words, his character is generally portrayed as the handsome champion of good who is the protagonist's love interest. For Spike, because he is introduced in the show as a villain, the producers had to rely on other means to construct a sympathetic image for the character. Spike relies on appealing to the Byronic hero figure, so it is his status as an alluring outcast that is emphasized. His struggle to fit in and the fact that he is still in touch with his humanity reveal a vulnerability that can nullify the fact that Spike is still a demon at heart, as he has no soul. Although he had already been associated with various positive traits, Spike is also given a soul at the end of Season Six, in order to diminish his vampiric nature even further and to allow for his character to become a hero. In other words, Spike is initially constructed as a villain, who after Season Four becomes an enchanting outsider trying to be accepted, and who finally exits the show as a hero, willing to lose his life to save the world.

Looking at the character construction of the sympathetic vampires in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* one could argue that most of the schemata associated with Angel and Spike, which aim to evoke sympathy, serve to position them closer to humans than to monsters. Even though their monstrous characteristics are at times obvious, it is their ability to be nearly human that is emphasized in their ability to experience human emotions, such as love, as well as being able to change and to fight against their monstrous nature. It seems that this ability is to a large extent responsible for the characters appearing relatable and sympathetic. Since, as Keen says, human beings can relate most readily and accurately to those who seem like themselves (Keen, 2006, p.214), it follows then that indeed the ability to seem human helps the characters

of Angel and Spike to evoke a sympathetic viewer response. Unlike Stoker's Dracula, whose appearance and behavior portrayed him as a supernatural evil, Angel and Spike have a lot more in common with the human characters of the show than with the soulless evil vampires that Buffy fights against. So, in relation to the study of vampire characters that are constructed as sympathetic, having examined the cases of Angel and Spike, it seems safe to say that in order for vampires to become sympathetic they must let go of their supernatural evil nature and become relatable and almost human. In other words, in accordance with approaches to sympathetic vampires discussed in Chapter 2, it could be argued that in order for vampire characters to be read as sympathetic, they need to be constructed closer to the image of an alluring outsider rather than the figure of Dracula, as audiences can more easily identify with the outcast who is neither alive nor dead (and as such reflects the angst of not fitting in) rather than with a supernatural fiend.

Additionally to the observation that sympathetic vampires seem to be closer to the image of enchanting outcasts than Stoker's notion of vampirism, an interesting aspect in relation to the construction of the sympathetic vampires in the show is Spike's change from an antipathetic to a sympathetic character. Seldom in fictional narratives can one see a villain cross over to the heroic side. There are some heroes that have villainous pasts, but, once the audience encounters them, they are usually already on the road to redemption by the doing of good deeds. Rarely do audiences have to watch a character while she is still a villain, and then witness the epiphany that makes her choose an alignment with good over evil. Therefore, Spike's story of redemption is rather interesting, as it is a rare phenomenon, and it shows that given enough time audience reactions cannot only change, but be completely reversed. Naturally, allegiance can shift, as it is based on the evaluation of the traits associated with the characters, and Spike's case shows how big that shift can be, as he is transformed from an antipathetic to a sympathetic character. Obviously there are changes in Angel's storyline as well, but since Spike's character invites a sympathetic reading after being initially introduced as a villain, the shift in allegiance is much greater in Spike's case. So, in relation to the study of the audience's attitude towards fictions, particularly when focusing on Spike's character construction, one can see that the feelings evoked can change and emotional reactions can even be completely reversed if there is enough time is allowed for the audience to accept and adapt to the change. This is obviously more possible in media like television, as television shows run for a period of one to several years, and thus the large duration allows for characters to undergo many changes and be associated with a variety of different traits.

Furthermore, by comparing the construction of the two vampire characters one can see that there are more than one ways to achieve the same result in audience response. The two characters fulfill the same role, that of the sympathetic vampire, but Spike's story, as I have shown, is not a repetition of Angel's. All in all, Spike and Angel is associated with different schemata that can cue a sympathetic reaction. The only two common points in the construction of both characters would be the relationship with the protagonist and the acquisition of a soul, however even these commonalities are presented differently in each character, and as a result they are linked to different schemata. For instance, in Angel's case his soul was the result of a curse cast on him, whereas Spike got his soul back by choosing to pass a series of trials, which if endured would result in the reinstatement of his human soul. So, despite the fact that Spike replaces Angel in the role of the sympathetic vampire and there is some common ground between the two characters, a completely different approach is used in Spike's case. Therefore, by analyzing the character construction of these two characters, which both aim to evoke a sympathetic reaction, one can realize that different strategies can be used in order to achieve the same results. Thus, in relation to audience's reactions to

fictional characters, it can be argued that appealing to different combinations of a series of various schemata can lead to the same response.

Finally, it is important to note that in television series the character structure is constantly present. Unlike films where the three stages of sympathy have a more linear structure, as one is expected to watch the film from the opening credits till the end with almost no interruptions, in television the characters have to be constructed both in relation to each episode and the series as a whole. The producers know there will be viewers that will watch the show irregularly, as well as those who will have missed the first episodes (or even the first seasons). As a result, the character structure is always present, in order that, viewers who have not seen all the episodes, will still have a fair amount of information about the characters. For instance, there needs to be elements of character recognition throughout the show to introduce and re-establish the characters in order to account for the viewers that will tune in either later in the episode or later in the series. The constant presence of the character structure is evident in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* as well, and new schemata, which associate the vampire characters with positive traits, are introduced at regular intervals throughout the show. For instance, before Angel's vampiric nature is revealed, the character is associated with some positive traits, so that the viewers who have not seen the first episode will not immediately consider Angel to be an antipathetic character because he is a vampire. So, a final point to take away from the analysis of the sympathetic vampire characters in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is that their construction demonstrates the different approach in the structure of television characters, as it needs to take into account the various different viewing patterns.

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Dialogues are taken from *BuffyGuide.com* (<http://buffyguide.com>), and transcripts are from *BuffyWorld.com* (<http://www.buffyworld.com/>).

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