MONSTRUM: THE VAMPIRE IN THE DETECTIVE STORY

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For Chris and Jake, with love and thanks. I couldn’t have done it without you guys.

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ABSTRACT

My approach to the vampire detective highlights its connections to the private detective’s story and reveals the monstrous investigators’ debt to early feminist forms of detection -- specifically in their reformation of the ‘other’ and of traditional forms of power and authority. Seen in this light the movement of horror’s imaginary ‘other’ into the rational world of detection can be seen as not an abrupt breach of detection’s realist conventions, but an almost seamless transition into symbolic spaces that point to the detective’s primary function -- to make sense of the senseless. It is in this light that I explore the monster that is a detective as a symbol that is also a sense-maker, and a quintessential postmodern figure.

I argue that the distinctions between monsters and ‘others’, and between popular narratives and postmodern religion have faded, culminating in a character that can not only model ‘otherness’ as an exemplary condition, but also provide strategies for modeling the form of active postmodern subjectivity that postmodern theorist Jim Collins’ (1989) conceives of as heretical activity.
Monstrum: The Vampire in the Detective Story

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INTRODUCTION

Speaking in Tongues: Defining and Divining the Hybrid Voice

The Latin *monstrum* refers etymologically to that which reveals, that which warns, a glyph in search of a hierophant. Always alert to portents, the ancient Romans tended to use *monstra* to mean all abnormal phenomena regarded as warnings or omens of the will of the gods, not just monsters, and, as such, the Latin term constituted a very important element of the Roman religion, which was obsessed with divining celestial tempers and intentions through appearances in nature. (David Gilmore, *Monsters*, 2003)

The main problem when people try to rationalize something is not to investigate whether or not they conform to principles of rationality, but to discover which kind of rationality they are using. (Michel Foucault, *Politics, Philosophy, Culture*, 1990)

Audience evaluation and academic analysis of narrative generally begins with the understandings provided by genre. Genre informs our explorations and creates our immediate expectations. It is a valuable tool for approaching popular narratives and a rich resource for identifying the culture(s) that create and use them, in that each genre ‘speaks’ its own ‘language’ of aesthetic conventions and thematic concerns, while simultaneously ‘talking’ about the culture(s) it is created for and by. Genre hybrids fuse pre-existing genres to create new forms that in effect speak two or more languages, at once. The hybrid is the product of both its contributing and sometimes conflicting parts, that emerges as a language of its own. Hybrid forms signal instability: they point to change. They suggest that for better or worse things are not what they once were.

In ancient Rome, the figure of the hybrid body that could reveal a warning was known as a *monstrum*. It functioned, in art and in stories, as an admonition, for good or bad. Such *monstra* served as a recognizable medium, or vehicle, for messages, though not the message itself. David Gilmore (2003) and Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (1996) compare the monster to a glyph, or hieroglyph. It is a symbol; it stands for something else which, in turn, must be interpreted. Hence, in a Roman culture, which produced a multitude of monsters for its religions and myths, many of
these stories also feature an interpreter, a hierophant. If monsters were a central element of ancient narratives, so too were those skilled in reading signs -- the oracles, the soothsayers, the priests and priestesses. The presence of interpreters suggests that meanings were not always clear in this empire of contested borders, continual power struggles, diverse peoples and pantheons of gods.

During the two millennia of Christian history in the west, a fairly homogeneous cultural period, monsters stood for evil, and required very little in the way of skills from an interpreting hierophant. They symbolized the unknown, gave flesh to cultural fears and anxieties. Their hybrid bodies, their difference unequivocally indicated 'not right.' Monsters signaled with terrifying clarity what evil might be found 'beyond' cultural borders, knowledge and belief. Monsters needed to be slain, and as such the body of the monster provided an opportunity to display the might and right of the forces it was created to oppose. In this way the monsters that surfaced throughout most of two Christian millennia signal opposing forces and simultaneously serve to set an example for non-Christians of the sorts of punishment that could be exerted against oppositional forces.¹

Cultural conceptions of 'other' and religion have undergone rapid and massive transformations in recent decades, and indeed it can be argued that, in consequence, postmodern experience is quite similar to that of the pre-Christian Romans. At present we too live in a world of contested borders, competing and conflicting powers and authorities, diverse peoples and many 'gods.' Ours is also a world wherein signs can have many meanings and require interpretation. As well, ours is a culture that, if the popularity of Reality TV, news programming, talk shows and crime stories, true or dramatic, are any indication, also appears to be 'obsessed' with the abnormal. It should come as no surprise, then, that two of the most popular characters to have surfaced in our fiction, two of the most frequently used and re-used, are a monster and an interpreter -- Count Dracula and private investigator Sherlock Holmes -- and that the genres they popularized are still among our most popular. Indeed, arguably the most used character on
contemporary primetime television and in mass market fiction is an interpreting figure -- the investigator. The television series *CSI: Crime Scene Investigation* (CBS, 2000-present) exemplifies not only the popularity of contemporary investigators, but also the rising power and authority of interpreting figures. *CSI* has generated two popular spin-off series, a score of related merchandise (fiction, board and video games, for example), and almost consistently appears in the weekly Nielsen’s Top Ten ratings for broadcast and syndicated television. The action features armed scientists actively involved in, if not central to, all facets of the criminal investigation, not only outside of the laboratory but also beyond the perimeter of the crime scene. I believe the increased and overwhelming presence of characters obsessed with interpretation reveals much about postmodern culture(s) and experiences, and that the postmodern genre blend of horror and detection may function as a *monstrum* to reveal and to warn that things are not as they once were.

In this thesis I will explore a hybrid genre that inserts the figure of the vampire into the private detective’s story, seeing in these narratives figures that function as *monstra*. On the surface it might appear that supernatural horror and detection are incompatible. Monsters are imaginary. Their stories require that we suspend our disbelief in them in order for them to be effective. The private detective, however, is a fully human character in whom conventionally we are expected to believe. Not only do detectives operate in the ‘real’ world, but rationality is at the heart of investigative narratives. No matter how abnormal the crime, the investigator must make sense of it, through forms of authority that work here, in the real world. We might also imagine each of these genres to be directed at us differently. Horror is visceral -- it is aimed at our bodies, to make us jump, feel frightened and/or excited (Clover, 1992). Detective stories are aimed at our heads, at our intellects, and while the crimes or criminals they reveal may induce fear, the detective also reassures us that there is justice (Raskin, 1993). While different, then, in a number of ways, horror and detection are nonetheless both obsessed with the abnormal. While degrees of abnormality separate them, they can be seen as mobilizing similar discourses, speaking some of the same language.
Horror and detection are each preoccupied with exposing cultural conceptions of an ‘other’ and authority, albeit in different ways. In each there is a monstrous figure who represents social and cultural evil. Horror’s ‘other,’ as argued above, is an imaginary figure, a symbol that stands for that which is perceived to be from beyond cultural knowledge. Detection’s ‘others’ may commit unimaginable atrocities, act and even appear monstrous, but they are, at the end, human deviants. What ultimately separates the ‘others’ of horror and detection is again their degrees of separation from the real. While acknowledging that the real in fiction is always a construct, always a convention, it must be noted we continue to draw a line between what seems real (which may include the abnormal) and that which is ‘unreal’ (wherein abnormality becomes super-human or monstrous). What we accept as realistic is closely aligned with that which we perceive to be within the boundaries of the human, physically and morally. On the other hand, horror has always depicted territory that is unreal, outside of conventional notions of the human and the physically possible. I would argue, however, that boundaries between what is seen as the real and what is seen as beyond-the-real are significantly blurred in our cybernetic times. Horror and detection are mutually preoccupied with exposing conceptions of ‘other’ and authority, but in the postmodern period, where reality itself is so scrutinized and so negotiable, the postmodern monster has in many cases seamlessly appropriated the private detective’s authority and action. This telescoping is possible because of the rapid transformation of bodies of knowledge within culture that have opened the door to the reformation of the ‘other’ and of the detective.

The vampire detective thus blends two icons, the supernatural vampire and the merely human detective in ways that are remarkable given their generic histories. Vampires were once explicitly barred from works of detection, along with all unnatural devices, by S.S. Van Dine’s well-known “Twenty Rules for Writing Detective Stories” (1928). The Detection Club, a society initially formed in Britain in 1928, also forbade the preternatural in detective fiction. Founding member, Catholic priest and mystery writer Monsignor Ronald Knox’s “Ten Commandments of Detective Fiction” (1929) unequivocally bans monsters from detective stories
in his second 'commandment': "all supernatural or preternatural agencies are ruled out as a matter of course." Detection and horror have undergone many developments since these prohibitions, but almost a decade after the vampire detective surfaced in fiction, academic analysis of the form suggests this critical convention remains in place. L. David St. C. Skene-Melvin (1996), for example, cites Tanya Huff's 'delightful' Victory Nelson series in his catalogue of Canadian detective fiction, but only to deny its right to be there. Huff's vampire detective stories are in his view not clearly works of detection, but "true fantasy... consistently logical within their own framework... [in] a universe other than our own... with its own coherent set of natural laws" (xxvii). Skene-Melvin implies that we live in a world with coherent, natural laws, yet we live in a world wherein contemporary science and medicine have redrawn the lines between natural and artificial, human and machine, technology and nature. Breaches in boundaries exposed by research and developments with cloning, genome projects and cyborg technologies, interestingly, are powerfully explored in popular narratives, and in particular those that have been perceived as 'lower' genre forms -- science fiction, horror, and fantasy.

I do not argue that Huff's series, or any other of the many works that feature an investigative 'other,' is not fantastic. I do, however, believe that we must continually contest our perceptions of fantasy and acknowledge that the fantastic is not a monolithic or easily-defined category. This seems particularly cogent in light of the many new television series that feature psychic investigators. Medium (NBC, 2004-present), for example, is based on an actual person, Allison DuBois, which raises the question of the blurring of the fantastic, the seemingly supernatural, with the real and natural laws as we have tended to conceive of them. A recent letter to the editors of TVGuide (October, 2005) cogently expresses this concern. The writer argues against the use of 'crime-drama' to categorize series such as Medium and Missing (Lifetime, 2003-present). These popular series are fantasy, he suggests, and as such should not be grouped with series like Law and Order (NBC, 1990-present) and CSI. One might argue otherwise, though, particularly in light of a 'real' Allison DuBois or the number of
documentary/reality series that feature psychics or mediums, engaged by actual police forces to aid in their investigations.

When exploring works that blend the realistic and the supernatural, how might we approach them as genre bodies? Are they developments in the horror genre, ‘true’ fantasies, or rational investigations? Certainly the vampire detective television series that I will focus on is more extreme than *Medium, Missing* or *Ghost Whisperer* (CBS, 2005- present), series that present humans who have, for lack of a better term, ‘gifts’ that enable them to communicate with the spirit world, and see events not in their own time or space. Not that long ago, though, psychics and their powers were perceived to be as far beyond culture as monsters. Centuries ago women like this would have been tied to a stake and set alight. It is also worth mentioning that for some audiences vampires are not only found in popular narratives. The Internet is home to many sites for locating those who seem to believe that they are and/or there are real vampires, beings neither wholly alive nor dead, who cannot tolerate sunshine and must consume blood to survive.7 Clearly the vampire figure remains a creation of the imagination in terms of natural laws as we understand them today. Yet it is a figure made more believable, and hence more suited to detective narratives, by the extensions to the notions of the natural and the credible mainstreamed by advances in technology and the cognitive science in our time.

In any case, the vampire investigator does not trouble the lines between fact and fiction in the same way as ‘gifted’ investigators do. Whether psychics, clairvoyants or mediums are ‘real’ or not is wholly subjective. The vampire, however, is always a fiction, always the glyph, always an ‘other.’ Given its supernatural status, however, in detective fiction the vampire becomes more than a “glyph that seeks a hierophant” (Cohen, 4), but rather a glyph that is a hierophant, a symbol that is also a sense-maker. The vampire detective is a hybrid body that is both ‘other’ and authoritative, obsessed not only with interpreting abnormal phenomena, but also with interpreting itself. In a sense, the vampire investigator is a postmodern figure active in self interpretation, in the continual “production of [its] own subjectivity” (Collins, 1989, 142).
In Chapter One, “Monstrous Developments: The Detective, Genre and Critical Theory,” I will begin my exploration of the vampire detective and expand on my opening remarks. I will argue that the vampire-detective is a hybrid body with a warning -- it is *monstrum.* I propose an approach to this fused form via a critical methodology that also fuses recognizable bodies (of knowledge) in new ways -- postmodern critical theory. In this light John Docker’s (1994) description of postmodern theory as “many headed [and] multi-armed” (82) seems particularly apt, not only for its monstrous imagery, but also because it points out potential problems in ‘capturing’ the form. For a number of reasons, my explorations will be guided primarily by my understanding of Jim Collins’ (1989) approach to postmodernism and popular culture. I will expand on Collins’ approach in chapter one, but for now I will distinguish his view as one that challenges “the uniformity of mass culture, the binary oppositions used to characterize alternatives to it, and the ... centrality of the ... culture that produces it” (15-16). Collins’ suggests that postmodern works can embody admonitions for a popular culture that is saturated with signs, but with no coherent decoding system. This is a world view that emphasizes the importance of interpretation.

Although I find Collin’s analysis of postmodernism and popular culture both cogent and useful in its approach to the complexities of popular culture and the postmodern subject within it, it is his approach to the detective genre that distinguishes his work and grounds my arguments. Collins suggests we can read the private investigator as a character who is not only concerned with exposing a criminal ‘other’ but one who is himself or herself ‘other’ as well. Such a conception of the private detective is crucial to an understanding of the appropriation of the form by women and other groups formerly known as ‘other,’ and also to the subsequent development of a monstrous investigator. It is also a conception of earlier forms of detection that appears to be drastically at odds with other postmodern theorists (particularly Brian McHale, 1987), a disagreement I will return to and expand upon in a subsequent chapter. In this chapter, however, I will introduce the private detective figure as one who is not only authoritative, one who
represents right in exposing an ‘other’s’ wrongs, but also as one who is simultaneously adversarial to authority.

In developing my argument, I produce a timeline with respect to the progression of the detective figure, mapping the evolution of cultural conceptions of right and ‘other’ from the time of the detective’s popular emergence to contemporary use. Although this approach does provide some understanding of the chronology of the detective genre, it is not a complete or detailed history of the genre. I have extracted what I believe to be key moments in that history -- Victorian, post-Depression, post first-wave feminism and contemporary popular culture -- to emphasize the genre’s connections to the culture in which it is produced, to emphasize the detective genre’s concern with the ‘other’ and with conceptions of right and authority, and to point to the fluidity of those constructs. This is not to say that, for example, the earliest works of detection, such as the stories of Edgar Allan Poe, or the ‘cozies,’ that I do not comment on, cannot be read for these bodies of knowledge, or that they have been disregarded because they do not support my argument. My purpose, however, is to account for the development of a monster/investigator from within the detective genre through the rapid and vast transformations of the power, the authority and the ‘other’ in detective narratives. The periods I focus on demonstrate these transformations succinctly and allow me to point to the changes that have developed the form in such a way that it has become an ideal body for appropriation by those who exist on whatever might remain of the margins of culture. In recent decades we have witnessed the emergence of sleuths who can look or be like anyone. For example, American network television offers Veronica Mars (UPN, 2004-6; CW, 2006-present), a teenage sleuth and rape survivor; Monk (USA Network, 2002-present), an obsessive-compulsive middle-aged man; and Sue Thomas: FBEye (CTV, 2003-5) a blind agent. Middle-aged female investigators are largely disappeared from American network production and scheduling. They are, however, vibrant on the public networks thanks to British producers and series such as Rosemary and Thyme (ITV1, 2002-6), New Tricks (BBC, 2003-6) and Prime Suspect (ITV1, 1991-2007). Diverse races,
genders, capabilities (emotional, educational or physical), occupations and social backgrounds are represented. This development offers a rich resource for reading detecting bodies through various discourses (race and gender, for example), and also points out the instability of postmodern investigators’ bodies. At the same time, investigators are not solely recognized or defined by their bodies, but by their actions. It is what the body does, not what it might ‘look’ like, that earns it placement in the larger genre category and provides stability to the form.

If the changes that have occurred in culture have impacted on the bodies, or the look, of our popular detectives, the same cannot be said of the body of the monster, the vampire. If we can consider detectives to be defined by their actions, monsters must be recognized by their appearance. This is not to suggest that all monsters look the same or represent the same blend of features in fulfilling their characteristic hybridity, but to suggest that they are always symbols -- symbols that must be recognized in order to be interpreted. Of all monsters vampires appear most like humans. This monster’s hybridity is not achieved through the assemblage of diverse physical forms, such as the swamp creature’s amphibian/human blend, or the werewolf’s wolf/man mix. Rather, the vampire, the monster who once was human, represents a blend of metaphysical states blurring the boundaries between life and death -- religion’s territory. In light of Sir James George Fraser’s (1922) observation that fear of the dead “is probably the most powerful force” in the creation of religions (1922, 1951, 323), I believe that the vampire, despite its many transformations and uses, can therefore be read as speaking about religion. This is not to say that we cannot read for other things, or see it to stand for something else (like sex, death, or capitalism, for example), but that cultural conceptions of religion are inscribed there as well. Religion, even if it is not explicit, is always a part of the vampire’s accumulation of representations that can be interpreted by a hierophant.

In Chapter Two, “The Vampire: From Anti-Christ to Super-Saviour,” I explore the various uses of the vampire/symbol in print, on film and on television as I move towards an understanding of the vampire’s body as a consistently recognizable example of ‘otherness.’ As a
symbol, such bodies can only be read in their interaction with other systems of meaning, the other genre languages they speak. I explore the use of the vampire symbol, from its popularization in Stoker’s seminal work (*Dracula*, 1897) to the super-saviours that began to emerge in the 70s and 80s, in order to expose the evolving conceptions of ‘other’ and right that have shaped the vampire as symbol, and reveal the presence of religion in popular culture.

At this juncture I must expand on two points. First, although each of the popular storytelling mediums that I have mentioned (fiction, film and television) use narrative forms in different ways, and are received in different ways by their respective audiences, my focus must remain on the stories told, not the story tellers. Thus it is that I approach vampires, detectives and vampire detectives, regardless of where they may appear or how they might be consumed, as extensions of and contributions to both the ongoing texts of Dracula and/or Sherlock Holmes, and also as something unique. Second, my reference to Bram Stoker and Arthur Conan Doyle’s iconic characters may seem to imply that they were the first of their kind. This is not the case. Nonetheless, regardless of the presence of pre-Stoker vampires or pre-Conan Doyle detectives, Count Dracula and Sherlock Holmes are each credited with popularizing their respective forms and giving birth to the genres that tell their ongoing stories. Gregory Waller (1985) maintains that “Count Dracula is to vampires what Sherlock Holmes is to private detectives, not the prototype but the definitive exemplar” (77). These characters now exist outside of any specific text and are recognizable even by those who know nothing of their originating sources. For example, pre-school audiences may have their first glimpse of the icons in the form of cuddly puppets, The Count and Sherlock Hemlock in *Sesame Street* (PBS, 1969 to present).

The vampire’s transformation, from Stoker’s Anti-Christ to the potential super-saviours of the 70s and 80s is significant in relation to the symbol’s use in 90s’ detective stories. At a very basic level it allows producers to merely transfer the symbol from one hero narrative to another. As Skene-Melvin implies, though, this transference, from a work like Chelsea Quinn Yarbro’s vampire hero series (1978-2005), for example, to Huff’s vampire detective series, shifts the scene
of detection to landscapes drastically discontinuous with its own conventions. 8 Ironically Skene-Melvin’s own exploration of the roots of detective writing reveal ‘criminous’ and supernatural or horror stories to have been entwined in 18th century gothic novels, the tradition from which Stoker’s work emerged.9 If Stoker’s vampire story is considered among supernatural and horror stories, “which should never, never, never be confused with fantasy” (Skene-Melvin, xi), and gothic stories could be both criminous and supernatural his categorization of Huff’s series as a ‘true fantasy’ appears contradictory, or suggests that the hybrid transforms its originating sources. I presume the latter given his recognition of Huff’s series as true fantasy. I also argue that the hybrid transforms its original sources, creating its own language as it were. Unlike Skene-Melvin, while I acknowledge the presence of the fantastic in the new form, I believe the stable and rational actions of the investigator complicate the genre of fantasy, and require alternate approaches that foreground, rather than diminish, its function as a detective story. In this sense, despite the ‘pull’ of the imaginary vampire, this thesis reveals more about contemporary detective fiction and popular culture than it does vampire narratives. What might be considered new in my approach to vampire narratives can be found in my unraveling of the two particular discourses that the ‘texts of Dracula’ share with the crime genre, to point to their rapid and similar transformations in the two very different genres and, more importantly, their contemporary intersections. It is this phenomenon that spawns the monstrous detective, the symbol/sense-maker, a figure more sacred than profane.

In Chapter Three, “Monsters, Gods and Acts of Interpretation: Angel Investigations,” I explore the implications of what I believe to be the intersection of our monsters, our gods and our theories in the body of a postmodern vampire detective, Joss Whedon’s Angel (WB, 1999-2004). From a student’s perspective, and one who must be conscious of page restrictions, Angel is a safe choice. I need not make lengthy claims for its relevance as an object of study. Both Angel and the original series Buffy the Vampire Slayer (Whedon, WB, UPN, 1997-2003), in which the character was introduced, are popular with academics. Likewise, its popularity with audiences,
revealed by the literally thousands of web sites devoted to the characters and their creator, attest to its relevance in popular culture. As an example of a postmodern genre hybrid, marked by the replacement of the human detective with a symbolic figure, someone/thing more than 'just' human, *Angel* is also, in this sense, a popular example. With *Angel* I argue that the distinctions between monsters and 'others,' and between popular narratives and postmodern religion have faded, culminating in a character that can not only model 'otherness' as an exemplary condition, but also provide strategies for modeling active postmodern subjectivity. In this light I read *Angel*'s narrative concerns to be synonymous with contemporary experience and see it functioning as a televised version of Collins' postmodern heretic/subject. *Angels*' unique circumstances emphasize these connections but I believe that in this way they can also be seen to symbolize a broader cultural movement. Thus, while *Angel* is my primary focus of study, the vampire detective and my analysis have implications outside of this one text, and point to the relevance of interpreting figures in cultures where meanings are not always clear.

I begin my approach to *Angel* as an extension of the ongoing stories of both vampires and private investigators. Angel is a vampire with a soul, a character initially introduced in another popular series, Whedon's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (WB, UPN, 1997-2003). In the original series Angel operates largely in addition to the Slayer's authority. It is Buffy's mission to destroy the evil vampires and demons that threaten the fictional community of Sunnydale: Angel chooses to help. Angel does not become a private investigator until his move to the spin-off series, set in a mythic L.A. The first season of *Angel*, particularly the first few episodes, emphasizes Angel's career switch and offers many opportunities to read him as a detective. What I believe is interesting about this appropriation is not just that it can occur, and not only that we can spot detection's conventions, but the way those conventions are assimilated to function not only as a recognizable form of authority for the vampire hero, but also as a form of salvation -- both personal and communal.
Angel's explicit connections with divine forms of authority and the accumulations of religious representations already inscribed on his symbolic vampiric body shift the investigator's position onto mythic landscapes. It is a connection and a shift that allows us to read the presence of religion in the spin-off series that is not readily visible in the originating series, or, most importantly, in the private detective's story. Though I find Angel to speak of religious themes and issues, the series itself resists any definitive understanding of divine authority. It acknowledges higher powers while exposing their lack of orchestration, ultimately suggesting we place our faith in a more dependable, even if fallible, form of authority: our own. This is the form of authority the private detective has always relied upon. The series links the interpretative and authoritative actions of the private eye with symbolic characters who must act with authority, and rely on forms of right derived from and based on their own interpretations not only of good and evil, but of themselves. While the series ultimately presents a bleak view for the forces of good, these conditions also offer a form of empowerment. In the presence of nothing to guide interpretations there is power to be found in the right and ability to choose our own. While this may suggest that any sign many mean anything to anyone, or that we are offered a smorgasbord of free choices a la Liberal Pluralism, this is not the case. Collins' notes "the significant tensions among discourses as they compete for shifting, fragmentary audiences, and ... the impact such tensions have on the consumptions of texts" (16), and argues that while we are not 'free to choose,' we are 'able to choose,' which is the Greek root of the word heretic. This is an important distinction given what Collins' perceives as the semiotic glut of postmodern culture.

I conclude my argument, in "Beyond Closure: Vampires, Detectives and Audiences," with the contention that I cannot claim the 'right' meaning or the definitive analysis of this form. I contend, nevertheless, that it is imperative that we approach works such as Angel knowing that they can reveal something about us. If we do not explore narratives because of their violence, fantastic creatures, popularity, teen target audience, or whatever other categories we might use to trivialize them, we miss what they might say. Elaine L. Graham supports such an argument when
she suggests that “some of the most definitive and authoritative representations of human identity in a digital and biotechnical age are to be found with two key discourses: Western technoscience... and popular culture” (2002, 4). By drawing attention to the monster’s etymology and age-old function, I hope to underline the importance of its presence in contemporary popular culture. If we have come to understand the term ‘monster’ to be synonymous with ‘big’ (as in monster truck or monster-sized beverages), or to associate with the term stereotypical creatures exhausted by their proliferation in fiction, film, television and many other popular formats, we are selling this hybrid figure short, for it can reveal a great deal about the culture that has summoned it. Ours is a cultural moment wherein technoscience and medicine challenge biological definitions of the human condition. In this light the popularity of ‘others’ who are exemplary, who can model what have been perceived to be the finest of human qualities, seems worth exploring.

In the private detective’s ongoing story, then, the appropriation of the figure by an exemplary ‘other’ points not only to developments in cultural conceptions of ‘otherness,’ but also to evolving conceptions of the right and the good. The popularity of investigators who are empowered by forces beyond culture, either because they are imaginary beings, or because they have un-knowable gifts, might suggest that there has been a loss of faith in the traditional detective who is only human as one capable of stemming the tide of evil in the contemporary world. If so, I read the vampire detective as able to extend the pleasures and politics of the private detective story, and as comprising a new sub-genre, the preternatural detective story. Works in this genre reveal the sleuth to be a form of cultural consolation, one that is no less cogent for its being an imaginary form. The preternatural detective extends the reassurance of the detective story with powers from beyond, and has undertones, as I will argue, of religiosity. In the preternatural detective story we are required and admonished to continually engage in acts of interpretation, a stable activity in times of instability. It is the way we act on our interpretations
that ultimately defines who and what we are, and this may be, perhaps, what the monstrous investigator points to, what it might reveal as *monstrum*.

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1 Bram Stoker’s vampire, in the context of this thesis, is an obvious example. St. George’s dragon also ‘works’ as an example of evil, and to set an example for what evil can expect in the face of Christian might. This is particularly emphasized in St. George’s story where the dragon’s death is, in a sense, ‘paid for’ by the once terrorized townspeople’s conversion from paganism to Christianity. On the other hand, we might also say they were bribed into conversion by the Christian knight, who does not kill the dragon until they convert.

2 Particularly heinous criminals challenge these distinctions when they are referred to as monsters in works of detective fiction, but they do not break them. For example, Patricia Cornwell’s serial killer, Jean-Baptiste Chandonne, is referred to as a monster, certainly behaves monstrously and because of deformities is known as ‘the Wolfman’ (*The Last Precinct*, 2000; *Blowfly*, 2003), but he is human.

3 Originally published in *American Magazine* (September, 1928), Van Dine’s credo to “every respectable and self-respecting” mystery writer explicitly calls for crimes to be “solved by strictly naturalistic means” – no ouija-boards, crystal balls or contact with the spirit world allowed. The full version of Van Dine’s rules can be accessed at Mount Royal College’s “Gaslight” website, [http://gaslight.mtroval.ca/vandine.htm](http://gaslight.mtroval.ca/vandine.htm)


6 From a letter to the editors of *TV Guide* by Dr. William Harwood (October 29, 2005).

7 [www.sanguinarius.org](http://www.sanguinarius.org), for example.

8 There are 18 books in Yarbro’s Count Saint-Germain series.

9 Interestingly, he points to the author of one of the earliest vampire novels, Sheridan Le Fanu, as the writer whose work, *Uncle Silas* (1864) “represents the horror story in transition to the modern story of detection” (xi)
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Monstrous Developments: The Detective, Genre and Critical Theory

As a signpost the monster helps organize more than the interaction of heaven and earth. It also governs the production of differences here and now. (Rosi Braidotti, “Signs of Wonder and Traces of Doubt,” 1996)

Monsters de/monstrate difference -- this is the purpose for which we have created them. The etymological roots of the word support an understanding of the monster’s presence as a public display of warning or admonition. “Monster” is an English word which evolved from the Latin monstrum (prodigy or portent), from the root monere (to show or warn). Monstrosities or monstra stem from monitus, an admonition “because they point out something by signaling or symbolizing” (Gilmore, 2003, 10). We can recognize monstra by their hybrid bodies -- they are simultaneously familiar and unfamiliar. They are “fusion figures” formed from the reassemblage of the familiar, of shuffled and recombined components (Carroll, 1990, 45). Monsters’ hybrid bodies transgress distinctions between human and animal, living and dead, inside and outside. This is their cultural work, one they have performed “from the beginnings of recorded time... [as a consistent] part of a semiotic culture of divination, metaphors, messages, indications of deeper meaning or inspiration” (Gilmore, 10). The term monstrum then refers, at once, to both a particular form, one that punctuates difference -- the hybrid -- and a specific function, to point out something, to admonish or warn. While the contemporary proliferation of monsters (in film, television, fiction and videogames, for example) may suggest a trivialization of their cultural work, we might read this movement as the dispersal of the figure from the sacred to the profane, and in its broad diffusion into popular and mass culture underscores its continuing, indeed increasing, pertinence.
In this chapter I want to temporarily put aside the visual images that generally accompany the monster and concentrate, not on the ‘look’ of the hybrid but on its construction and function, examining hybrid forms that are not ostensibly monstrous and also ‘speak’ warnings. I speak of such hybrid forms as monstra, as vehicles for the public display of portent arguing that such cultural monsters, with their fused forms and admonitory voices, can also be found in other imaginative bodies, specifically in the private detective figure, and in related generic blends. Such hybrid forms or fusions function to ‘point out something,’ to reveal admonitions for the culture(s) in which they surface, and provide a valuable resource for reading ourselves.

I begin this chapter by presenting my understanding of the postmodern analytical context as it is imagined by Jim Collins (1989). In this context I see postmodern theory as a fusion of known forms, a hybrid strategy with its own energy and history, hence as a framework, lens and mechanism most capable of embodying and revealing cultural warnings. In fact, through postmodern approaches to the monster, the detective and genre hybridity, the admonitory potential of each can be fully revealed. If we view the private investigator though Collins’s postmodern lens, from its popular presence in 19th century fiction to contemporary usage, we can recognize the monster in the detective, and in the cultural functions the monstrous private investigator might serve.

The detective story mobilizes discourses similar to the horror genre. Both genres emphasize law and order, providing prime locations for seeing difference, albeit with dissimilar emphasis and under unlike conditions. The law and order of the fictive P.I. is not at odds with the ‘real’ world law and order of the genre’s readers. The landscape of detection is a ‘real’ place with human criminals and conditions that can be rationally ‘known’ to the reader. For example, I might not have lived in Arthur Conan Doyle’s England, but the Victorian world in which he introduces Sherlock Holmes is one that is not at odds with other representations of that period. Not so, of course, with another important work of the time, Bram Stoker’s Dracula (1897), a
horror story. Stoker's version of Victorian England is on one level a 'real' account. We might even consider the novel's collection of journal entries, newspaper articles, and letters to work towards such an understanding. The presence of Dracula, an unnatural being, signals altered worlds and altered expectations. Unlike private detectives, Dracula carries no burden of proof for his existence outside of the text; there are no physical laws to which he must conform. He requires only the ability of the reader, willing to suspend belief, to give him life. The private detective, on the other hand, requires a lesser degree of suspension of disbelief in that he is active in, and burdened by, the conditions of humanity, coded within and by the culture investigated. Stoker's monster never has to establish his right to be monstrous. Holmes is constantly called upon to defend his humanity, to ground his 'magic' in human skills and scientific rationale.

Joe Bellon (1999) argues that "we cannot begin to understand how a text or a series of texts function until we understand, fundamentally, the generic forms that make them unique" (137). I agree and for this reason approach the culminating figure in this paper, the hybrid, the vampire/detective, by first exploring its antecedent genres. The vampire detective can be seen as a part of the continuum of both of its narrative sources, not a sharp break from each, rooted as this figure is in the conventions of both vampire and private detective narratives, which ultimately connect to form the investigating monster. Conceptions of both 'otherness' and cultural authority are intrinsic to both horror and crime genres, but these threads are flexible, adjusting to cultural need and flow.

Although I ultimately turn to male vampire detectives, my exploration of the private detective genre traces the evolution of that figure from its male origins to its inclusion of female investigators, demonstrating that while genre narratives may have conventions, be formulaic, they are by no means static. Indeed the feminine body serves as a cogent manifestation of the capacity of the genre to migrate towards the inclusion of cultural 'others.' From her limited presence in Victorian crime fiction to the ubiquity of the female investigator in contemporary detective fiction, the female in detection exemplifies the capacity for incorporation and fusion that marks
this genre’s elasticity with popular culture. The shift to women investigators -- their opening of the category to ‘others’ -- lays the foundations for larger cultural and imaginative shifts, notably for the inclusion of the preternatural detectives found in our time. This is not to suggest that the developments in the ‘texts of Dracula,’ which I will explore in chapter two, do not exert a pull on the ultimate hybrid with which I engage, the vampire detective. My view is that to approach the vampire detective as first and foremost a vampire is interesting, but nothing new. As early as the 70s we have embraced multiple versions of vampires, from comic Count Chocula on cereal boxes to the romantic aristocrat, Frank Langella on Broadway. At this point we could say that the vampire can do most anything and detection, in this sense, could be seen as another of its many career options. I believe, though, that when we approach investigative ‘others’ foregrounding their connection and contributions to the private detective’s story, particularly in light of the contemporary proliferation of criminous stories, the changes that feminism has initiated in the genre can be revealed as intrinsic to the hybrid’s development. In her movement from the traditional ‘other’ to post 60s and 70s investigator, the female detective positions her former status of rejection as a legitimate basis for knowledge and authority, thereby opening the field to ‘others’ who will also emerge from the margins -- monstra.

Monstrous Viewing: The Postmodern Lens

The monster is that uncertain cultural body in which is condensed an intriguing simultaneity or doubleness: like the ghost of Hamlet, it introjects the disturbing, repressed, but formative traumas of ‘pre-’ into the sensory moment of ‘post-’ binding the one irrevocably to the other. The monster commands, ‘Remember me’: restore my fragmented body, piece me back together, allow the past its eternal return. The monster haunts: it does not simply bring past and present together, but destroys the boundary that demanded their twinned foreclosure. (Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, Monster Theory: Reading Culture, 1996)

Monster theorists Jeffrey Jerome Cohen (1996) and David Gilmore agree that the monster is a cultural glyph, a sign to be read by the hierophant, the interpreter. However, the manner in which the monster, the glyph, can be interpreted comes with its own warning — that which writes the glyph, so to speak, also scripts the interpreter. That is, they are each constructs. I would like to explore this idea in an examination of theory that conceives of critical analysis as a particular
type of tool, a sort of lens through which to read the glyphs of culture, yet one that is created
within that same culture. I ultimately argue the postmodernist lens offers a particularly cogent
perspective on the monster and the culture from which it emerges, as postmodernism, in its own
hybridity and fluidity, shares the characteristic components of that which it seeks to reveal.

First, I would like to suggest that we imagine, as Collins (1989) does, the various forms
of analysis that have emerged, historically and contemporarily, as parts of a continuum, evolving
and developing in complex interrelationships with other cultural forces. In this sense movement
in critical approaches to culture, from modernist to cultural studies for example, though an
indication of fundamental shifts in perception, evolves, expands and culminates, but does not
sever ties with pre-existing modes of thought. Theory develops in the same tangled cultural space
as fictive practice, popular culture and means of production, where it is also legitimized and
reproduced as a particular form of knowing. Theories are, like popular narratives and social
structures, not discrete entities. Theoretical approaches develop in and around each other,
producing, connecting with, and responding to the same transitional conditions, interconnected by
“networks of discursive, social and technological changes” (Collins, 77). Advocating a
postmodern approach that imagines these complex transitions as part of a continuum, Collins
differentiates the postmodern context by “the simultaneous presence of that style along with
modernist, pre-modernist and non-modernist styles” (114). In other words, the postmodern
context is a fusion of known forms, a hybrid and thus hospitable to monstra. This is an important
distinction as it provides for the presence of what might appear to be modernist modes of
discourse in postmodern texts. The components may seem familiar, but postmodernism, Collins
explains, “constructs an entirely different relationship with the accumulated representational
activity [from that of modernism], recognizing that this activity cannot be conjured away by a
sudden rupture because it forms the very fabric of our ‘structures of feeling’” (134).

Decentered culture(s) are, for Collins, a “fragmentary assemblage of conflicting voices
and institutions...[wherein] cultural production is no longer a carefully co-ordinated ‘system’...
[rather it] produces conflicts between competing forms of discourse… resulting in the need for any given genre, medium or institution to promote itself as a privileged mode of experience” (2). This is not to suggest that ideological or power relationships are no longer part of cultural production, “but that the lack of any co-ordinated system to assign functions to specific discourse makes what we recognize as ‘our culture’ discourse sensitive, thereby rendering impossible the notion that cultural production is one grand orchestra playing the identical turn on separate instruments” (Collins, 12). Power is elusive, ‘up for grabs,’ by many competing want-to-be masters, but no master plan.

Postmodern popular culture offers no easy ways to distinguish between dominance and resistance, mainstream and opposition, in a world where we are “between centers and margins that are always shifting” (Docker, 1994, 163). This is a condition with enormous impact on both the construction of representations and the postmodern subject. In recognition of the lack of any one culturally dominant force, Collins believes postmodernity’s subjects are actively involved in producing themselves, from simultaneous and competing sources, and are defined by their own abilities to orchestrate movement and arrangement into relevant meaning. As I mentioned above, this does not mean that subjects are free agents, wholly independent or “unconstructed by the very messages they come into contact with” (Collins, 144). But to deny that selection is not only possible but mandatory is to suggest that the subject is entranced by ‘one grand orchestra.’ It is the very lack of orchestration combined with the bombardment of cultural products that has produced “by no pre-conceived design whatsoever, a subject who is engaged in the process of being interpellated while simultaneously arranging those messages -- as if the lack of cultural orchestration has produced a subject who must act as the curator of his or her own musee imaginaire” (145). Collins believes that Althusser’s (1971) conception of interpellation, “as the very basis of the conversion process in which individuals are hailed or called in by ideology” (40), is one that is useful, but that it oversimplifies the postmodern interpellative process. The postmodern subject cannot be ‘always-already’ the product of a dominant ideology when what
attempts to compete for dominance is a "conflictive heterogeneous mixture of self-legitimating discursive ideologies (ibid) ... [all] insisting on their ability to perform" (42). The musee then is not a quiet place but one constantly under pressure, and the subject within hailed by multiple and competing calls that must 'clear a space' in order to be heard. The lack of orchestration, uniformity or a 'master plan' is particularly open to subjects who must be active in order to explain their world to themselves, so that "the activity of the subject is as important as activity on the subject" (Collins, 144). It is for this reason Collins believes we must engage in "heretical activity" (146) to maintain/gain control of the production of our subjectivity. Conceptions of heretical activity brush up against religious resistance, and certainly if we imagine popular culture to be synonymous with consumer culture, critical thinking might well be heretical in this sense. Collins, though, returns to the Greek root of heretic, "able to choose" (ibid), and in doing so acknowledges the conditions of postmodern existence and identifies the postmodern subject's mission within it.

**Genre Hybridity and the Cultural Tangle**

Thus we define a 'monster' as a new shape resulting from a combination -- usually in visual form, but sometimes only in words -- of characteristic components or properties of different kinds of living or natural objects. It is therefore characteristic of the 'monster' that it does not occur in nature, but belongs solely to the realm of the human imagination, and also that its shape forms an organic entity, a new type capable of life in art and in the imagination. (Heinz Mode, *Fabulous Beasts and Demons*, 1973)

Not surprisingly postmodernity welcomes fluidity in genre and brings a particularly resonant framework for monstrous representations. Numerous academic studies have revealed the interrelationships of genres, audiences and the forces of production (Fiske, 1991, Cawelti, 1976, Neale, 1980, and Gledhill, 2000, for example). Primarily used for taxonomy, genre is a way of separating fictional territories. The popular version of division by genre is played out in every bookstore and video outlet in North America that displays its wares separated by generic categories -- science fiction, romance, mystery and so on. Yet genre has never displayed a purity of form. Genre signals familiar territories through the aesthetic codes and conditions marking generic familiarity, but simultaneously relies on constant innovation and variation for ongoing
life. Hence the space between originality and repetition, between innovation and convention, demonstrates genre’s potential to speak uniquely, culturally and historically. Genre is fluid, flowing along with the cultural forces of production and reception, moving not only in response to conditions in the cultural arena in which it currently functions, but also in response to pre-existing incarnations, while pointing to the future.

Genres are not natural forms, such as those envisioned by Mode as the parts which create the monster (wolf-man, for example). They are, nonetheless, bodies of knowledge that have become naturalized via circulation and acceptance. We can recognize genre in this sense as a living form, a cultural entity that develops and expands its own body in interaction with other forms, both natural and ‘naturalized.’ These forms sometimes combine to create new forms, hybrids. Generic hybridity constitutes a new shape conforming to Mode’s understanding of the monster, having all the combinatory potential of “a new type capable of life in art and the imagination” (1973, 7). Again, generic hybridity is not monstrous in and of itself. It is a particularly useful tool for conveying monstrosity because it is itself fluid of definition and infinitely adaptable over time. Generic hybridity and the monster share in the circumstances of their creation. They rely on the fusion of familiar forms for their existence, and most important, in that fusion they each create a distinct new form. They are mutually imaginative forms existing only in the ‘reality’ of the culture(s) that use them, new forms given life through ongoing usage in the ‘real’ world.

Abyss Gazing with the Detective

Whoever fights monsters should see to it that in the process he does not become a monster. (Friedrich Nietzsche, Beyond Good and Evil, 1889)

Detective fiction is an especially interesting genre because it is so accommodating of generic evolution and mutation. At first glance the private investigator would appear to figure neatly into Gilmore’s (2003) analogy as a particular form of hierophant, one whose interpretive skill focuses on signs formed by the laws of the land, in opposition to transgressions and
transgressors. This idea is apparent in early approaches to the detective. Dennis Porter (1981), for example, comments on approaches that view crime fiction as a form of popularized authority in a "celebration of the state apparatus" (121). While it would not be difficult to argue that detectives whose investigations are sanctioned by institutions popularize authority, the presence of the private detective points out the flaws in such a monolithic view of the genre. Analytic frameworks that focus on detective stories' a priori acceptance of a law, a source of order and authority, miss the monster and do not recognize the private detective's admonitory potential. For example, viewing the P.I. from Michel Foucault's panoptic tower (1995) can only reveal the investigator's reaffirmation and acceptance of cultural codes of behavior. The monstrous potential of the private detective or the amateur sleuth to act as a warning, to be seen as another form of justice, is not interpreted, not conceived of because it cannot be seen from a centralized position. Collins maintains "the inability of most ideological analysis to conceive of the detective (and by extension popular culture) as a third-term alternative to standard dichotomies arises from the rigid binarism" of frameworks relying on a dominant or centralized source of authority (31). Collins' analysis recognizes the genre as "one of the first and most significant manifestations of decentered cultural production" (28). This distinction is crucial to my understanding of the genre's potential to function, not as a popularized celebration of authority, but as a critique of the system that gives life to the need for and the presence of an "alternative sense of justice" (30). The very existence of the private detective character, implicitly or explicitly, exposes the gap between state sanctioned justice, privileges a private sense of right and critiques the barriers that limit moral authority while heroically side-stepping them. These understandings lead me to conceive of the detective as monstrum. It is a body that is 'other,' a hybrid that is both inside and outside culture, and serves to admonish, to point out cultural dangers and divine cultural tensions.

I must point out that Collins's description of a detecting 'other' is not a distinction maintained by other postmodern theorists. Brian McHale, for example, whom I believe succinctly sums up the 'principle of systematicity' that connects the various arms and heads of
postmodernist expression, distinguishes the detective story as modernism’s genre par excellence for its foregrounding of epistemological concerns: “how can I interpret this world of which I am part? And what am I in it?” (1987, 9). While I agree with McHale that detectives are concerned, obsessed even, with questions of interpretation, they are also simultaneously concerned with interpreting modes of being, ontological questions. McHale himself supports an understanding of the presence of epistemological and ontological questions “tip[ping] over... the sequence is not linear and unidirectional, but bidirectional and reversible” (11). McHale and Collins clearly connect, though, on the importance of the *picaro*, a central figure of 16th and 17th century fiction, to, respectively, postmodern narratives and the private detective. For McHale, the “characteristic *topoi* of carnivalesque literature are also the characteristic *topoi* of postmodern fiction” (175). The picaresque adventure is a typical plot of carnival narratives, in which the “*picaro* seeks not social and economic advancement... but answers to ‘ultimate questions’” (McHale, 172). If the *picaro* tradition exemplifies postmodern concerns for McHale, for Collins it is the tradition from which the private detective emerged.

Collins’ argues that the detective emerged in the 19th century as a hybrid figure, a fusion of the picaresque and chivalric romance, earlier forms of fiction that manifest the investigator’s “doubly adversarial role” (28). The private detective is obsessed with justice, but simultaneously appears as a noble outsider, as consistently opposed to the institutions of authority, as to its transgressors. It is the very presence of the fused figure of the private detective (insider/outsider) that critiques and questions structures of power and authority. I agree with Collins and would suggest it is this characteristic of the detective genre that provides for the detective’s ability to circulate across whatever structures the culture(s) they investigate can hold in place. The 20th century American hardboiled genre is easily read for the dually adversarial detective, but traditional detectives also manifest their duality. Sherlock Holmes, for example, is separated from the authoritative agencies by his superior intellect and skills of deduction, not to mention his recreational drug use. Holmes operates *in addition to* the police force, but from outside of
authoritative agencies. His use of disguise to penetrate a culture structured by class consciousness privileges both the nature of decentered knowledge and the deductive methodology of the decentered. He uses the Baker Street Irregulars, a Victorian version of a street gang. They provide him with legitimate sources of information, and draw attention not only to the presence of children who lived in these conditions, but to their ability to contribute. The detective’s duality is the characteristic which allows us to read the concept of ‘otherness’ at work in both the code of the detective and the deviant pursued. The duality of the detective character also enables the detective to act as a social explorer and an admonitory figure, one who, Docker has said, can point to and reveal the “social values and anxieties of [the] time” (220). This is a position and a condition shared with other fused forms, such as monstera.

I have suggested that private detectives and monsters are both hybrid bodies, and thus ‘other,’ but the monster and the detective can also be seen to mobilize those very distinctions. The creatures of horror, fantasy and folklore offer forms of extreme marginalization -- they are imaginary and so far ‘beyond’ culture that they cannot be found in any ‘real’ space within. The detective story also exposes difference, although not as extreme -- it is a difference, a transgression that motivates the investigative action. The private detective character, I have argued, also displays difference, from other (sanctioned) forms of authority and from the criminal transgressor, the obvious ‘other’ of the crime story. However, what constitutes ‘other’ as a repository of difference is imbricated in the cultural tangle, connected to time and place by interrelated forces. For example, ‘other’ at various points in the cultural continuum has been largely defined through discourses of race, ethnicity, gender and/or beauty aesthetics. If we follow the continuum of the detective story we can ‘map’ the construction and rapid transformation of this cultural ‘other.’ That is, in step with the cultural visibility of groups formerly demonized in cultural products and by cultural policies as ‘other,’ fictive conceptions of ‘other’ change as well. An exploration of the continuum of the detective story reveals the ongoing appropriation of the authority and action of the moral detective by those once
marginalized culturally and demonized fictively. If we explore the presence of women in Victorian, hardboiled American, early feminist and later contemporary works of detective fiction, we discern the potential of fictive practice to reveal the climate of a particular time and place, and its use as a means to expose cultural change. I intend to follow the path of woman/’other’ through selected periods of detection to expose the interrelations of fictive practice, popular culture, and critical theory. In doing so I reach the tangle at this end of the continuum that has allowed the monster, the creature we can recognize from horror, fantasy, fairy tale, or legend to assume the doubly adversarial role of the private detective, while functioning as a source of moral authority. It is my contention that this condition is predicated on an acceptance of moral authority derived from former discourses of rejection, an argument I will develop in the rest of this chapter.

Previously I identified two static features of the detective genre that I consider to be relevant to subsequent appropriations of the investigative figure by a preternatural ‘other.’ To reiterate, regardless of the many and varied developments within the genre, detective fiction consistently disseminates cultural difference (there is a transgression and a transgressor), and it continues to provide characters who can act, albeit in diverse ways, as a source of authority (there is an investigator). I go on to focus on the presence of women in selected stages of the detective genre’s ongoing story. In her figure we can read an evolving view of the female/’other’ that will support my previous arguments. More important, though, we can also witness the transference of the authority from the masculine figure to the feminine, which the private detective must have, to operate as an alternative form of justice. The evolving figure of the female detective serves as a segue to the more extremely ‘other’ detectives, such as vampires, that succeed her. The contemporary appropriation of the detective figure by an imaginary ‘other,’ the preternatural detective, is then a specific sub-generic appropriation. The preternatural detective, whether male or female, vampire, werewolf or necromancer appropriates not just the detective figure, but specifically the post 80s female detective figure, and her tangled history.
As a site from which to view difference, popular 19th century works of the detective genre typically situate the feminine 'other' as an ambiguous presence. Although most often articulated through class and gender as victims of circumstances, Chris Willis's (1999) analysis of Victorian and Edwardian detective fiction suggests "assertive, independent women became increasingly common in late Victorian fiction" (para 1). When treated as victims of cultural circumstance, the constraints at least acknowledge the conditions of the times, providing a glimpse of Victorian society and characterization that is at least sympathetic, if skewed by stereotypes (that in turn have their own histories). Although they are most often seen as a domestic or as a client (and thereby of a particular class) in Sherlock Holmes investigations, it is I believe noteworthy that the only villain to outwit Holmes was a woman (Irene Adler, in A Scandal in Bohemia, 1891). Also present in Victorian fiction were a number of popular female detectives, whom Willis argues were present in the popular press because of a "mass market audience with increasing awareness of female emancipation" (ibid). Her analysis positions the Victorian detective-heroine as "an anomaly: as a detective she works to uphold the existing social framework; but as an assertive woman she threatens it. Whether amateur or professional, she steps out of the home to invade the strictly male domain of the law" (Willis, para 2). It is, I believe, noteworthy that from the 1890s onward, a time when the female detective flourished in British popular fiction, popular narrative was one of the few places a woman might 'step out of the home' and step into the role of the detective. Although women were employed as private detectives by the early 1890s, "women were not admitted to the CID as detectives until the 1920s" (ibid). In this sense we might imagine these early female detectives to be fantastic, not found in the 'real' world.

If the Victorian female detective posed a threat to social order it was one meditated and contained by its producers. For example, although female detective stories were marketed as criminous stories their titles reveal a literal indication of the unusual. In titles such as Revelations of a Lady Detective (1864), The Female Detective (1864), The Experiences of Loveday Brooke, Lady Detective (1893) and Dora Myrl, the Lady Detective (1900), gender is marked as novelty, as
something different, and perhaps something not entirely serious. The diverse deductive methodologies of the 19th century female detective also work towards offering ambivalent or dualistic readings. The figure is present and active but her skills and successes are often attributed to perceptions of women prevalent at the time of production, augmented by intuition, snoopiness and a propensity for gossip. Feminine intuition and instinct were so frequently used to account for the female detective’s successful investigations that by the 1930s these forms of deduction were as unwelcome in the landscapes of crime fiction as monsters. The aforementioned Detection Club’s oath strictly forbade reliance in feminine intuition to solve a crime alongside of “Divine Revelation... Mumbo Jumbo, Jiggery-Pokery, Coincidence or the Act of God” (1929). The sixth of Monsignor Knox’s ‘Ten Commandments’ prohibits female intuition as unequivocally as his second forbids monsters. Not all of the early female detectives relied on female intuition or instinct to operate, but Willis’s analysis suggest they were almost all young, pretty and single. These traits offered a method of disarming male colleagues and suspects. They also offered possibilities for hybridity with romance storylines, and popular exploitation in the pictures accompanying stories in magazines such as The Strand, the British journal in which many of the works of Conan Doyle’s series were published.

The culture in which the detective-heroine operates also inscribed difference in determining by whose authority she was licensed to investigate, and provides another source for reading this figure as benign -- ‘other’ perhaps, but not a threat. She appears patently created to reassure, to calm threats that may be imagined by her very presence. With very few exceptions the 19th century female detectives were middle-class, amateurs or private professionals, working for themselves or in private agencies. Many were university-educated, some with degrees only obtainable for females in popular fiction. For example, the detective-heroine of Grant Allan’s series Miss Cayley’s Adventures, published in The Strand in the 1890s, has a degree from Oxford -- “Oxford women could not take degrees at this time” (Willis, para 29). Willis’s analysis of the use of the female detective in fin-de-siecle fiction suggests that while a manifestation of outsider
cultures, they also served as a vehicle to contain and mediate concerns about female independence for a mass market audience. So while the female detective may have been a new and exciting hybrid (human/not-man, insider/outside), her voice and body is made benign, somewhat silenced by the forces that have created her, and perpetuate her position as ‘other.’

Willis suggests the Victorian female detective acts to reassure the reader by constantly reasserting her femininity (in the codes of the time) “by being sexually attractive and showing womanly weaknesses from time to time” (para 25). Her motivations for investigating are acceptable, womanly concerns (read emotional). She does not detect to conquer male territory, but in response to conditions with which the audience can sympathize -- to support a sick father, husband or brother, or to prevent the death or wrongful imprisonment of a loved one. Note-worthy in regard to the resolutions of these stories is the ultimate fate of the female detective in the Victorian version of the happy ending. Willis maintains the formulaic resolution adhered to by most of these works combine three features: the criminal is caught, the female detective’s skill is acknowledged and she is married, a condition which always ends her career. This is a satisfactory Victorian reward for the heroine, the victim of a lack of acceptable alternatives.

The transformation of the Victorian female ‘other’/victim into the villain is a significant development in the innovations undergone by the genre when used by the American hardboiled school. Academic analyses that read the American branch as misogynistic are many (Cawelti, 1976, Wilson, 1995, for example), but I wish to emphasize the connection between the cultural context and the female ‘other’ in her many guises. Priscilla Walton (1999) suggests that the world to and from which the hardboiled dick spoke, had witnessed a disruption of gender roles, transformed social situations and increasing corporatization. As a site for exposing difference, the femme fatale, a hybrid identity blending femininity and death, was popularly exposed in many forms as a figure of fear and fascination. She is as destructive and exciting a figure as the vampire or the werewolf, associations made when she is referred to as the vamp, or the she-wolf, who preys on men for survival, and perhaps, pleasure. Scott Christianson exposes the duality of
her construction, finding significance in the genre’s "reaction-formation in a cultural context which displays its primary antagonist, the ‘other,’ to be both female and popular" (1990, 141) — abject but also a symbol of male status. There are of course exceptions, most obvious perhaps in the secretary/associate character, but the most prevalent representation of women explored their new and complicated status. Simultaneously perceived as social and economic competition and sexually desirable, women are most often revealed as a deviant but desirable force.

Like the monster, the femme fatale’s ultimate power to disturb and defy social order rests solely on her body, her sexual powers in this case, powers that both appeal and repel. While it could be argued that the femme fatale’s machinations suggest that she is also intelligent, I would contend that her brain power is a secondary characteristic. It is unlikely she would have a chance to spin her web without having first attracted her prey. Her body, her appetites and her malevolence mark her as monster and reveal her status, outside of the culture that created her.

The front covers of the dime pulps published throughout the 30s, 40s and 50s may perhaps provide the most cogent visualization of the femme fatale’s characteristic features. The front covers of Black Mask Magazine, for example, mutate from the 30s views of frightened voluptuous females to the 40s snarling beauty with a gun, to the 50s smiling sexual predator. The faces change, but the bodies remain the same, emphasizing the attributes we are meant to ‘look out for’ — desirable but deadly.

Beauty in the hardboiled genre is not confined to ‘bad’ women. The previously mentioned ‘sweet kid’ secretary/associate was quite often beautiful, as was Nora Charles, introduced in Dashiell Hammett’s The Thin Man (1934). In light of John Cawelti’s suggestion that the “real hostility of the hardboiled story is directed toward women and the rich” (1976, 158), the popularity of Nick and Nora Charles is worth mentioning. Popularized in novels, films, radio shows and theater, Nora is a beautiful woman and quite wealthy. Seemingly the “evil...embodied” (ibid) in both these traits is modified by the presence of a husband. If we consider that Nora’s desirable body and class are threats that have been made safe by matrimony
(wed-locked, so to speak), then the physical characteristics of two other investigating females of this time may also be relevant. Erle Stanley Gardner's Bertha Cool and Sam Merwin Jr.'s Amy Brewster are as smart talking and non-submissive as the femme fatale, and they could be thought to pose an economic threat -- Bertha co-owns a detective agency and Amy is a lawyer -- but both are plus-size women. Their bodies are not considered dangerous as they do not/cannot use them for seduction. Nor are they coded as maternal bodies, behaving more like the femme fatale than the 'good girl.' They smoke, drink and intimidate the men who work for and with them, and those who work against them.

Regardless of the seemingly misogynistic intentions of the hardboiled genre of the 30s and 40s, there are other ways to approach these works. If, as Cawelti (1976) has observed, the tensions revealed in the genre expose what might be desired in the body of women and the means of her destruction, they also expose the perceived fragility of the masculine dominant -- the 'sap' that falls for the femme fatale's stratagem. Frequently the detective's ability to see the trap, to not 'play the sap' ultimately serves to draw the moral line between the two, most often, though, after he has sampled the 'bait.' Sam Spade, in Dashiell Hammett's The Maltese Falcon (1930), uses those very words to articulate why the romance that has developed between himself and Brigid O'Shaughnessy cannot go on. In many ways the femme fatale and the detective are similar -- they both rely on their bodies for pleasure and violence, they drink, smoke, speak the same language and are equally cynical. His ability to turn away from their similarities and her attractions saves his life and restores whatever order could be said to exist. If the femme fatale reveals the tensions in a culture "where success with women is a crucial index of status, and 'making out' one of the few tangible measures...of group esteem and popularity" (Cawelti, 159), she also reveals a glimpse of the female 'other.' Even if overwhelmingly personified as destructive, the femme fatale, at the very least, is present and a powerful force in the narrative action, within the world projected and within the genre. She is unapologetic, remaining true to her nature until her death.
We also cannot clearly read the predominant use of the femme fatale character against an equally powerful binary ‘good.’ Nora Charles’ beautiful socialite status might be made safe connected to the moral fiber of her retired P.I. husband, but for many of the femme fatales of this time, marriage is the trap from which they seek to escape -- the condition that breeds their discontent. For example, in Sherwood King’s If I Should Die Before I Wake (1938) the femme fatale surfaces after being blackmailed into an unhappy marriage. Cora’s plot in James M. Cain’s The Postman Always Rings Twice (1934) develops after her husband decides they’ll relocate, tearing her away from her business/social interests to care for her paralyzed sister-in-law. We cannot distill this argument into a single statement, such as bad marriage = a bad woman, for if the femme fatale suggests that pleasure and destruction lie outside the circle of family relationships, we are also offered little to suggest that pleasure and safety can exist within it. The family in Raymond Chandler’s The Big Sleep (1946) is a decaying garden, producing deviant offspring in the Sternwood sisters.

There appears to be no happy ending in the hardboiled story, and it seems quite often that the only person who survives more or less intact is the dick himself. He can sample the goods offered by the femme fatale and walk away when they get stale or uncomfortable, and while he may wrap up a case quite often this is to no one’s satisfaction but his own. If justice is served in the hardboiled genre it is the detective’s form of justice, the official forces being too corrupt or inept to be trusted. This distinction not only highlights the corrupt city around him, but necessitates an important shift in the perception of institutional forces from Victorian forms of the genre. The superior intellect and analytic abilities that distinguished and separated a detective like Sherlock Holmes from the police operated, as I have suggested, in addition to institutional resources. Lestrade and his police force may have been unequal to particular investigations but they were an authoritative presence, and were generally competent. The criminal, the evil but intelligent ‘other,’ is an anomaly in Holmes’s world, an aberration that in most cases is revealed and destroyed, assuring the restoration of a perceived communal safety (Irene Adler, as I have
mentioned, is an exception). The American hardboiled detective has no such safety net; he cannot rely on the competence or even the benevolence of official forces. His adversaries are not anomalies, or even necessarily the same as the authorities. If not the authorities themselves, the hardboiled criminals are part of an underworld, a network of transgressors in a world the hardboiled dick can also enter. The hardboiled detective’s source of authority is not in addition to the law, or even above it, but better than the law and its agents. It is an exemplary justice based on his own loner code of morality, the code that marks him as an outsider and a rebel. The hardboiled detective is the rebel hero because he chooses to be, a choice which ties him personally to justice he can mete out.

I have taken time with these distinctions because I believe they signal the upcoming meeting of the morally retributive rebel and the feminist detective, a figure whose popularity and presence rose and transformed rapidly in the later decades of the 20th century. In the remainder of this chapter I explore the appropriation and the transformation of the hardboiled detective’s outsider status and moral authority by the feminist detectives that surface post 1960s and 70s social action. The shift from ‘in addition to’ forms of deduction into an exemplary moral authority marks the hardboiled dick’s heroic, but ultimately self-serving mission. I continue now to suggest that this shift, from communal safety to self-gratification, so to speak, is crucial to the development of a new form, one with an ability to operate in the space between cultural need and individual action. If the male hardboiled detective is the rebel outsider, self armed with an isolating, but moral authority, the feminist detectives of the 80s were armed with a morality invested in them by their former position as ‘other’ – his outsider status was chosen, hers a historic form of oppression. The feminist detectives, explains Katy Emck (1994) are not “at odds with a series of social institutions because [they are] possessed of the alienated moral purity of the traditional P.I., but because they are male dominated and oppressive to women” (387). The male P.I. rises above corruption, from discourses of rebellion, the female from the margins, from discourses of rejection. He has separated himself from institutional authority, she has been
separated by that authority, and that separation, that difference becomes the force that arms the female detective with a license to repudiate. The female detective serves communal needs not only within the fictive worldview, but from a body instantly recognizable as formerly-known-as-'other.' In her successful appropriation of authoritative action she rejects and repudiates the validity of her constructed past and reframes the feminine in her own voice.

The proliferation of crime fiction written for and by women since the late 70s parallels the expansion of women’s position in North American culture. Early female appropriation of the American hardboiled formula legitimized a feminist standpoint, privileging former positions of oppression as legitimate sources of ‘knowing’: the root of the female dick’s authority and power, and of feminist theories. Maureen Reddy (1990) underlines this connection when she suggests that “feminist literary criticism, feminism as a social movement, and feminist crime novels have grown up together” (174). If, as Willis suggests, the presence of female detectives in Victorian fiction was presented as a novelty and constructed so as not to frighten, but to reassure readers with a growing awareness of female emancipation, her presence in feminist detection answered to a demand. The demand for stronger female characters by fiction readers, and the industry response, is one that Manina Jones and Priscilla Walton (1999) claim to be clearly connected to women’s growing powers independent of the domestic sphere.

In many ways the Victorian female detectives and the early feminist detectives appear quite similar. Early feminist dicks, like Sara Paretsky’s V.I. Warshawski or Sue Grafton’s Kinsey Milhone, are also sexually attractive and may display ‘womanly’ weaknesses (read emotions). Yet, unlike the well-mediated Victorian female detective these characteristics do not marginalize them, but become tools or weapons in the female detective’s hands. For example, Paretsky’s V.I. may seem to display women’s stereotypical preoccupation with fashion, but her frequent comments about her clothes only serve to emphasize that she is a discursive character, that she can determine, to some extent, her own meanings, her own representations. V.I., explains Emck, “oscillates between dressing ‘down’ so she can be masculine and athletic and project a street-
level competence, to dressing ‘up’ in order to exude yuppy-like professionalism or to catch patriarchal magnates off guard with her feminine elegance” (388). The point is she decides which part to perform with full awareness of the implications.

The white, educated, middle-class female detective is central to both Victorian and early feminist forms. Old news, perhaps, but noteworthy in this context is that the degrees and positions held by the feminist detectives were now no longer only available to women in fiction. As I have mentioned, Willis’s analysis suggests the assertive and independent women present in Victorian detective stories, largely produced by men, for a perceived largely male readership, create a benign form of ‘otherness.’ Any threats to the social order are mediated by this context. Not so for the feminist detectives, created largely by and for women. While we might say that the commercial success of the feminist detective confirmed and reassured producers about the commercial and narrative viability of pro-woman positions, and does offer the genre’s characteristic reassurance (there is justice), she in herself is not wholly benign. Her political agenda, formed in exclusion, threatens the status quo. If the detective of the Victorian tradition functioned in addition to sanctioned forms of authority, the feminist detective shares her relationship to authority with the hardboiled detective. That is, Emck suggests, that they are both “representative of a personal and marginal code of ethics at odds with a justice system and society perceived as both corrupt and constraining” (387). The hardboiled P.I.’s alienation, though, as I have stressed above, is self-chosen, the feminist’s is historically imposed. In this sense, the feminist P.I. also has much in common with the malevolent criminal of the hardboiled story, the femme fatale. I have previously mentioned the similarities between the femme fatale/‘other’ and the hardboiled dick/‘other’ -- their mutual reliance on their bodies, their comfort with violence, they speak the same ‘language’-- but these intersections are also apparent in the feminist detective where they combine to form effective tools for investigating culture(s). Unlike the male P.I. though, the feminist detective’s moral stance does not alienate her or her alternative source of authority from the culture(s) she attempts to re-order. V.I. Warshawski cogently expresses her
break from previous representations when she says that she is “not made of stone” and cannot have the “detached objectivity of Sherlock Holmes” (*Bitter Medicine*, 1987, 40). The feminist detective cannot maintain either the stance of Holmes or Hammer as the texts work to “de-emphasize the genre’s traditional representation of the detective as single, ‘transcendent’ subject and prefer to represent parity and dialogue between the detective and her clients and friends” (Emck, 385). This being-in-relations contaminates the detective’s professional isolation, and re-organizes it around notions of family and social responsibility.

If the face of the white, educated, middle-class female detective of the late 70s and early 80s reflected a somewhat homogeneous version of woman, it was a version of the female mirrored in the early stages of 60s and 70s feminism. Each emerged in appearance and acceptance as a counter-tradition, a particular form of knowing from outside of traditional bodies of knowledge, thus opening up a new subject position. If the early female detective was able to easily fit the mantle of moral outsider that separated her masculine kin from the institutions of authority, she did so bringing with her the knowledge and experience of the formerly marginalized, as a retributive force. But the ongoing evolution of 60s and 70s ‘one-voice’ feminism grew to acknowledge diverse experiences and many sources and forms of oppression. As these values have become absorbed into mainstream concerns, so to does the ability of ‘just’ female-ness to function as a marker for ‘otherness.’ The assimilation of formerly marginalized groups, as the genre continued to develop, privileged the moral authority of a detective formerly-known-as-‘other,’ but the increasingly diverse faces of the late 80s detectives and those that followed, match the multitude of voices that could articulate ‘woman’ and speak from decentered culture(s).

The detective genre and feminist theories have evolved to incorporate increasingly diverse views and voices that continue to signal the recognition of consumer and reading communities, and a layering of significations in accord with postmodern experience. We are offered throughout the 90s female detectives who are not only Caucasian and heterosexual
(borders transgressed in the 80s), but also manic depressive, or sex industry workers, or recreational drug users, or thieves -- all characters who appeared in the early days of hardboiled fiction to signify the criminal ‘other,’ not the detective. For example, *The Maltese Falcon*’s antagonist was marked as a cultural deviant not only for his criminal behaviors, but by both non-traditional sexual mores and physical infirmity. Contemporary writers use traditional markers of difference not to give flesh to the cultural deviant, but to the popular detective. Abigail Padgett, for example, writes a riveting series featuring a child services worker who struggles with manic depression. Set in the south-west U.S., Padgett’s protagonist, Bo Bradley, continues to express concerns spoken by her 80s sister sleuths, but also those of the mentally ill, children in crisis, the native community and other ethnicities visible in the area, the desert ecosystem, and the institution she works for.9 Scottish noir writer, Denise Mina, offers a trilogy of novels set in Glasgow.10 Her amateur sleuth, Maureen O’Donnell, speaks not only from a position of poverty and extreme familial dysfunction, but also from that of a recreational drug user and heavy drinker. Admonitory messages regarding drug use are framed around discovery and consequence, not lack of enjoyment. Even in the nation loudly at war with drugs, Laura Lippman’s amateur sleuth Tess Monaghan refers casually to her drug use in the debut novel, *Baltimore Blues* (1997). For Tess the joint she smokes on her roof is just “another substance,” albeit controlled, but not unlike chocolate, wine or “greasy fries” (155).

Liza Cody also presents a unique character in her Eva Wylie series; an offshoot of another series of Cody’s featuring private investigator Anna Lee.11 Most easily read through a carnivalesque lens, Eva is a woman out of control. Large and unattractive, she is very aware her size and features bar her from advantages offered the beautiful. Her grotesque and powerful body, nonetheless, is also the means to her survival, and is ‘worked’ on, not for seduction, but for that very survival. Eva is a wrestler, the London Lassassin, and a night watchman at an auto parts yard, where she lives in a trailer on site. The two guard dogs she trains and works with provide
no moments of maternal sweetness as her approach to their training is Draconian at best. Eva is also a frequent ‘borrower’ of cars not her own, a pragmatic solution born of need, not desire.

It would, though, be incorrect to suggest that all excursions to the margins for a detecting ‘other’ offer critical voices. As Collins’ has said, anarchy is not the only other option in decentered worlds -- a multitude of positions are available from which to ‘speak.’ For example, although the sex trade industry has provided the landscape for a number of titles that do critique, or call attention to social conditions (Gail Bowen’s *The Wandering Soul Murders*, 1994, for one), others seem to use strippers or prostitutes primarily as a source of humour or titillation. For example, Janet Evanovich’s Lucille Ball-esque bounty hunter, Stephanie Plum, often teams up with former ‘ho,’ Lula, and in spite of their comic fumbling, they often capture the bond skipper and the occasional murderer. Lula, although possessing the smart mouth, street smarts and physical presence to be a powerful force, is consistently diminished by her penchant for spandex clothing far too small for her ample frame. Nancy Bartholomew’s Sierra Lavotini series is also noteworthy in this regard, for the voyeuristic depiction of stripper’s bodies. There also appears an overwhelming concern with establishing the amateur sleuth’s credentials as a ‘good’ girl/stripper at the expense of women who lap dance or ‘just’ drape themselves naked on a pole. Sierra’s long-winded descriptions of her body and her revealing and often tear-away clothing, and her emphasis on her ‘planned’ routines speak not at all of the conditions that supply such things with commodity status. I do not draw attention to these works to scorn them for the apparent lack of feminist ideals. I believe, in fact, that they signal how diverse the voices that can articulate female conditions and action can be, in the genre and elsewhere, and that all female detectives are not feminists.

Regardless of whatever framework supports reading the diverse and popular detectives, the emergent discourse disputes boundaries, hauls in the marginalized from whatever borders may still exist, and also perpetuates an understanding of the source of moral authority derived from former discourses of rejection. Excluded identities continue to emerge, in a consistent
manifestation of the shared space of decentered culture(s), production and consumption. It is a ground well developed for the emergence of a preternatural detective, an investigative ‘other’ whose contemporary form also arises from discourses of rejection ‘beyond’ culture, perhaps the last cultural frontier for concepts of ‘otherness.’

1 I identify and focus on innovations made for and by women, but I do not mean to imply that only the women’s movement has contributed to these developments. My argument, I believe applies to the changes initiated in culture by all groups that once spoke from discourses of rejection, those formerly-known-as-other. I focus on representations of the female ‘other’ only because her appearance and proliferation in detective fiction following the 60s and 70s is most visible. Her body can also be used to motivate discourses (of race, ethnicity and/or sexuality, for example) that highlight the broader concerns, issues and successes of human rights movements.

2 Quoted in Willis, para 14.

3 The sixth of Monsignor Knox’s commandments position intuitive deductions alongside of accidental insights: “No accident must ever help the detective; nor must he have an unaccountable intuition which proves to right” (1929). All ten commandments are accessible at www.diogenes-club.com/knoxrules.htm

4 I do not wish to suggest that the generic territory between Victorian detective fiction and femme fatale lay barren. The tradition of the ‘cozy,’ open to both female writers and female investigators, flourished during this period. I would argue, however, that the cozies’ emphasis on the manners and mores of rapidly disappearing times perpetuate the Victorian’s victim of social circumstance. Cora Kaplan’s (1986) analysis of the early ‘queens of crime’ (writers such as Agatha Christie, Dorothy Sayers, and Patricia Wentworth, for example) suggests that like the Victorian female detective this school of detection’s female detectives and their writers do not challenge social order. At their worst, explains Caplan, they are “explicitly antifeminist, and at their best highly ambivalent about any disruption of traditional gender relations” (1986, 1997, 212)

5 Consider the conundrum of the ‘trophy wife,’ for example – prize and price.

6 Many of these are available on-line at a number of wonderful websites. One of the best, I believe, is the electronic repository of Black Mask Magazine. Not only are some of Black Mask Magazine’s covers available, but also many from other pulps published under the Black Mask banner.

www.blackmaskmagazine.com

7 Writing as A.A.Fair, Gardner introduced the Cool and Lam agency in The Bigger They Come (1939). He produced 29 books in this series, which concluded in 1970. A large, chain-smoking middle-aged widow, Bertha may also be noteworthy as the first character in the genre to swear. Three hundred pound Amy Brewster was introduced in Knife in My Back (1945). Merwin Jr. produced three books in this series.

8 The novels’ filmic treatments also enjoyed popularity. Tay Garnett directed The Postman Always Rings Twice (1946). King’s novel If I Should Die Before I Wake was the basis for Orson Welles The Lady from Shanghai (1948).


10 The debut novel in this series, Garnethill(1998) was followed by Exile (2000) and Resolution (2001).


12 Introduced in One For the Money (1994) there are currently 12 books in the Stephanie Plum series.

The Vampire: From Anti-Christ to Super-Saviour

Every age embraces the vampire it needs. (Nina Auerbach, Our Vampires, Ourselves, 1995)

We live in a time of monsters. (Jeffrey Jerome Cohen, Monster Theory, 1996)

Monsters are symbols. They must always ‘stand for something’ -- they cannot stand for themselves. Monster theorist Jeffrey Jerome Cohen suggests that “the monstrous body is pure culture... exist[ing] only to be read” (1996, 4). Monsters have no existence on their own; they are only here because we have made them. Our relationships with the monsters we have created are complex: they are simultaneously mirror and reflection. Like a mirror they are constructed to reveal parts of ourselves, but what is reflected is but a projection, an image which is not and cannot be ‘us’ even if it might appear to be. David Gilmore believes “the mind needs monsters” (2003, 2) to act as a sort of pictorial metaphor, an imaginative ‘other’ on which to transfer cultural fears and anxieties. I have previously identified the monster’s hybrid body and its revelatory function as stable characteristics of the monster, but also of importance is the presence of a third characteristic, a feature that mutates, disappears and reappears over time. In this sense monsters embody or encode cultural change. Our own history exists in the monsters’ many varieties.

Conspicuously absent from many of our contemporary monsters is their inherent evil. As Gilmore has suggested, this is not entirely new (51). Pre-Christian monsters also enjoyed ambivalence in their roles as emissaries of the gods. They may have revealed terrible forces or malevolent inference, but their wickedness towards humans was not inherent. Consider the Minotaur or Medusa, for example: each of these mythological monsters is terrifying, but both are also victims, powerless as to the use made of their bodies. The many and varied hybrid creatures that circulated via myth in ancient times were directly connected to the religious beliefs of the time, as polysemous as were the flawed
gods themselves. Monsters seemed to have developed into inherently evil creatures with the spread of monotheistic religions. The widespread acceptance of one God impacted on *monstra* in ways which ironically seem to have strengthened not only their relationship with a particular religious system, but also their ability to do evil. Aligned with Satan, monsters became a visual trope for God’s opponents, and their power to do evil rose proportionally as they became imagined as a theological ‘other.’ The Christian God’s ‘perfect’ being authorizes errors in creation -- if monsters are here it is by his authority and for his divine purpose. Monsters, then, functioned as admonition by directing attention from the ‘true’ path in largely symbolic or allegorical form.¹ The death of St. George’s dragon, as I have mentioned, leads to the conversion of an entire village from their pagan beliefs to Christianity. In this way the monotheistic monster, Rosi Braidotti suggests, is “simultaneously hellish and holy, sacred and profane…the simultaneity of opposite effects is the trademark of the monstrous body” (1996, 136).

Inherent wickedness and unmotivated malevolence towards humans appear to be key components of two Christian millennia of *monstrum*, and certainly remnants or traces of this construction linger into our time. Yet contemporary representations of monsters, such as Angel, the vampire, are different from those of the early Christian era. As I will argue, the absence of evil as a defining characteristic of the monster speaks volumes, not only about ourselves, but also about that which we perceive to be divine.

Of particular interest in examining contemporary incarnations of monstrosity is the vampire. Gregory Waller (1985) suggests that of all the monstrous threats we have imagined, it is the vampire who is “most often resurrected and the most endurable” (3). This may be in part due to the unique relationship vampires share with humans -- the fact that they used to be like us. They can ‘fit in’ and move about in the world the way a swamp creature or a werewolf cannot. The vampire has a rich history of use stretching from legend and folklore, across all levels of culture, to contemporary cyberspaces and video games, and Dracula is its core figure. Ken Gelder (1994) believes that like the ‘texts of Bond,’ “Dracula has been ‘worked over’” (90). To highlight the Bond/Dracula comparison he calls on Bennett and Woollacott’s (1987) study of the many films of Ian Fleming’s James Bond novels. Although what Gelder calls the ‘texts of Dracula’ have not been produced by as consistent a hand as the
Bond films, the various forms of Dracula that have evolved do, nevertheless, offer a coherent body for analysis. Gelder also suggests that the Bond films and the vampire texts inspired by Bram Stoker’s work bear “a nominal relationship to their literary sources… [and] as they begin to comprise a distinctive genre, these films speak to themselves…much more than…to any original novels” (90).

Another point raised by Gelder, in light of the Bond study, is the value of these popular works as a resource, precisely because of the way they demonstrate the remodeling of monsters in step with the ideological needs of evolving times.

The vampire remodeled, or ‘built on,’ becomes not something fixed or static but dependent on the additions for forward movement. For Gelder it is not so much the formulaic features used or not used in the remodeling, but the discourses “such remodeling[s] mobilize” (92). Gelder calls on Stephen Neale’s (1980) genre studies to suggest that although genres mobilize similar discourses, they do so in ways that modify, restructure and transform specific genre elements so that the “relative weight of these discourses…is subject to change” (93). Certainly vampirism is mobilized differently into discourses such as those of Victorian sexual repression (as in J. Sheridan LeFanu’s Carmilla, 1872, for example) or of 20th century sexualization (as in Tony Scott’s film, The Hunger, 1983).

As a resource for reading ourselves, vampires offer a number of discursive threads to follow. As a public display of difference the vampire is located somewhere ‘beyond’ culture (unassimilated or foreign), but also is located within culture, the source for its construction. Gelder suggests this simultaneity may account for the undead’s longevity and what seems to be our eternal need for its presence. The vampire, Gelder explains, “can be made to appeal to or generate fundamental urges located somehow ‘beyond’ culture [desire, anxiety, fear], while simultaneously, it can stand for a range of meaning and positions in culture” (141). In this chapter I will explore a ‘range of meanings and positions’ of two particular threads that make up the complex text of the vampire figure, and emphasize their connection to religion.

The first section of what follows, “Other and the Anti-Christ,” explores the past configurations that inform our contemporary vampires. I will uncover the foundations of this iconic
symbol and reveal the metaphoric use of the vampire figure as traditional horror's European Anti-Christ, and the implications of this construction. The second section, "Secular Born Killers," highlights what Jules Zanger (1997) conceives of as the vampire's shift from a metaphoric 'other' into a metonymic deviant and the implications of this slippage with respect to the vampires that begin to surface in the 1970s and 80s. "Undead Devotion," the third section of this chapter, signals the presence of yet another vampire that also begins to appear in this time, and explores the gothic link that connects the sympathetic vampire to family sagas, romance and transformation. I then turn to the detective genre in "The Preternatural Detective: Formerly-Known-As-'Other'" revealing the discursive progression the investigating vampire will come to rely on for life, love and authoritative action. I will conclude this section and this chapter by offering examples of the many vampire detectives currently in circulation, but a few artifacts chosen from a trove of preternatural investigators, a situation that in itself makes these hybrids worth investigating.

‘Other’ and the Anti-Christ

The vampire has a body, and it is his own body. He is neither dead nor alive; but living in death. He is an abnormality; the androgyne of the phantom world; a pariah among fiends. (Montague Summers, *The Vampire: His Kith and Kin*, 1928)

One of the more positive implications of life in a postmodern world is the effect of decentering on groups once invisible.² If we live, as Veronica Hollinger (1997) has suggested, with a "loss of faith in totalizing stories" (199), we also witness the incorporation of perspectives historically marginalized. My exploration of female investigators in the detective story, for example, demonstrates the profound impact that ongoing cultural projects of inclusion have had on a particular genre. I will go on now to explore the significant impact that cultural decentering has had on the vampire as I follow the movement of the undead through not only their imaginative existence but also the 'real' culture(s) that have embraced them.

The vampire of folklore is not an attractive creature. Zombie-like and devoid of humanizing characteristics it is merely an obsessive/compulsive automaton on whom, Jan Louis Perkowski (1998) suggests, all the anxieties and fears of the communities that created it were projected
Clothed in rags and remnants, folklore's hapless vampiric scapegoat does not clean up until resurrected as a city dweller. The urban vampire's first public appearance in literature is attributed to Dr. John Polidori's *The Vampyre* (1819), widely reputed to have been conceived at the same house party that spawned Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* (1818) and Lord Byron's *The Giaour* (1813). *The Vampyre*, though, may only mark the first English literary vampire. Heinrich Augustus Ossenfelder's German poem, "Der Vampir" was published in 1748, and the Italian opera *I, Vampir* was composed in 1800 by Silvestro de Palma. From 1820 to 1830 the theaters of Paris also offered vampires. LeFanu's *Carmilla* (1872) offered a beautiful and sophisticated female, and the first lesbian vampire. Urban but not sophisticated, *Varney the Vampyre* (1847) was presented in penny-dreadful format. This cheap and accessible form of the vampire has been largely attributed to James Malone Rhymer (Waller, 1985; Skal, 1990; Gelder, 1994), but folklorist Montague Summers disagrees. In *The Vampire: His Kith and Kin* (1928) Summers' attributes *Varney the Vampyre* to Thomas Preskett Prest, a prolific writer of the 19th century. Summers is unequivocal -- not only is the work Prest's but it is also "undoubtedly the best novel" that writer had produced (331-2).

Summers' name also comes up as an advocate of a particular school of thought regarding the history of the word vampire. Unlike the etymology of the monster, the history of the word vampire is not clear. Katharina M. Wilson (1998) identifies four distinct schools of thought differentiated largely geographically. Wilson gives academic credence to the scholarly positions of three of the schools which advocate, respectively, Turkish, Greek or Slavic roots of the word. The vampire, or *upir* may be a derivative of the Turkish *uber* (witch) or the Greek verb meaning 'to drink.' However, the Serbian word *BAMIUPI* is the root advocated by theorists of the Slavic school, and the etymological source that has "now gained universal acceptance" with linguists, folklorists and historians (Wilson, 4). Wilson associates Summers primarily with the fourth school of "writers, notably English and American" (ibid) who claim vampire belief to be ancient, but the word to be Hungarian and recent. Although Wilson dismisses this group as historically inaccurate and their explanations as speculations, it is ironic that
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these origins are the ones that resonate most clearly with a particularly cogent representation of the
vampire -- the iconic European Count.

Regardless of its controversial etymology, its zombie cousin or its earlier appearances in the
public imagination, Bram Stoker’s Dracula (1897) is undoubtedly the work that spawned a genre --
vampire fiction. As a cultural ‘other’ Stoker’s Transylvanian aristocrat was already known to 19th
century Britain through a variety of disciplines. Although we have come to regard this area of Europe
as a fantasyland or an imaginary place, Transylvania was ‘real’ and significant to British economic
interests at the time. A growing and perhaps interrelated interest in Eastern folklore studies,
ethnography, and travelogues also contributed to the Victorian reader’s prevalent ideas about
Transylvania. It is known that many of these studies informed Stoker’s own writing, and in fact, many
were “incorporated ... almost word for word” into Dracula’s journal/travelogue (Gelder, 3). My point
is that we cannot imagine Stoker’s vampire as springing from the grave unannounced. Even the icon
arose in grounds already prepared for him, and his reception was formed in that space as well. If
Stoker’s readers were unsure of how to initially read the vampire, Dracula’s Transylvanian aristocracy
provided the signs, and European Christianity the key for decoding. I believe this connection to be
crucial to our understanding of the traditional vampire -- it is a European ‘other,’ created for and by a
European religion and coded by a binary system that reveals privilege and conflict in a single term.

The European vampire, not only of Stoker’s text but the also the many works it inspired,
subverts and inverts the liturgy of European Christianity. Stoker’s inversion is explicit when he marks
Renfield’s rants with capitalized pronouns and honorifics; “I am here to do Your bidding, Master. I am
Your slave, and You will reward me, for I shall be faithful” (1989, 108). Dracula is the Anti-Christ, the
Prince of Darkness to Christ’s light. Dracula drinks from the blood of ‘good’ Christians, as Christ
offers his in the Christian sacrament of communion. Christianity offers eternal life in another place,
only for those who choose Christ. Dracula, on the other hand, can offer eternal life, right here, right
now, to those he chooses. The possession and display of Christian symbols and artifacts (the crucifix
and holy water, for example) not only identify a Christian believer and belief system, but also provide
protection from the ultimate anti-Christian, the traditional vampire. Because of the oppositional nature of the traditional vampire's construction it is only as powerful as its binary partner. As with the criminal 'other' in the detective stories of the traditional school, the perceived power of the vampire 'other' serves not only as an example of transgression, but also provides an opportunity to witness the strength of an opposing force. The detective is only as great as the crimes solved; the great evil that is the vampire must oppose great good.

The traditional criminal and vampire also share in their solitary nature. In Conan Doyle's works the criminal masterminds might have a few henchmen but generally they, like the European vampire, plot their own course of action. Stoker's Dracula is also a master mind, and although his Transylvanian castle is inhabited by three female vampires, he brings home the 'bacon' and they, like the women of their time, stay at home when he goes out into the world. For the traditional vampire, binary distinction as the Anti-Christ offered near-equal resources for manifestations of terror. Religious status conferred mythic and miraculous powers, proportional to the sources that coded their vampiric existence as evil. Dracula's evil powers may then be read in light of cultural conceptions of the power of God disseminated by religious institutions: if he has unnatural strength and abilities this is only because that which he opposes has such strengths and abilities. This is the nature of binary codes -- the source of the traditional vampire's authority to oppose is directly connected to the source of authority it has been constructed to oppose. It is for this reason that the transformation of the vampire figure from the traditional Anti-Christ into the 1970s and 80s social deviant deserves critical attention. Joan Gordon and Veronica Hollinger (1997) suggest that the variety of transformations the vampire has undergone is a response to changing conditions in the larger cultural arena. The vampire may not be a physical entity, but it may be "something much more powerful, a creature who can take on the allegorical weight of changing times and collective psyches" (Gordon and Hollinger, 4). If our monsters are transforming it is because we ourselves are transforming as well.
Secular Born Killers

Evil is not without its attractions. (Bruno Bettelheim, The Use of Enchantments, 1976)

Margaret L. Carter’s (1997) survey of vampire fiction published since 1970 suggests that the shift in the characterization of the vampire “reflects a change in cultural attitudes towards the outsider, the alien other” (27). The tag for Joel Schumacher’s film The Lost Boys (1987) cogently expresses this important phase in the vampire’s ongoing story: “Party all night. Sleep all day. Never grow old. Never die. It’s fun to be a vampire.” Clearly this indicates the contemporary creature’s departure from the vampire’s traditional role as the “arrow in the side of Him who died for man” (Stoker, 251). As a metaphor for the outsider, the vampires that surfaced in 70s and 80s mass culture manifested not only a change in cultural attitudes, but also in technology. The commercial proliferation of mass-mediated vampire images was directed to an expanding market with diverse levels of education and literacy. Sesame Street’s (PBS, 1969- present) The Count, a counting-obsessed, tuxedo clad vampire-puppet is just one example of the diverse target markets and formats the undead could now be made to appeal to and appear in. As the expansion of the character spread into wider territories, replication also hastened the alteration of Stoker’s iconic figure. This occurred not only for generic reasons, but as Zanger (1997) suggests, for legal and commercial ones as well. Innovation and originality are crucial to genre development but Zanger believes the emergence of mass media technologies accelerated “the normal processes of… mythic displacement…smoothing over the hard-edged definitions of the vampire provided for us by Stoker” (18).

Although the 70s and 80s did witness a diverse and prolific assortment of vampires, for the most part the creature is still an evil ‘other.’ At this stage in the vampire’s narrative history, however, evil need not be attributed to anti-Christian activity. Evils acts are not the ‘natural’ result of binary coding, or as an opposition to God, but “expressions of individual personality and condition” (Zanger, 18-9). The transformation of evil action from cosmic conflict into a matter of choice and circumstance erodes the vampire’s religious status, and impinges on its ability to act as metaphysical ‘other.’ For Zanger the loss of the vampire’s metaphysical qualities transforms the metaphoric Anti-Christ into a
metonymic deviant; “no longer embodying metaphysical evil, no longer a damned soul, the new vampire has become, in our concerned awareness for multi-culturalism, merely ethnic... without any necessary moral weight” (19). If this understanding appears to contradict the religiosity I claim ‘comes with’ the vampire/symbol, I would argue the disappeared metaphysical is in itself an important dis/connection worth exploring.

Demystified, the vampire more closely resembles humans, but Zanger’s analysis suggests this metonymic vampire may be more dangerous. According to Zanger the rhetorical function of metaphor is to make clear; metonym, however, simultaneously screens and reveals, subordinates and privileges -- from within the same single semantic category. The function of the metonymic vampire is not to metaphorically ‘stand for something’ as much as “to conceal, to obscure, to misdirect our attention from [the vampire’s] most salient characteristic as murderer, while at the same time retaining that characteristic for its essential, defining function” (Zanger, 20). We are left with a linguistic version of the Mobius strip: vampires are more like humans, but the humans they are most like are serial killers, but if they were not serial killers they would not be vampires, because vampires are more like humans, and on and on. Yet, the new vampire is not just a serial killer but also socially complex and capable of self-reflection. Stoker’s Count is clearly not human, but he is also not complex. The Count contributes no journal entries, and has no voice in the narrative except by hearsay. Dracula is a collection of human stories, and the vampire is only seen from the position of a potential victim or, as in Van Helsing’s case, an expert. The Count does what he does, a rather limited set of activities, but it is largely Van Helsing who tells us how and why.

The vampire narratives that begin to surface in the 1970s and 80s present a creature with a more human range of emotions and often shift the vampire to the narrative center. Zanger suggests this represents a loss of “that monolithic force possessed by Dracula, his unalterable volition” (22). The new vampires operate by their own volition, with the capacity to experience a range of human emotions and experiences, and manifest the “desire and the capacity for change” (ibid). This is a significant aspect of contemporary vampires as it is a feature which moves the undead closer to us. Like Gelder,
Zanger compares the 'texts of Dracula' that circulated, particularly in the 80s, to other popular texts and finds that the domestication, the de-demonizing of another mythic icon, the Mafia Don, parallels that of the vampire. Mario Puzo's *The Godfather* (1969), and the trilogy of films and the countless imitations that followed, worked to domesticate the gangster, the family man/murderer. Zanger believes the family connection, for both the vampire and the Mafioso, "permits us to approach him on a kind of neutral turf on which the murderous activities that make his existence possible shift to the periphery where their moral enormity becomes obscured" (24). The marginalization of the human victim, while emphasizing the killers' domesticity and enviable attributes (lifestyle or possessions, for example), effectively de-center the killers. They must retain their visibility as murderers, for this becomes reductively that which marks these families with meaning and interest. With no strong 'good' human to identify with, or to fear for, the contemporary audience "must identify with the lesser of evils provided for -- the 'good' vampire, the reluctant killer, the self-doubting murderer" (Zanger, 21) -- the flawed hero.

The evil American vampire of the 70s and 80s, the metonymic vampire without a monotheist structure to draw from for imaginative construction and power, borrows from human experience, substituting psychopathic behavior for satanic forces. Zanger suggests this shift might also be understood as a displacement of moralistic structures by a "pagan hegemony of power and pleasure" (21). Power and pleasure clearly drive the vampire's popularity throughout this period, bringing with them visions of evil that are framed as desirable. The vampire demystified is the vampire next door, or at the least a vampire with an already familiar presence in North American popular culture. The source of their new power is precisely that they blend. Margaret Mitchell's elegant plantation owners are revived in Anne Rice's *Interview with the Vampire* (1976) and rock star cool in *The Vampire Lestat* (1985). Our introduction to the vampires of Tony Scott's *The Hunger* (1983) is immediately framed by the meanings rock star David Bowie, actor Catherine Deneuve, and goth icons, the band Bauhaus, bring with them to the film. Schumacher's *The Lost Boys* are 'bad' teenagers, young offenders with fangs.
Kathryn Bigelow’s redneck vampires in *Near Dark* (1987) are coded by spaghetti westerns and punk-a-billy music.

The vampire of the 70s and 80s can also be characterized by a proclivity for family life, albeit an evil family life. The vampire is no longer a dominant and solo ‘Master,’ but frequently relates to and connects with others of its kind. *The Lost Boys* and *Near Dark* offer vampire families, and as with *The Hunger*, present a third term alternative to vampire/human binary divisions. *The Lost Boys* and *Near Dark* are very similar in that they can each be read as revivals of a medieval staple: the rescue story wherein a princess is captured by an evil force, often a dragon, and then promised, by the King/father, to the man who saves her. The ‘princesses’ in these tales are Star (*The Lost Boys*) and Mae (*Near Dark*); they are captured by ‘dragons,’ the undead families who have marked them as theirs: and they must be rescued by a handsome ‘prince,’ the teenage male protagonists, respectively Michael and Caleb. As with many of the courtly tales (*Tristan and Iseult*, for example) the rescuers are ‘poisoned’ by their vampire/dragons and healed with love. Significant, though, is the replacement of the medieval idealized version of heterosexual love, with contemporary forms of familial love as the healing source. These young princes, in fact, cannot rescue the damsels in distress until they are themselves rescued by their ‘good’ families. In *The Lost Boys* the ‘good’ family also has the additional help of some not so handsome young princes, the aptly-named Frog brothers. Significant as well is the disappearance of the ‘King,’ someone who cares that the princesses have been taken. Star and Mae are still prizes to be won at the conclusion of these films, but it is their vampire ‘families’ who position them as such in order to lure Michael and Caleb to undead family life.

An arguable exception to the communal behavior of vampires of this period is found in *The Hunger*. The *Hunger* presents vampires as a literally alien ‘other,’ another race. Miriam Blaylock (Deneuve), the lone true vampire in this world view, is unable to procreate, which is a a source of sorrow and sympathy. This is particularly evident in the novel, and its sequel’s flashbacks to Miriam’s past lives with others of her own race. Her husband, played by Bowie in the film, is not a biological or ‘true’ vampire. Miriam’s blood can only allow him to retain his youth for so long before he becomes
little more than a barely animated husk, and must join her previous companions in a coffin in the attic, eternally. Miriam is bereft of a vampire family, but her desire to create companions, to have a family life, drives this vehicle as surely as it does the other films of this period.

Star and Mae, like The Hunger's semi-vamp characters, are also not 'true' vampires, and present troublesome constructs -- The Hunger's are not vampire enough to reap the perks of eternal youth, and Star and Mae because they are not fully indoctrinated, into either vampirism or womanhood. The girls are meant to seduce the young male protagonist in each of these films to life as the undead, but they are barely seductive. Nicola Nixon (1997) comments on the eroticism present in these films as sharing more similarities with teen romance forms than the dark eroticism of Stoker, which is not surprising given the teen target audience. Mae and Star, comments Nixon, are "pretty tepid at best...vapid and nice-girl heroines who have been led astray briefly and wait only to be saved" (123). In the context of both of these films these girls are saved by the combined efforts of the recuperated teenage protagonist, who 'should' be and probably would be, afraid of the overt sexuality of Stoker's succubii, and his 'good' family. Claudia, the vampire girl of Rice's Interview with a Vampire, is not so lucky.

Rice's vampires exemplify the shift from the solitary predator's living arrangements and in doing so Gelder (1994) suggests they reveal connections to women's romance and family sagas, which may make them appear to be conservative. Yet the polymorphous sexuality of her vampire protagonists --Louis, Lestat and Armand -- complicates such a reading. The forever-child vampire, Claudia, is raised by same-sex parents, Louis and Lestat, offering glimpses of a 'bad,' un-American domestic life. Unlike Star and Mae, when Claudia becomes disillusioned with her hybrid state (vampire and child), she does not wait to be saved, attempting twice to kill one of her 'fathers.' The insertion of a vampire mother figure, a woman 'made' for this purpose by the more emotionally nurturing of the demon couple, Louis, cannot restore Claudia or keep her in the family. Hence she and her new mother, Madeleine, are destroyed by other vampires after leaving the shelter and protection of their patriarchal makers.
It is also important to mention that in each of these films or novels, the children or teenagers at risk, those most susceptible to whatever charms their vampire antagonists offer, are also kids from 70s and 80s versions of the ‘new’ family. Claudia is orphaned, but *The Lost Boys* Michael and *Near Dark*’s Caleb are from single-parent families. They function as ‘good’ in opposition to the vampire’s ‘bad’ family, largely coded by the normalized presentation of parent-child relations and a single family dwelling. In *The Lost Boys*, *The Vampire Chronicles*, and *Near Dark*, the collective is the ‘bad’ family -- homeless, transient, incestuous, and/or pedophilial -- that preys on the young victims of ‘good’ heterosexual families in crisis. One might expect the ‘good’ and the ‘bad’ to be also separated by the bad vampires’ serial killings, but this is complicated by the glee with which each ‘good’ family participates in the gory destruction of their vampire equivalent. If the vampire works of the 70s and 80s appear preoccupied with family life, it is also worth noting that *Fatal Attraction* (1987) was the top grossing film the year *The Lost Boys* and *Near Dark* were released, and was also an admonitory story of postmodern family life. If the threat constituted by the ‘bad’ family displaced the individual predator in capitalist America, Nixon suggests this construction is “eminently appropriate” (121) -- capitalism’s hero is the individual. In transferring what once did function as a metaphor for the labour-sucking aristocrat onto to the collective, true evil is not associated with individual action and “the blood-sucking vampire has to be reconstructed … as a demonized collective” (ibid).14

With the shift from solo to pack existence, the vampire’s power as an emissary of the devil is displaced by symbols of popular pleasures. In the 70s and 80s these pleasures were aimed directly at youth (Zanger; Nixon). The loss of the metaphysical qualities that connected the Anti-Christ to its opposite, the power to perform wicked miracles, if you will, is replaced by cool clothes and rock’n’roll -- a look and a subculture. Auerbach’s analysis of *The Hunger* supports this understanding. The vampires of *The Hunger*, she comments, are notable for “not their powers, but their assets” (58). This is not to suggest that the vampires that surfaced during this time no longer possess the physical strength of ‘Christ’s thorn,’ and in fact strength and a mythic wardrobe seems to be all they possess. As with the traditional vampire, the source of the ‘new’ vampire’s power is also the source for its destruction. If the
images of popular culture arm these vampires with their power, knowledge of popular culture is also the key to decoding and destroying the creatures. Cultural knowledge, and in particular that of 'low' cultural forms, is a form of currency capitalized by *The Lost Boys*’ Frog brothers. The Frog brothers are aficionados of comic books and horror texts, the fictive resources for recognizing and dealing with fictional monsters. Stephen King’s *Salem’s Lot* (1975) also stresses how important cultural knowledge is, and reading in particular, for disarming the vampire, presenting all three of the novel’s heroes through their relationship to literary forms. Matt, for example, is an English teacher and Ben a writer of popular novels. The teenage hero, Mark, is not only distinguished by his age but by his immersion in low culture -- the genre sources of the Frog brothers. Gelder suggests *Salem’s Lot* “demonstrates the ‘parental’ influence of popular fiction over a low cultural realm which might otherwise slip beyond it -- and to which adolescents are turning” (129). The diverse forms of culture represented by the three heroes in *Salem’s Lot* are largely made effective against the vampire enemy when Mark’s low culture knowledge and Matt’s high are mediated and united by Ben’s knowledge and participation in popular culture.

Zanger’s analysis of the 80s evil vampire suggests that in the vampire’s appearing more like humans, the role of “humans as victims becomes increasingly trivialized and marginal” (21). I believe this to be only clearly the case with the vampires of *The Hunger* and *Interview With the Vampire* which do conform to that formula. *The Lost Boys, Near Dark* and *Salem’s Lot*, however, are ‘about’ their humans and the vampires that threaten them. We could, nevertheless, in imagining the evil vampire family as a collective, regard them to have both a greater need for human victims and a heightened capacity for finding and killing them. The family of vampires is thus able to victimize more humans who become marginalized as objects for consumption, as food. In Stoker’s work each victim was significant to its limited cast of characters. Dracula may have been inhuman but his pursuit of Jonathan, Lucy and Mina was a personal drama and a seductive ritual. The 70s and 80s families of vampires, ‘living’ in communities or ‘on the road,’ may encounter more humans to marginalize, but I would contend that the trivialization of their human victims is in large part produced in film through the
use of an MTV aesthetic. The music video style slaughter carried out by Near Dark’s dysfunctional family is the work of psychopaths, sadistic and impersonal, performed to the punk-a-billy frenzy of The Cramps. The roadhouse patrons are reduced, in this framework, to being props for the vampires to perform with.

Undead Devotion

The vampire is everything we love about sex and the night and the dark dream-side of ourselves: adventure on the edge of pain, the thrill to be had from breaking taboos. (Poppy Z. Brite, Love in Vein, 1994)

While a good number of vampires that began to surface in the 70s and 80s converted the solo Anti-Christ into a family of murderers, other, more sympathetic vampires also began to appear at this time. The appearance of the sensitive male vampire, largely written by female writers, also signaled a generic shift in vampire fiction towards family sagas and romance forms -- modes of transformative action that incline the vampire even more clearly towards humanity. Gelder suggests that the ‘vampire chronicle’ is a “recent development of horror fiction” (108). This development allows the vampire to move across time and place, through the use of flashbacks, and to develop as a character over a series of novels in a way previously unexplored.

Anne Rice is the most well-known and successful of all vampire chroniclers who have appeared in the last few decades. Although her Louis is undoubtedly sympathetic, he is still presented, often and graphically, in literature and film, as a murderer. Introduced in Hotel Transylvania (1978), Chelsea Quinn Yarbro’s le Comte de Saint-Germain diminishes even this aspect. In doing so Yarbro disturbs what we might imagine as a gothic umbrella that, up until this point, has ‘covered’ all transformations of the vampire’s story. While it is beyond the scope of this project to explore fully the gothic, as a form of literature and as an approach to cultural criticism, at a basic level, we might imagine 17th and 18th century gothic literature as the form that gave an ancestral home, a title and a decent wardrobe, to the folkloric vampire in a still Christian but increasingly urban-industrial world. Histories of family violence, monsters and romance are all staple motifs in gothic literature, particularly in the texts Valdine Clemens (1999) segregates as the “sentimental Female Gothic” (8). Tania Modleski (1992) has
suggested that one of the basic premises of gothic romance involves “the mystery of masculine motives” (24). In this sense, the heroine asks not only ‘who done it,’ but what is he? When she is able to distinguish between the suave and sophisticated madman and the unstable but worthy man, she also solves the mystery. Reading the inscrutable ‘other’ in gothic fiction is a precursor is some ways to encountering vampires.

Yarbro’s handsome and aristocratic Transylvanian vampire subverts and inverts the gothic romance’s admonition to ‘beware the poser,’ and presents the male vampire as the transformative spark in the love trajectory the romance forms offer. Yarbro’s Christian vampire, Saint-Germain, discovered over 3000 years ago that he “no longer wanted to live on fear”, [the taste of] fulfilled desire being much more satisfying” (The Palace, 1978, 77). This vampire is “gentle, protective, responsible, quiet, humorous, tender and calm” (ibid), all features Modleski attributes to the ‘real’ hero of the gothic romance. Yarbro’s Count is a surreptitious bloodsucker. We do not witness the nightmarish kills that Rice’s guilt-stricken vampire participates in, but rather erotic encounters of mutual pleasure. Victims are ‘disappeared,’ and replaced by erotic dreams or earth-shaking cunnilingus -- representing safe sex, and no risk of pregnancy or STDs, but also a form of sexual activity most associated with female pleasure. In this way, Auerbach suggests, Saint-Germain reveals that “he knows the erotic secrets patriarchs withhold” (150). He does not love “as other men do” (The Palace, 51), though he is no eunuch. When necessary he feeds from largely unaware and sleeping women, entering the dreams he scripts for them, in order that he may feed off their sexual pleasure, as well as small amounts of their blood. We do not ‘see’ the invasive blood thief, but we do see the dreams.

Significant as well is what I read as Saint-Germain’s appropriation of the gothic role of the female’s transformative power, the spark that sets the ‘real’ hero off. It is Saint-Germain who transforms his human lovers, not by turning them into vampires, but by empowering their growth and development -- not only as sexual beings, but also as social beings in repressive conditions. For example, in Darker Jewels (1993), the seventh book in this series, the vampire is sensitive in his approach to the brutally victimized Russian woman forced to marry him in the 16th century on the whim
of Ivan the Terrible. Saint-Germain’s treatment of Xenya begins a process of healing that allows her
to rise above sexual abuse and systematic cultural oppression, and allows her to experience some true
moments of happiness in an otherwise bleak life.

Yarbro’s texts work to diminish the Count’s presence as a vampire and expand his humanity.
She literally ‘disappears’ the vampire, in this particular novel by not actually mentioning the ‘v’ word
until the last page. While this may seem a contrived device, the Count’s identity as a vampire is not at
all concealed from the reader, and appears more natural for her not having stated the obvious. Auerbach
believes Saint-Germain displays “the wisdom and skill to heal the societies that cast him out” (149).
Yarbro emphasizes that these are human skills, ones that he has acquired through knowledge rather than
vampire powers; “all his death had given him was durability and strength beyond that of the truly
living, a degree of control over humans, superior night vision, and one specific thirst. The rest -- the
skills, the learning, the music, the compassion -- he had acquired for himself in many long and peaceful
lessons” (Yarbro, 1997, 354). These are, of course, the most attractive of human qualities and
accomplishments and at 3000 plus he has had a substantial amount of time to study. The Count’s
Christianity can also be read in this light. Not only does it indicate a radical departure from earlier
representations of the vampire, but it highlights moral strength humans may also have access to. What
is stressed, I believe, is that the qualities that allow the Count to function as a ‘good’ vampire are those
also available to us.

Tanya Huff also presents a Christian vampire in the Blood quintet, a series that can be read as a
bridge between heroic vampire narratives and vampire detective stories. Huff’s series follows private
investigator Vicky Nelson through five investigations in Blood Price (1991), Blood Trail (1992), Blood
introduced in the debut novel as not ‘just’ a woman, but one with a degenerative eye disease, retinitis
pigmentosa. After her self-chosen retirement from the Toronto police force and her career as homicide
detective, she establishes her own agency. In the course of the series, Vicky comes to be aided in her
investigations by Henry Fitzroy, a former Duke of Richmond and Somerset, Earl of Nottingham,
illegitimate son of King Henry VIII, a 450-year-old vampire, and a writer of historic romance novels for women -- gothic bodice rippers.

In terms of preternatural powers Henry might be seen to contribute little that has not already been explored in Yarbro's Count. "Our habits are too well known," Henry comments to Vicky and, perhaps, the reader as well (Blood Price, 104). Like Yarbro's sensitive vampire he has some measure of thought control, speed and strength. Like Zanger's vampires Henry can also be read as an ethnic 'other,' but there is a moral weight attached to Henry's 'otherness' -- he is an exemplary character. Like Yarbro's Comte St. Germain, Henry also appropriates and subverts the gothic's love trajectory. He is a handsome, surreptitious bloodsucker, a skilled lover and a transformative force in the lives of some of the humans he has encountered during his long life. But Henry further complicates what Zanger has referred to as the metonymic vamp's "demoticizing of the... magical, metaphysical 'other'" (17).

Henry is not magical, though he is religious, raised and then raised again as a Catholic.17

Henry's Catholicism not only informs his spirituality but aids his ability to do good -- literally. When Henry and Vicky have determined that a demon will surface in a cemetery, Henry waits three nights for its appearance. When the demonic power begins to surface he performs the sign of the cross and prays for strength: "The next thing he knew he was kneeling on the damp ground, tears streaming from his light sensitive eyes as afterimages danced in glory on the inside of his lids" (173). When he gathers himself together, after the "hardest hit" he's taken "in centuries" he wonders why he feels no menace (174). He drops to his knees again and prays when he sees the answer at the foot of the concrete angel he has been leaning against, "Christus Resurrexit! Christ is Risen" (ibid). When Henry later reports the event to Vicky it is framed as a magical or miraculous occurrence, "when the power of God reached out and said, 'No'" (187). Numerous references are made to Henry's Catholicism throughout the debut novel but two in particular contribute to my understanding of Henry. He is not an Anti-Christ or secular born killer, but an avenging angel, a Christian super-saviour.

One important reference to Henry's religiosity occurs following Henry and Vicky's first meeting at the scene of the fourth murder, when their investigations intersect for the first time. Henry's
revelation (about what he is and the nature of what they both seek) is mediated though Vicky’s eight years of experience on the police force. As in hardboiled detective fiction, Vicky’s version of ‘good’ and ‘bad’ are not contained by binary forms. She has seen too much, been exposed to too many visions of human cruelty. Next to this, “vampires and demons weren’t that hard to swallow” -- particularly when the vampire is “one of the good guys” and handsome too (106). Because she has seen the demon, “darkness swirled into darkness and was gone” (107), she has no reason to disbelieve its presence.

Likewise, she rationalizes, she has “no reason to disbelieve Henry Fitzroy” (ibid). She compares her recognition of the demonic phenomenon to a street kid’s ability to recognize a plain-clothed police officer: empirically unexplainable perhaps, but nevertheless a fact. Leaving Henry’s apartment, “not really sure why” (108), she is drawn by the sound of church bells to St. Michael’s Cathedral. As she sits in the Catholic Church she ponders the presence of God in her “vaguely Christian” upbringing (109). She falls asleep questioning her own ambivalent religious beliefs, admitting to herself “but then, I didn’t believe in vampires before tonight” (ibid). Vicky surfaces from her nap in an altered world.

The statue of the Madonna she had been looking at as she drifted into sleep looks the same, but the carpeted church is transformed into an indefinable, but historic time, as is a young axe-man in leather vest and boots who appears before her. Intent on damaging the statue the young man is stopped in his attack by Henry, in “the colours of the Madonna; wide bands of snowy white lace at collar and cuff, a white shirt billowing through the slashed sleeves of his pale blue jacket” (110). “The Blessed Virgin is under my protection” he tells the terrified man before he releases him, after which he prays (ibid).

Vicky awakes, the setting changes and ‘real’ time Henry is before her. Vicky is unsure of how to frame this event -- “just a dream... holy vision... sign?” (112). Ultimately, it need not be resolved and she can “keep an open mind,” and use the feelings she receives from the experience, without having to define them. Her tolerance for ambiguity, contradiction and not-knowing is matched to postmodernity’s tolerance for these things.

We can also recognize Henry the “avenging angel” (110) in the historic flashback set in the Inquisition. “I am vengeance” (121) Henry says, before executing the Papal Hounds who have tortured
and killed his Catholic lover. Although Henry exacts retribution from church authority figures, we are given to know within the story that these figures are perceived as institutional anomalies, not as the representatives of a higher power. Characterizing Henry as an angel complicates reading this vampire as Zanger’s (1997) metonymic vampire -- it borrows not from human domains, from the otherworldly or mythic. Henry is not Anti-Christ or “merely ethnic” (Zanger, 19), he is like an arch-angel, a super-saviour, a divine and retributive force. I believe this moves Henry’s contributions to the vampire’s ongoing story closer to religious works than horror’s texts. This seems particularly cogent when we consider that, contrary to the proliferation of images of cherubic and/or feminine angels in popular culture, biblical angels are warriors.

I do not mean to imply that works like Yarbro’s or Huff’s are no longer representatives of the gothic tradition. The subversions and inversions of the gothic again, I believe, point to the evolving nature of all historic narratives, their existence along a continuum. John Cawelti (1976) has pointed out the similarities of the hardboiled detective to the gothic novel, the generic foundation for Stoker’s Count, primarily in their mutually atmospheric use of symbols of fear. But, he suggests, the symbols of terror undergo a “major shift” (156) in the hardboiled tradition. For example, the gothic castle of the villain, the isolated domain of evil, is relocated to the detective’s city, the corrupt garden of paradise that is the modern metropolis. The gothic’s female victim’s transformation into the hardboiled villain, the femme fatale, also “stands out” (ibid) for Cawelti. In Stoker’s world-view it is clearly Mina’s and Lucy’s honour that is at stake, but in the hardboiled world, as I noted in the previous chapter, the honour of the P.I. is threatened, and often by a female villain. Susan Rowland (2004) also explores the nightmare of the gothic in the truth-seeking and rational genre of detection and suggests that “the gothic is one of the generic sponsors of crime fiction” (28). Each form (gothic detective and vampire fiction) functions as a literature of transgression. The movement of the gothic vampire into the contemporary landscape of detection, in this sense, seems inevitable. If 17th and 18th century gothic literature provided a home for the imaginary monster, postmodern crime detection also provides a comfortable place for the preternatural detective to surface. The detective genre provides an ideal location, not only for
putting the sensitive (and mostly male) vampire’s power and strength to good use, and thus distracting him from evil, but also for providing opportunities for strong female investigators to transform into ecstatic lovers.

The Preternatural Investigator: Formerly-Known-as-‘Other’

It is one thing to be tough facing garden variety human criminals, but another thing entirely to face monsters who are often immortal or nearly so, supernaturally strong and quick, completely indifferent to human life, and in possession of magical powers. (Linda J. Holland-Toll, “Harder than Nails, Tougher than Spade: Anita Blake and ‘The Tough Guy’ Detective,” 2004)

The vampire’s transition from Anti-Christ to Christian super-saviour represents a dramatic shift in horror narrative, but the appearance of any sort of monster, good or bad, in the detective story has been perceived as equally dramatic. This is not to say that detectives have never before investigated monsters or the supernatural. The ‘weirdies’ or ‘weird menace’ pulp magazines of the late 19\textsuperscript{th} and early 20\textsuperscript{th} century were probably the first.\textsuperscript{20} These early stories differ from works like Huff’s, for example, in that the unnatural events that occur are invariably found to be the work of humans. Kolchak: The Night Stalker (ABC, 1974-1975)\textsuperscript{21} and The X-Files (Fox, 1993-2002) also present investigators confronted with the supernatural, but do not ultimately explain away the supernatural though human attribution. In the Blood quintet Victory Nelson begins the series operating as a human investigating an unnatural occurrence. At the conclusion of the series she is herself a vampire, a preternatural investigator and a supernatural occurrence. Vicky’s transformation heightens my sense of this series as a bridge between the type of supernatural detection Kolchak and The X-Files’ agents engaged in and the preternatural detective’s story.

Huff’s series heightens the sense of violated boundaries by immediately situating her series firmly within the ‘real’ world. The audience and the detectives, in this sense, must together ‘deal’ with the presence of an anomaly in the landscape of detection. This is not the case with the other works of preternatural detection, a fact which -- along with Huff’s emphasis on the centrality of ratiocination throughout the series -- marks Huff’s work as precursor to another new development in the genre. For example, Laurell K. Hamilton’s preternatural vampire-hunter/investigator, Anita Blake, also
occasionally co-investigates and dates a vampire, but her ‘real’ world St. Louis is a fantastic place in a U.S.A. where vampirism is legal. Hamilton’s series, which is explored as an example of female hardboiled fiction by Linda J. Holland-Toll (2004), requires that the audience suspend rational disbelief; the protagonist operates within a world more fantastic than our own.

To recognize Victory Nelson as a rational being requires the audience to suspend disbelief to some extent in the presence of the unreal, yet her reliance on rational strategies for the solution of crimes marks her as operating in a real world, a concept that undermines the speculative aspects of horror, fantasy or romance. Ultimately it appears that regardless of who/what investigates or who/what commits the crime, the activity of investigations remains the same -- to interpret the signs and act upon those interpretations. ‘Who done it?’ remains the central question. The others, such as what the who might be, or the nature of the investigator only extends the number of mysteries to be solved -- or not? If the detective story can “sharpen the reader’s awareness of the process and possibilities of sign interpretation” (Raskin, 1992, 103), the preternatural detective story can pose mysteries unsolvable by reason even if the crimes under investigation are resolved. Epistemology is not challenged, even if ontology is, in other words. Such tendencies move preternatural detective fiction into the realm of the postmodern. If both postmodern horror and crime fiction display the breakdown of totalizing systems of belief and the assimilation of those formerly-known-as-‘other,’ then those left on the extreme borders, those that separate ‘real’ from unreal, the nightmarish from the everyday, may be the last source for encoding difference -- who can be ‘other’ if there is no ‘outside’ to speak from?

Heroic vampires are not the only creatures of fantasy that have been hailed from the supernatural beyond and inserted into crime fiction. The investigating vampire is but one form of a preternatural investigator in fiction, film and television that has surfaced since the late 80s signaling, if not reader relevance and cultural significance, at the very least the economic viability of producing such a hybrid. I must restrict a close reading of the vampire in the detective story to a limited number of texts, but I wish to take a moment here to make clear that Tanya Huff’s and Joss Whedon’s detecting vamps have been selected from a much larger body of works sharing similar features. The
appropriation of the authoritative action of the investigator by a vampire, werewolf, magic-user, faerie, and/or other creatures most familiar from folklore, fairytale, fantasy and horror texts, comprises what I consider to be one of the distinct characteristics distinguishing these works as a unique sub-genre of detective fiction. I have chose to concentrate on vampire detectives because I believe this particular manifestation of the preternatural detective, the postmodern morphing of two of popular culture's most enduring fictional characters (Dracula and Sherlock Homes), to have symbolic significance of iconic proportions.

The first investigating vampire in fiction may well be Lee Killough's San Francisco P.D. homicide detective Garreth Mikaelian. Introduced in Bloodhunt (1987), the series was developed with Bloodlinks (1988). These two novels were re-printed in an omnibus, Bloodwalk (1997) and followed by Bloodgames (2001). The first televised vampire detective is CBS's Nick Knight (1989), a made-for-television movie starring former soap and pop star Rick Springfield. CBS revived the character for Canadian series television in Forever, Knight (1992-94), producing 70 episodes still in syndication. The early 90s saw a host of vampires in detective fiction alongside Huff's series. P.N. Elrod's vampire investigator Jack Fleming debuted in Bloodlist (1991) and has lived to spawn ten other novels with the publication of Song in the Dark (2005). Laurell K. Hamilton's hardboiled necromancer, Anita Blake, dates the undead (and a few were-creatures) in a prolific series that, since its debut with Guilty Pleasures (1993), has produced new novels yearly, many of which have reached the N.Y. Times Bestsellers Lists. Sookie Sackhouse, amateur sleuth, also dates a vampire and uses her own telepathic 'otherness' to investigate in Charlaine Harris's Southern Vampire series: Dead Until Dark (2001), Living Dead in Dallas (2002), Club Dead (2003), Dead to the World (2004), Dead as a Doornail (2005) and Definitely Dead (2006). All Together Dead will be released in May, 2007. Writer/director Alan Ball (American Beauty, 1999; Six Feet Under, 2001 -2005) has recently purchased the film options for the series and will be producing an hour-long pilot for HBO.

Karen E. Taylor's series Vampire Legacy (1994-2004) features a fashion designer who is also a vampire and an amateur sleuth. Huff has also recently released the Smoke series -- Smoke and Shadows
(2004), Smoke and Mirrors (2005) and Smoke and Ashes (2006) -- that moves some of the characters from the Blood quintet from Toronto to Vancouver, B.C.. Another contemporary treatment of the vampire in the detective story situates a gay American vampire, Simon Kirby-Jones, within the location and traditions of the British cozy. Dean James introduced Kirby-Jones in Posted to Death (2002), which was followed by Faked to Death (2003), Decorated to Death (2004) and Baked to Death (2005). Years before Whedon's Angel surfaced in Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Christopher Golden, writer of many Buffy and Angel novels and other related merchandise, introduced The Shadow Saga. Golden presented his P.I. vampire, Peter Octavian, in Of Saints and Shadows (1994), and developed a series with the subsequent publication of Angel Souls and Devil Hearts (1995), Of Masques and Martyrs (1998) and The Gathering Dark (2002). In 2003 Golden, along with Buffy the Vampire Slayer alumnus Amber Benson, became involved with the BBC in the Ghosts of Albion (2003), an internet drama. The animated web cast, a first for the BBC, features preternaturally-gifted siblings investigating the implications of their recent inheritance. The internet drama allowed audience interaction in the mystery, unfolding clues and maps along with the on-line action. The vampire detective also appears in many works of anime, such as Yutaka Kagawa's Nightwalker: The Midnight Detective (2001), a Japanese television series available in North America as a two-volume DVD, and in role-playing games such as Vampire: Apocalypse available on-line at RPG.net

The filmic character introduced in Blade (Stephen Norrington, 1998) began life in a Marvel comic book as a vampire P.I. (Tomb of Dracula #10, 1973). As a vehicle for actor Wesley Snipes the Blade series (Blade was followed by Blade II, directed by Guillermo del Toro, 2002, and Blade: Trinity, directed by David S. Goyer, 2004) has downplayed detection for violent authority. The introduction of Hannibal King to the filmic series in Blade: Trinity afforded a possibility to emphasize an original feature (King and Blade operate a detective agency in Tomb of Dracula #53), but did not do so. In any case the film does emphasize Blade's 'otherness' as instrumental to his ability to interpret signs of danger and exert authority, and highlights the implications of his efforts on behalf of humanity. For this reason I would also include The League of Extraordinary Gentlemen (Stephen Norrington, 2003),
Underworld (Len Wiseman, 2003) and Underworld: Evolution (Wiseman, 2006), as examples of investigating ‘others,’ as each features the undead engaged in investigating and apprehending those who are perceived to threaten not only the existence of ‘their’ kind, but ours as well. Van Helsing (Stephen Sommers, 2003) also offers a resource for reading the preternatural investigator. Sommers’ Van Helsing investigates his vampire adversary in human form, but he cannot destroy the vampire until he himself is a werewolf. This is by no means a comprehensive list of vampires in detective stories, and if considered alongside the many series featuring werewolf investigators (Rebecca York’s Moon series, 2003-present, for one), or magic-using sleuths (J.K. Rowling’s Harry Potter series, 1997-present, is probably the most successful example), or psychic ‘gifts’ (as does Medium), the body of works that can be incorporated in a category marked by the appropriation of investigative action by a preternatural being is legion.

The ‘texts of Dracula’ have developed so that the vampire can be exemplary -- stronger than us, more attractive, nobler, and more able to resist the pleasures and temptations of life in a postmodern world. Like the hardboiled female detective of the 70s and 80s, the vampire detectives that proliferate throughout the 90s and into the third millennium surface from discourses of rejection but cannot repudiate monstrosity. Not only can they still not ‘stand’ for themselves, it is their ‘otherness,’ their preternatural strengths, skills and knowledge from ‘beyond’ that make them useful in the role of the detective. The visibility of so many of their still evil kin also complicates repudiation beyond an individual representative. The vampire detective, like the hardboiled dick, must reject others of his kind (respectively other vampires and agents of authority), but he does not restore them or repudiate vampire-ness. He does, however, like the dick, restore himself by rejecting the behaviors of others of his ilk, and in doing so is also a rebel. The vampire detective cannot restore order, the world is too far gone for that, but through his own self-redemptive efforts, his consistent preoccupation with the signs that surround him, he can redeem himself and keep us safe.
1 My focus is solely on the imaginary monsters used primarily as devices for devotions or in stories and art, but the ‘fact’ or ‘fiction’ of monsters contributed to centuries of religious tracts and texts devoted to exploring such concerns. The 7th century monk, St. Augustine, may have begun this quest when he ‘sanctified’ monstrous races by labeling them as the ‘real’ inheritors of Cain’s curse.

2 ‘Real’ world examples include accessible public buildings, Braille on the key pads of public pay phones and ABMs, and close captioned television.

3 Waller (1985) and Skal (1990), for example, are among others that refer to this house party. The development of the internet, however, lets us explore this in more detail. Polidori’s story was published in The New Monthly Magazine in 1819, but was initially attributed to Byron. The reasons for this can be read in Polidori’s draft of a letter to The Morning Chronicle, available online at www.npg.org.uk/live/rp991b.asp

4 Summers’ work, in fact, resonates so closely with my experience of the traditional vampire (from film, literature and television) that I found it very difficult to read The Vampire: His Kith and Kin without breaking into the narrative voice so strongly associated with these works. For example (cue scary music) “in all the darkest pages of the malign supernatural there is no more terrible tradition that that of the vampire, a pariah even among demons” (Summers, 1928, ix).

5 Raymond McNally and Radu Florescu (1994) make larger claims, connecting the birth of the horror genre to the dissemination of vampire stories by Christian monks in the 17th century. McNally and Florescu maintain an explicit connection exists between European Christianity, the European vampire and by extension the horror genre. In tracing the history of Dracula they have determined that the legends surrounding Vlad (the Impaler) Teppes, the historical figure that provided Stoker with the name Dracula, were first recorded by German Catholic monks who fled Transylvania, because of Dracula’s attempt to destroy Catholic institutions and confiscate their wealth. In relating their stories to other monks, McNally and Florescu suggest they created the first horror story in 1642 (1994, 81).

6 I distinguish the form of Christianity associated with this vampire as European because, like Gregory Erikson (2002) I also believe that the transformation of the vampire in North American popular culture parallels the transformation undergone by European Christianity when it too moved to the ‘new world.’ I will discuss this further when I explore Angel, the secular super savior in Chapter 3.

7 Just some, for example, that are directly related to Stoker’s work are the Bela Lugosi vehicle in 1931, the many films of the Hammer studios throughout the 50s, 60s and 70s or Francis Ford Coppola’s 1992 film.

8 I am referring to a scene in Stoker’s work that has the count bringing home ‘supper’ in the form of a baby.

9 Leader of Stoker’s Army of Light, Van Helsing defines nosferatu as undying and having the strength of 20 men: “he is of cunning more than mortal, for his cunning be the growth of ages; he have still the aids of necromancy, which is, as his etymology imply, the divination by the dead, and all the dead that he can come nigh to are for him at command; he is brute and more than brute; he is devil in callous, and the heart of him is not; he can, within limitations appear at will when, and where, and in any of the forms that are to him; he can, within his range, direct the elements; the storm, the fog, the thunder; he can command all the meaner things: the rat, and the owl, and the bat, the moth, and the fox, and the wolf; he can grow and become small; and he can at times vanish come unknown” (250)(sic).

10 I had always assumed the Count’s preoccupation with counting to be linked to his title and Sesame Street’s mission, but there may be a historic precedent for his condition. The folkloric vampires of Medieval and Renaissance Europe were also obsessed with counting, a weakness used against them. Scattering seeds, nuts or beads on the grave of a ‘vampire’ was thought to distract them enough so that they would not leave their grave site. Vampires could also be kept from entering a home by hanging a knotted net over the front door.

11 I do take exception to Zanger’s use of ‘pagan’ in this context. Pagan comes from the Latin, pagans, ‘country dweller.’ Wicca is considered a pagan religion, but it is not concerned with power and pleasure in the sense Zanger uses these terms. I take him to refer to a dominant view of pagans -- savage or uncivilized.


14 Notably, Karl Marx in Capital: “capital is dead labour which, vampire-like, living only by sucking living labour, and lives the more, the more labour it sucks” (cited in Gelder, 1994, 17).

15 Or eighth, if Out of the House of Life (1990) is included, or eleventh if the three novels in the spin off series about Olivia Atta Clemens are counted as well.

16 Not for too long though. She dies on the sword of a soldier trying to protect her husband, the vampire.

17 A source of obvious tension between him and his father, Henry VIII.

18 Her execution has nothing to do with their relationship; she is condemned as a witch because she studies.
The stories of the Old Testament, the archetypal resource for reading the warrior/angel, are also central to John Travolta's character in the film *Michael* (Nora Ephron, 1996).

In the mid 20th century the occultist/investigator Du Grandin, created by Seabury Quin for the horror pulp, *Weird Tales*, explored strange occurrences in 93 episodes from 1925-1951. The animated series *Scooby Doo* (Hanna Barbera, 1969–present) is a later example.

*The Night Stalker* originally reached audiences as a made-for-TV movie, directed by John Llewellyn Moxey, in 1972. The character was revived for the television series, *Kolchak: The Night Stalker*.

I include the 'gifted' in this category. Although Alison DuBois's character on *Medium* is accepted as legitimate by the District Attorney, her works for him are still kept concealed from public knowledge. Likewise, no matter how often her visions are proven to be cogent, she must continually explain or prove her skills are real. The aforementioned letter to the editors of *TV Guide* also suggests cultural acceptance of precognitive powers is not unanimous.

In *Blade: Trinity* Blade is introduced to Hannibal King for the first time. King is a member of a team of vampire slayers, and functions primarily as a source of cornball humour.
THREE

Monsters, Gods and Acts of Interpretation: Angel Investigations

[The hardboiled detective story] gave murder back to the kind of people that commit it for reasons... The detective in this story is the hero; he is everything... The story is this man's adventure in search of hidden truth, and it would be no adventure if it did not happen to a man fit for adventure. If there were enough like him, the world would be a safe place to live in, without becoming too dull to be worth living in. (Raymond Chandler, The Simple Art of Murder, 1950)

Religion may be present in discussions of the roles superheroes play as deliverers, or reflections on the struggles of life, or in devotional acts to a celebrity, or in ritual patterns of television viewers. (Bruce David Forbes and Jeffrey H. Mahan, Religion and Popular Culture in America, 2002)

My approach to the hybrid form of the vampire detective has to this point focused largely on its antecedent genres. My exploration of vampire narratives and private detective stories reveals rapid transformations in each of these discourses, as well as their mutual concern with conceptions of 'otherness' and authority. I have demonstrated that these strands of discourse have evolved to such an extent that they have become entwined. Those who were merely 'others' in traditional uses of these genres have now frequently migrated to centre stage as authoritative and exemplary figures. If Stoker's Anti-Christ infused Victorian readers with a “fear of the hated unknown” (Auerbach, 67), Huff's and Yarbro's heroic vampires inspire trust and love, and emphasize their connections to Christianity, and the higher power that once rejected the vampire.

Likewise, the female 'other' of classic and hardboiled detective traditions has risen from rejection and emerged, post 60s and 70s feminism, as a central and authorized figure, empowered by her excursions on the margins. The feminist detective paradigm shifted authority from the rebellious and self-isolating stance of the hardboiled dick to one that not only privileged the standpoint of the formerly marginalized, but also accentuated her sociality. What is different in these renovated forms is that the previously-'others', the formerly-rejected figure is in both genres now empowered.
The detective’s body need not be recognizable, that is, any body can fill the form. It is not the look of the detective we rely upon to identify the character’s generic home, but what that body does. We could say, in this sense, that the private detective’s body is a fluid form, but it is given definition by its obsession with interpretation -- we 'know' detectives by their actions regardless of their appearance. What is different about vampires is that we cannot know them by their actions -- they can do anything. The symbol must only be recognizable in appearance to be identified as vampire, but what the figure might mean is open to production and interpretation -- vampires are unstable. Gregory Erickson (2002, “Sometimes”) suggests that by the time that Angel, the vampire with a soul, is introduced in Joss Whedon’s Buffy the Vampire Slayer (WB, UPN, 1997-2003), all sense of vampiric ‘otherness’ has dissolved. I do not believe this to be true. It is Angel’s preternaturally strong vampire body that signals his ‘otherness’ and makes him an effective soldier and, thus, useful to Buffy and her mission. Rather, what has dissolved is an a priori connection between ‘otherness’ and fear. The vampire is always an ‘other’ -- always from beyond cultural knowledge and always symbolic (which is to say, needing interpretation) -- hence the complexity of its reception in the detective genre. It is the paradoxical fusion of a genre based on ratiocination and a genre with elements of the fantastic that I wish to explore as an example of productive postmodern hybridity. Despite the critical ‘truism’ that the detective story must not deal with supernatural events, contemporary preternatural detectives exist and are popular suggesting that this is a distinction no longer maintained by either producers or audiences.

David Trotter (1989) regards the private detective figure as “the ultimate interpreter [and] the ultimate semiotician” (67). Detectives have to be -- they must analyze and read institutions of authority in order to make sense of that which is senseless. If authorized institutions were effective there would be no need of their cultural work. In a sense there has been a breakdown in stable social orders, a decentering of previously assumed-to-be stable codes and operations. Collins’s postmodern subject encounters similar conditions in decentered culture(s). The postmodern subject must be a semiotician, an interpreter orchestrating meaning in
tension-filled environments, in the lack of an ultimate meaning-maker, as is true of the detective in crime fiction as well. Both can be perceived as heretical, as resisting powers they might have otherwise surrendered themselves to. The similarities between the P.I.’s work and the heretical activity of the postmodern subject, who must “strike a balance between involvement and critical distance” (Collins, 147), are striking, but not surprising. If, as Collins suggests, the appearance of the private detective in 19th century popular narratives marked one of the earliest and most significant manifestations of postmodernism’s decentered tendencies, it is no wonder that we can see the private detective, in this sense, as a kind of bricoleur, who not only interprets and orchestrates meaning from the senseless, but more importantly, has the authority to act on his own volition. Regardless of the diverse bodies or even species that have come to inhabit the form, or the sorts of cultures they investigate, the private detective continually engages in stable and rational activities aimed at decoding, making sense of profound instabilities.

What happens then when the private detective assumes an unstable body? It is my contention that when detectives, ultimate sense-makers, assume the bodies of monsters, symbolic forces from ‘beyond’ nature and culture, to supplement their work within culture, they also access the connection between monstra and religion in postmodern popular culture. Erickson maintains that “we create, in our gods and in our theories, reflections of who we are” (“Sometimes,” 118). Certainly, Angel, Buffy the Vampire Slayer’s spin-off series, reveals that the lines between monstrosity and divinity have blurred and reformed within the private detective, a figure who proves to be, simultaneously, religious and heretical.

In the first section of this chapter, “The Good, the Bad and the Ambiguous,” I will demonstrate the ongoing destabilization of a monster whose meaning was already ambivalent in earlier incarnations. Joss Whedon’s world view, encompassing both Buffy and Angel, punctuates decentered conditions by offering vampires that are beyond simple categorization. Many of Whedon’s monsters, particularly on Buffy, fulfill Frederic Jameson’s (1981) definition of the ‘other of fantasy.’ That is, not ‘other’ and “feared because he is evil, rather he is evil because he
is the Other” (115). Yet the vampiric ‘other’ is not always an object of fear. Rather, fear may disappear from the equation depending upon the semiotic context. The ‘texts of Dracula’ have developed so that particular vampires must be read in relation to the signs that surround them and these signs themselves may not be stable. For example, the versions of Christianity that constructed the evil European Anti-Christ, or that supported the righteous violence of North American vampire-heroes such as Yarbro’s St. Germain or Huff’s Henry Fitzroy, are not present in our current world view, yet Christian symbols – crucifixes, holy water – persist and sometimes need to be accepted as having the power to repel evil forces, despite the religious faith that originally sustained the signs having disappeared.

In the second section, “The Undead Detective,” I explore the insertion of higher powers and hardboiled features into Angel’s story. These additions are particularly noteworthy on Angel as these are not characteristics of its originating series, Buffy. That is not to say that we cannot read for the presence of religion on Buffy, but Angel accentuates these insertions given his personal relationship with higher powers. On the television series Buffy the Vampire Slayer, Buffy is ‘the chosen’ of a council of human Watchers. Angel chooses to work with her when he is recruited by the Powers That Be. Acts of detection are immediately connected to higher powers on the spin-off series when it is again the Powers That Be, or the PTBs, that encourage Angel’s career shift, not only as a means of personal redemption, but also for communal safety. In the final section, “Making Sense of Divine Non-Sense,” I explore the implications of attaching higher powers to the private detective and the postmodern subject. I will argue that what is revealed is a form of postmodern religiosity, based on continual action and self-orchestration in the conspicuous absence, not of higher powers, but of an orchestrated master plan. In this sense, Angel reenacts the conditions of postmodern subjectivity and strategizes the heretical action that Collins believe we must all engage in to make sense of ourselves and of decentered culture(s).
The Good, the Bad and the Ambiguous

Buffy: A vampire’s personality has nothing to do with the human it was...
Angel: Well, actually...
(Buffy the Vampire Slayer, “Dopplegangland,” 3016)

Buffy may believe that vampires maintain no traces of their former human interiority, but the vampires on the series undermine this view. All the vampires in the series have the potential to live extended lives and possess superior strength; they cannot tolerate direct sunlight, see themselves in mirrors, or enter a private home uninvited. Yet the primary vampires only present themselves as non-human in the presence of blood, or when threatened; otherwise they appear as attractive, albeit pale, humans with distinctive personalities, and the switch to ‘vamp face’ appears a matter of choice.¹ The countless anonymous and disposable vampires that appear throughout the series, most often briefly, usually wear only their vampire faces, featuring a prominent forehead, yellow eyes and fangs. Nina Auerbach (1995) believes that all vampires have an “apparent uniformity but simultaneously an adaptive trait with which vampires shape themselves to personal or national moods” (5). The ‘vamp face’ and a preoccupation with blood may be read as a stable sign of vampirism in Whedon’s world and allows the vampire/symbol to be recognizable. The many sorts of vampires he presents in the series, nonetheless, display personhood and seem to underline decentered conditions and the fragmentary nature of ‘national moods.’ Angel, in particular, seems to exemplify the difficulties inherent in attempting to identify the vampire as he is himself multiplex and irreducible. The errant human son, the evil monster, the repentant monster, the flawed hero and the exemplary character are all components of Angel that cannot be separated or exorcised, and that go well beyond the common or recognizable signs of vampirism.

Angel’s resistance to simple categorization is emphasized throughout both series. The use of flashbacks, for example, particularly on Angel, reveals the handsome and brooding vampire hero also to be the infamously evil Angelus. Angelus the vampire is ‘born’ in 1753, when Liam, the whoring, drinking, gambling son of Irish landowners, is ‘sired’ by Darla, a
female vampire with a taste for destruction and cruelty. In the parlance of the series, the term ‘sire’ is used to refer to the act of turning a human into a vampire. While usually a male act, any vampire can sire (turn a human into) another vampire. Siring is synonymous with parentage, so that Darla, Angelus’s lover, is also his vampiric mother. The couple terrorizes Europe and parts of Asia, adding Drusilla to their incestuous ‘family’ in 1860. In this sense they are much like the evil families of vampires that surfaced in the 70s and 80s -- preoccupied with themselves and with killing humans or adding them to the family. Angelus’s siring of Drusilla provides a good example of his overtly evil nature. Intrigued by Drusilla’s sensitivity to the supernatural, her ability to recognize the threat he poses at a glance, Angelus stalks the young woman, kills her family, finally taking her at the convent she has entered. After he kills the other sisters in front of her, he rapes and sires Drusilla, making her both mad and vampire (Angel, “Dear Boy,” 2005). The fey Dru expands the evil trio in 1880 with the siring of Spike, once William, a sensitive and poetic Victorian mama’s boy (Buffy the Vampire Slayer, “Fool for Love,” 5007; Angel, “Darla,” 2007). The camaraderie of these killers ends in 1889 when Angelus kills a gypsy girl. In retaliation her family curses Angelus, restoring in the predator a soul, a conscience that will conflict with his vampiric need for blood and his personal talent for behaving badly.

The vampire’s soul does not initially inspire great deeds or force him to be good, but it does make Angelus feel guilt for his past actions, and anxiety about any future meals. Subject to melancholy and unable to kill with impunity, Angelus can no longer fulfill his position in his evil vampire family. He is eventually abandoned and, renamed Angel, makes his way to America. Angel’s 20th century undead and souled ‘life’ is largely revealed through Angel’s many flashbacks, but it is the original series that initially reveals and indicates the primary points of departure that will play an important part of the spin-off’s world view and come to connect it to the detective genre.

Angel is clearly a multiplex and evolving character, a postmodern vampire constantly adapting and changing over time but for the audience, also within changing contexts. For
example, Angel’s knowledge of Buffy and her mission precedes the audience’s introduction to the characters on the premiere episode of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (“Welcome to the Hellmouth,” 1001). It is not until the second season’s two-part finale that it is revealed that in 1994, at the very moment that Buffy is being told of her destiny as ‘the chosen,’ she is watched by Angel, who is being asked to make a choice about his own future.² Angel’s surveillance of this scene has been pre-arranged by Whistler, an “immortal demon sent down to even the score between good and evil” (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, “Becoming, Part 2,” 2022). Angel, at this point, is an abject figure: unwashed, clothed in rags, transient, and feeding on rats.³ Although he has ‘lived’ a diverse lifestyle throughout the 20th century, when Whistler approaches Angel in America, he appears as a vagrant. His soul to this point has not inspired great deeds in him or sustainable happiness, and it did not come with a guarantee of goodness, but nor did it in his human life as Liam.

One might argue that Angel has been chosen to be a champion, but it is clear, in this first contact with the Powers That Be, that the ultimate choice is his. As Whistler says, Angel “could go either way” (“Becoming, Part 1,” 2021). Whistler, an emissary of the PTBs, offers Angel a chance at redemption. The vampire can “become someone. A person. Someone who can be counted.” Angel chooses to ‘become someone’ by helping Buffy. By the time she reaches Sunnydale, and her own series, he is there, a mysterious figure ready to atone for past sins and aid in her mission. Two points are worth emphasizing: Angel chooses to fight with ‘the chosen’ Slayer, and he is motivated and authorized to do so by divine forces. His strength as a vampire enables his ability to serve as a potent force, but it is the intercession of higher powers that sets this force in motion.

Angel’s power is mobilized on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* as a force for good, except for a brief and eventful stint in season two. Angel’s re-transformation into Angelus, his ‘real’ vampire self, occurs as the result of a loophole in the gypsy curse, both discovered and made manifest following the moment of ‘pure happiness’ he experiences when he and Buffy make love for the
first time. No longer restrained by conscience, as Angelus he terrorizes Buffy and her friends, torturing some and killing one, and he eventually initiates an apocalypse only Buffy can avert by sending him to a hell dimension. Eventually, again through the intercession of the PTBs, Angel, whose soul had been restored by magic moments before Buffy ‘killed’ him, is returned to Sunnydale. Resurrected, again, Angel soon leaves fictional Sunnydale, to avoid the conditions of the curse, and the temptations of Buffy.

It is at this point Angel moves to his own series set in the real and mythic American city of Los Angeles, the typical setting of many hardboiled novels and films noir. It is here that Angel enters the discourses of detective fiction. In the American hardboiled detective tradition, he opens an investigative agency “to help the weak ones lost in the night” (Angel, “In the Dark,” 1003). He is aided initially by Doyle, a part demon, part human who also has some atoning to do and whose painful visions from the PTBs allow him to ‘see’ where they are needed. Cordelia Chase and Wesley Wyndham Price, recurring characters on Buffy the Vampire Slayer, will also join Angel Investigations in the first season, along with a new character, Gunn, the team’s only local, a street-smart gangbanger (read ‘black’). In season two the team expands with the addition of Krevlorneswath of the Deathwok Clan of Pylea. Green-skinned, horned and flamboyant, Lorne operates an L.A. karaoke bar, Caritas, which caters primarily to demons. In season three human physicist, Winifred (Fred) Berkel will also join the team, following her rescue from Lorne’s inhospitable home world, as do the vampires, Spike and Harmony, both Buffy the Vampire Slayer alumni, for the fifth and final season.

Angel, in this very brief synopsis, emphasizes the complex, indeed paradoxical nature of this hybrid and postmodern figure, and underscores the complexity of this world view. Angel is not presented in opposition to any one sort of bad vampire, nor is he the only ‘good’ vampire, with soul or not, and even when Angel is ‘good’ he can do bad things. Spike, for example, initially appears on Buffy as a bad vampire, the only vampire who has ever killed two Slayers, but he is also capable of love and likes the status quo as it exists. Spike is effectively neutered by
The Initiative, in season four of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, through the insertion of a microchip in his brain that will not allow him to injure humans without feeling searing pain himself. He begins to fight demons not from a desire to do good, but initially because they are the only creatures the chip will allow him to harm without hurting himself. His power and action are eventually co-opted for Buffy’s uses. Spike does not have the same motivations as the Slayer, but their diverse purposes do lead to the same end -- dead demons and vampires. Spike’s change, his choice to use his power for good is not, like Angel’s, an atonement, used to repudiate past sins or for self redemption, nor does it initially surface from the desire to do good things, but rather to impress Buffy as he falls in love with her. Regardless of his motivation, however, what is more important is that Spike is capable of, and chooses, moral action.

Spike is not ‘cursed’ with a soul, but fights for and wins one through battle in the Demon Trials, but his re-souling reads more like an economic exchange for a job well done than spiritual transcendence. He returns to Sunnydale, guilt-stricken and vulnerable, but it is significant that compared to Angel, Spike’s recuperation or reframing of his past violence is achieved fairly quickly. In the context of series television this only makes sense; the audience does not have the hundred years Angel had off-screen to work this out. In the context of these series, given what we know of Spike through flashbacks, we could also understand Spike’s soul transition to be less abrupt than Angel’s. Spike’s pre-vampiric self, William, had a ‘good’ soul; he was a gentle and, perhaps, even overly sensitive male, devoted to his mother and teased for his transparent emotions and bad poetry. The feelings Spike encounters in possession of a soul are not unfamiliar to the human that was William. Angelus, on the other hand, experiences with the return of his soul feelings that he had not explored as Liam, the errant son. Angel, in possession of a soul, must learn as a vampire lessons he had rejected as a human. Both Spike’s and Angelus’s first meetings with their families as vampires is directly connected to their human relationships with them. After killing the keeper of the graveyard where he is buried, one of Liam’s first actions as a vampire is to slaughter his family. William, on the other hand, sires his
sick mother to restore her to health, and so that she might be together with him and Dru forever. Buffy may believe that vampires have nothing in common with their former human selves, but the vampires in the series undermine such a position and the series emphasizes their own volition.

Even when Angel is good, it is a ‘goodness’ that is morally ambiguous, and it is in this sense that the Angel/Angelus division does not work either as a binary, or as a Manichean version of the good and evil in all of us. Angel suggests that there is more than good and evil, that good can turn into evil, and that good can be evil as well. Angel can always ‘turn into’ Angelus, but even with a soul Angel is also capable of acts of cruelty and violence that go beyond the bloodshed seemingly needed to combat evil. Two second-season episodes of Angel particularly highlight his susceptibility to evil. In “Reunion” (2010), Angel locks the executives of an evil law firm, Wolfram and Hart, in a wine cellar with vampires, Darla and Drusilla, knowing and, more importantly not caring, that all the humans might die. In “Redefinition” (2011), following a premeditated ambush, he sets Dru and Darla on fire. One might argue that these acts are not distinguishable from the countless other killings we have seen Angel engage in, and it is true that in both situations only ‘bad’ characters are punished. His actions, though, are framed both within the larger moral scheme of the series and by Angel’s co-investigators as disturbing and unacceptable. Team members Wes, Gunn and Cordelia tell him that he has crossed a line, and only they separate him from “real darkness” (“Redefinition”). He responds by firing them all. Likewise, even though Angel has killed Darla before, and in doing so again would engage in an ‘acceptable’ kill, his choice to leave the vampires ‘alive,’ and in agony is cogent, as is Dru and Darla’s reaction to this Angel. Dru continually refers to Angel, throughout both “Reunion” and “Redefinition” as ‘Daddy’ or ‘Angel-beast,’ but as they sit under the hydrant Darla has opened to put out their burning clothing, Darla says “that wasn’t Angel... wasn’t Angelus either... who was that?”

The series also does not limit forms of vampiric goodness to only those with souls or chips. The reintroduction of another recurring Buffy the Vampire Slayer character as a regular
cast member for the final season of Angel, also suggests that 'natural,' soul-less vampires can choose to behave. Harmony is human, but hardly humane, for the first three seasons of Buffy the Vampire Slayer, until she is turned into a vampire during the third-season finale's graduation/apocalypse. As a high school girl Harmony is a part of the 'in' group at Sunnydale High School, led by Cordelia Chase. After Harmony is sired she becomes, ironically, a much more sympathetic figure. Not bright enough to be truly dangerous, and not enough like Buffy to hold Spike's romantic interest, she eventually makes her way to L.A and Angel. Here she becomes involved with a vampire motivational speaker, not out of a desire to be evil or destroy humanity, but for connections and friendships (Angel, "Disharmony," 2017). Likewise, when Harmony joins Team Angel for the final season, in their new home in the offices of Wolfram and Hart, as Angel's administrative assistant, she is not motivated from a desire to help humanity so much as to belong somewhere. That she is able to make this choice is significant for, as she reminds Angel and Spike, she doesn't have a soul or a chip so "it's harder" for her (Angel, "Harm's Way," 5009). Harmony's condition implies that making moral choices is an activity that vampires can and do engage in, even in the absence of a soul, and even if it is 'hard.' Buffy and Angel do not clearly articulate what vampires are, but not doing so allows the creatures to 'stand for themselves' within the series, to choose their own versions of vampireness. It does make clear, nonetheless, that multiplexity is an ongoing condition, a conflict that will always be present. Angel is never just Angel, but always Liam, Angel, Angelus, and as Darla suggests, maybe someone else. He must always deal with the conflict between his vampire needs and his human soul, and must continually choose to do good, under circumstances where 'good' is not a predetermined category.

As an addition to the 'texts of Dracula' Whedon's world highlights the contemporary monster's ambiguity, its ability to be or do anything. Like Zanger's (1997) 'new' vampires, they act on their own volition, for good, bad or places in between and outside of those constructs. The preoccupation with family life that Zanger identifies in the 'new' vampires can still be recognized
in the series' bad vampires, but it is noteworthy that the vampires perceived to be good live on their own. They do not, however, work on their own and, in fact, as I will expand on below, they privilege group activity, the relationships typical of feminist detective forms. It is only when Angel is Angelus that he seeks out other vampires; otherwise he is surrounded by diverse peoples, humans, demons and vampires.

It is significant, I believe, that in each of the series premieres, both the original and its spin-off, the 'big bad,' in the parlance of the series, is a vampire, for in this shared feature the discontinuities that will shape Angel are accentuated. The Master, Buffy's first nemesis, is a Nosferatu-like creature who quotes prophecies and has an apocalyptic plan for mass destruction and carnage. Russell Winters, Angel's vampire antagonist in "City Of" (1001), on the other hand, is a suave and debonair Hollywood insider, involved in the mass media, and one whose violent threat is primarily carnal in nature – he preys on beautiful, young, aspiring starlets. While each of these vampire's predilections are heinous, we might consider the Master's threat to be more fantastic, one that can only be realized in speculative forms of fiction. Russell's evil may harm fewer humans, pose a less significant threat to humanity, but his vampirism is introduced as a secondary feature of his criminality, and his primary threat is not restricted to speculative genres. The differences in each of the series premiere's views of vampires not only illustrates what we might call 'old school' and modern versions of fantastic vampire evil, but they also emphasize the new direction of the spin-off series, the presence of higher powers, and the insertion of the 'real' hardboiled detective into Angel's action. This is not to suggest Angel's violent action does not incorporate Buffy's fantastic freedom to kill without state-sanctioned license, or that the series is not a part of Buffy's story, but that the incorporation of the mode of the private investigator and the presence of higher powers adds new levels and complexities by adding to the originating text and creating something new.
The Undead Detective

Doyle: It's not all about fighting and gadgets and stuff. It's about reaching out to people." (Angel,'City Of')

Doyle, Angel’s new half-demon sidekick, clearly speaks to Angel’s discontinuities from its source in the premiere episode “City Of,” highlighting the intercession of higher powers and the generic shift that will be stressed, particularly in the first few episodes. Doyle, like the Whistler character, claims a connection to the Powers That Be, but he also acknowledges he is not sure what that means, never having seen them. He ‘knows’ he has “been sent -- by the Powers That Be,” but when Angel responds with “be what?” Doyle cannot answer (“City of”). What Doyle does know comes to him through painful visions and suggests the PTBs are “more powerful than me and you, and they’re just trying to make things right.” While filling in a new audience on Angel’s life to this point, Doyle also emphasizes the new series’ shift from the fantastic slaying action of the warrior/soldier to the world of the private detective for the crossover audience. He tells Angel that his role as the “faceless champion of the hapless human race” is effective, but it is also dangerous as it separates him from those he saves. If the vampire has no feelings for humans, Doyle insists that detachment will nourish a craving “too appetizing to turn down.” Angel’s craving for human blood, normally kept at bay, has recently been heightened by his need to feed from Buffy after being poisoned in his last season in her series. Angel’s new task encourages his involvement with humans, not only to save their lives, but to ensure that he will care, that his task will not become ‘the job.’ While this may seem a different mission from that of the hardboiled detective, Cawelti’s (1976) analysis of the figure suggests otherwise. Cawelti identifies the hardboiled genre’s departure from the British classical school with a “greater personal involvement” (143) on the part of its detectives. The moral and emotional commitment of the hardboiled genre shifts these works from the classical “drama of solution to the [hardboiled] detective’s quest... for justice... [he] can mete out” (ibid). In fictional Sunnydale the vampire can dispense justice in aid of the Slayer, a position with authority
only in a speculative world view. Angel's spin-off mission gets its authority from a figure whose form of alternative justice we already know to be 'better than,' more violent than, sanctioned forms, and one who must live in the world to help it -- the private detective.

Although detective fiction may raise religious themes or refer to religious persons, places or artifacts, the hardboiled detective would not at first glance appear to be a religious figure. Honourable, but slightly disreputable, the dick looks to no other source but himself for his moral stance. As Cawelti (1976) suggests, it is because there is no other source that the "private detective is forced to take over the basic moral functions of exposure, protection, judgment and execution" (152). As I have mentioned, I believe that vampires can be about or 'stand for' many things (sex or capitalism, for example), but cultural understandings about religion are always inscribed in their symbolic bodies, whether a particular vampire articulates those concerns or not. This is a condition of membership among the 'texts of Dracula.' This connection is explicit in Whedon's world. Buffy reveals Angel's special relationship with divine forces -- he is their champion, a recruited warrior atoning for past sins. On Angel the PTBs redefine his mission by advocating detection/involvement with humanity. It is important to recognize that Angel's acts of detection are not only a form of penance, but also a form of immunity, an inoculation against his recent craving for human blood. In this sense the similarity between Angel's divine mission and Tzvetan Todorov's (1977) 'vulnerable detective' is significant. Todorov located the vulnerable detective in the hardboiled works of Dashiell Hammett and Raymond Chandler. He identifies the "chief feature" of these detectives to be the "lo[ss] of his immunity... [he] constantly risks his life... [and] he is integrated into the universe of other characters" (8). I believe that this understanding of the hardboiled detective's features intersects with the PTBs admonitions, so that on Angel religion and detection become related.

The Los Angeles setting is an immediate surface indication that Angel's worldview differs from Buffy's. Stacey Abbott (2002) has commented on Angel's relocation to L.A. and his subsequent reinvention as a private detective as two of the indications of the new series' links to
detection and film noir. The chiaroscuro lighting used, the constant emphasis on the L.A. location, both in the credits and in the frequent establishing shots, all speak to Abbott of what Andrew Spicer (2002) has called the “fundamental ambivalence” of the noir city, “dangerous... and corrupt but also exciting and sophisticated” (Spicer, 67). Angel’s new choice of homes is also relevant in this sense as they also point to a shift from vampire and horror narratives to those more at home, so to speak, in the ‘realist’ form of detection. Although his dwellings on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* appear home-like, in comparison to the crypts and nests of Sunnydale’s other vampires, they are still in abandoned buildings, separate from humans and other vampires. In *Angel*, however, we find him living in an apartment, accessible through the office space of a 40s era building that will, for a while, be the home of Angel Investigations. Likewise, his next home/office space, which will function as such for most of the series run, is also a part of the hardboiled scene, the noir-ish Hyperion Hotel. Even the last season’s move to the swank Wolfram and Hart building, and his luxurious apartment within it, can be folded into the hardboiled genre. As Cawelti reminds us, the moral stance of the dick is such that he can “achieve the rewards of success [while] maintaining his honor and his integrity” (137). It is probably not coincidental, though, that the fifth season finds the team, with all the resources and appearances of success available to them, constantly questioning their autonomy and their ability to maintain their moral position in light of the firm’s Senior Partners.

The rhetoric of the flashback as a stylistic convention also ‘speaks’ of the new series’ genre shift. On *Buffy* Angel’s flashbacks are used to reveal moments in his past and highlight Angel’s good against Angelus’s evil. In this sense we might read them primarily as a sort of historic documentation. On *Angel*, though, flashbacks occur more frequently, not only to reveal the past, but to emphasize its inevitable resurgence in the present. If *Buffy*’s flashbacks suggest that Angel is not Liam or Angelus, that he is not his past, *Angel*’s suggest it does not matter. Like Collins’ postmodern subject Angel can never return to ‘zero-sum’ -- the past is always present.
This contributes to a sense of futility and doom not fully realized in the original series but completely at home in the decadent and corrupt cities of film noir and hardboiled detection.

Angel’s mission is unequivocally reframed in the last scenes of the premiere episode by *Buffy* alumni Cordelia Chase, but a number of features throughout “City Of” also draw attention to the generic shift in the action: the human ‘client,’ the investigative procedures, the nature of the threat, and the levels of violence used to oppose it. Angel is inserted into the episode’s action by a vision from Doyle, whose vision only tells him a young human is in need of help. It is up to Angel to determine how and why from the cryptic note Doyle has written: ‘Tina. Coffee Spot.’ In other words, he must conduct an interview with a stranger over whom he has no legitimate authority to compel the release of information — he must engage in conversation. This is the aspect that makes Angel most uncomfortable, but as Doyle reminds him, “that’s the whole point” (“City Of”). While Doyle implies that Angel’s good looks will help him become involved, Tina’s initial responses suggests otherwise as she first mistakes him as coming on to her, and then as the hired muscle of an associate. Once the waitress/actor determines that Angel is shy and socially inept rather than a threat, personal or external, she reveals her experience with the American dream. She came to Hollywood looking for stardom, but “they weren’t hiring.” Now she wants nothing more than to go home to Missoula, but she feels threatened by Russell, a man whom she thought would further her career goals.

In continuing investigative mode, Angel drives her to a Hollywood party where she is to pick up funds that will allow her to leave town. Here Angel runs into Cordelia, who like Tina has come to Hollywood looking for stardom. True to her form on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, once Cordelia learns Angel is not there to “bite people,” and more importantly has no connections that might further her own career plans, she ends this brief reunion. When Angel and Tina leave the party they are confronted by a group of men, associates of Russell Winters, who attempt to abduct Tina and bring her to him to ‘talk.’ Angel, predictably, foils these plans, but notable in this exchange is the level of violence that occurs — fisticuffs, the threat of pistols and no trace of
vamp face. This is hardboiled action, not Slayer. Angel offers Tina a safe place at his apartment where she tells him she believes Russell to be responsible for the disappearance of her friend. As Tina sleeps Angel searches her address book for the last name of her missing friend. Rather than go into Slayer mode, advancing directly to the source of the threat and killing it, Angel must incorporate investigative procedures. He uses the sewers and subway tunnels, accessible via a trap door in his apartment, to reach the library. Here, using a public computer he accesses a news article, a crime report and the coroner’s files, discovering a body matching the description of Tina’s friend. When Angel returns to his apartment Tina has found Doyle’s note, revealing her name and employer, and assumes Angel has lied about helping her. He tries to explain as Tina runs from the building, but when he steps into the sun the pain causes him to display his vamp face. Understandably upset, Tina returns to her own apartment to find Russell waiting for her, where he reveals he is not only her landlord but also a vampire. He kills her, leaving injuries that will be familiar to Angel when he discovers her body.

Angel now knows what Russell is, and can in this sense proceed directly to ‘go’ in Slayer mode, but he must still use investigative procedures to find him. This is, after all, Los Angeles and not small-town Sunnydale. Russell’s location is tracked through the sedan used in Tina’s attempted abduction, to his mansion in the Hollywood hills. Angel’s killing mission is preempted, however, when it turns to a rescue upon the discovery that Russell’s latest starlet/snack is to be Cordelia Chase. Angel eventually destroys Russell during a business meeting at the offices of his attorneys, Wolfram and Hart, introducing the primary antagonists Angel Investigations will face throughout this series. Russell, cocky in the face of a legal presence that ensures that he “has not and will never be” charged with any crime, encourages Angel to behave civilly and reminds him of all they can do as vampires. “Can you fly?” asks Angel as he pushes him through a window. The vampire disintegrates in the sunlight during his fall, leaving only the chair to hit the ground, and no body to prove a ‘real’ murder has been committed in ‘real’ L.A.
It is the rescued, but still desperate Cordelia who cogently marks the discontinuities from the original series that Angel’s premiere has emphasized and underlines the sociality of female forms of detection. Cordelia inserts herself into the vampire and the half demon’s “little mission,” initially as an administrative assistant of sorts, and introduces the concept of charging, “based on a case-by-case analysis”. Tolerating Cordelia, while providing the lonely and poverty-stricken former teen queen with a job, also emphasizes Angel’s new mission. Angel can help Cordelia, but she can also provide the vampire with a connection to humanity. Cordelia’s reframing of the “little mission” as one of detection is underlined in the second episode of the series when she provides the team with business cards and a working name: Angel Investigations.

In keeping with the generic shift Angel’s work quickly intersects with ‘real’ world authoritative forces in the second episode, “Lonely Hearts” (1002). In a realistic L.A., surrounded by humanity and directed to get involved, Angel’s investigations soon come to the attention of a ‘real’ authority, the Los Angeles Police Department, and primarily Kate Lockley. Over the course of the series Angel and Kate co-operate on a number of cases and clearly move Angel’s world into the landscape of detection and the hero’s new role. This working relationship does not continue past the second season’s “Epiphany” (2016), and turns out to be very costly for Kate. In this world Angel must fly under the radar lest, as Doyle reminds him, the police mistake him for a “v word.” “Vampire,” Angel says resignedly, but Doyle means something far more threatening to real authority — a vigilante (“Lonely Hearts”).

The series works quickly to establish that although Angel has connections to higher powers, he is, like the postmodern subject, not privy to a master plan, should one exist. Nor is he slave to the desires of the higher powers, and thus is able to maintain the personal moral stance of the hardboiled detective. In the episode “In the Dark,” for example, Angel is given the Gem of Amara, a ring which makes its vampire wearer ‘unkillable.’ At the close of the episode, as the sun sets on Angel’s first day in over 200 years, he destroys the ring. Doyle bemoans the loss of what he figures is Angel’s “redemption,” but Angel responds, “nah, it just looks like it” (“In the
Angel perceives the gem not to be a form of salvation but a temptation to distract him from his work among the night’s weak ones. Angel also turns down the opportunity to remain human after he is accidentally transformed into one following a fight with a Mohra demon in “I Will Remember You” (1008). After absorbing the blood of the demon through a wound received during their battle, Angel becomes human. In this episode he is not tempted by what looks like redemption, but what is in effect a release from both his curse and his debt to humanity. When Angel turns down this lottery-like chance to become a ‘real boy,’ to choose his own version of himself, he does not do so because gods do not exist, but because they do not reveal their plans or indicate the ‘right’ choice. Angel chooses to return to his souled, but vampire body, when he acknowledges that it is his vampiric ‘otherness’ that makes him effective. His preternatural body, with its strength and restorative powers, is that which makes him useful.

Like the hardboiled detective Angel operates under a belief system that mobilizes disillusion as a source for continual action. He believes in the existence of higher powers -- they recruited him -- but they do not reveal a grand plan or appear to offer any assistance to guide his moral and ethical choices. In this way Angel addresses religious themes and issues while resisting divine authority. This very resistance, Gregory Erickson explains (2004, “Religion”), can be seen as theological, or as he proposes “(a)theological,” whereby the importance of religion “lies in the difficulty of the act of its interpretation” (para 10). In other words, what is perceived to be religion is only made so in the act of interpretation. It is what one perceives to be sacred, holy or divine that constructs what is religious. With words from ‘on high’ that cannot be relied on, Angel and his investigators are forced to rely on their own interpretations. Most often misinterpretations are acted upon by a solitary team member, which emphasizes and privileges the group effort, the relationships, and combined action that mark feminist appropriations of the hardboiled figure.

A number of episodes on Angel stress that solitary action is not only dangerous, but catastrophic within the series’ world view. For example, the efficacy of group action is the
thematic concern of “Provider” (3012) when, driven by the financial concerns of his new fatherhood, Angel overbooks the team forcing them to handle clients on their own. This proves almost fatal for team member Fred. As I have mentioned above, when Angel behaves badly in “Reunion” and “Redefinition,” he acts alone. Wes’s season two interpretation of a tampered prophecy results in the abduction of Angel’s son to a hell dimension. Gunn’s solo negotiations for a ‘brain boost’ in season five brings about the death of Fred and the arrival of the god, Illyria.

It is true that the series’ emphasis on communal action rejects the loner code of the early hardboiled detectives, but this is a discontinuity that also marks female appropriations of the genre, the form from which I believe preternatural detectives have developed. Tough and sexy, Angel may look the part of original versions of hardboiled-ness, but the domesticated vampire owes both its appearance in the generic format and its forms of responsible authority to its connections with female appropriations of the detective figure. It is in this sense that although the appearance of the male vampire detective chronologically follows these pre-existing forms, it also stands between them -- drawing on the power of each.

These differences from the originating series could all be said to mark Angel’s assimilation of modes of detection, but Angel’s use of the trope as a form of atonement or penance is also noteworthy, particularly in light of his relationship with the PTBs. This gives the figure of Angel openness to religious interpretations of a sort that is not apparent in the original series, or in works of hardboiled detection. It is this openness, I believe, that allows Angel to reveal a form of postmodern religiosity in acts of detection and in postmodern theory. Angel raises religious questions, about the nature of good and evil, the supernatural, sin and redemption and the Powers That Be, but does not answer them. Instead, I believe, the series works to suggest that we must answer them ourselves, in relationships and through acts of interpretation. Through acts of detection, of continually engaging in making sense of the signs and mysteries that surround us, we might provide, and have faith, in our own answers. They may well be the only ones we can rely on. Angel’s epiphany may force him to accept the ineffectiveness of gods, but it
is a realization that does not force his surrender; instead it creates an opportunity for continual action based solely on his desire to help others -- "I want to help because I don’t think people should suffer, as they do" (Angel, “Epiphany,” 2016). Angel’s realization that there is nothing to believe in does not amount to a rejection of religion; rather, his recognition of a significant absence may well be what religion in postmodern times is all about -- it is certainly what the hardboiled detective is all about.

**Making Sense of Divine Non-Sense**

Only a god can save us. (Martin Heidegger, *Being and Time*, 1962)

Erickson suggests we limit ourselves to a traditional definition of religion as the “sacred cosmic order against the chaos” (“Religion,” para 43), when it may be that religion is simply the chaos itself. Using Derrida’s understanding of religious belief to be an experience of absolute interruption, Erickson maintains that religion is that which is “beyond understanding and partakes of the impossible” (ibid). Religion in this sense does not explain the incomprehensible, but is a recognition of the incomprehensible and the divine, the “absolute other... blur[ring] the distinctions between gods and monsters” (ibid). This is a distinction Erickson has explored in an earlier essay on the series. In his analysis of postmodern American Christianity and vampires, Erickson (“Sometimes,” 2002) parallels the transformation of the European vampire into American vampires with the transformation of the European Christ to an American Jesus. Erickson points to a number of developments undergone by the Christ of Europe that relate to the American vampire. In particular, there is an emphasis on conversion and on a post-resurrection and accessible Christ. The American Christ is not an enigma but, like the vampire-next-door, one who “walks and talks with you and is a friend” (“Sometimes,” 112). Likewise, the rewards offered by American Christianity are not reserved for the ‘other side,’ but as with the vampire, one can be ‘born again,’ here and now.

Gelder’s (1994) analysis of vampire narratives suggests that if Christianity cannot model contemporary North American culture in its own image, the vampire may be in a position to do
so. This creature, explains Gelder, has shifted from a position of small social significance (confined to folk culture and other ‘low’ genre forms) to one that is “not only central to culture but it may even be reconstructing it in its own image — or vice versa” (142). But in creating an ‘other’ that is exemplary of the human condition, rather than an example of human deviance, our connections with that ‘other’ change as well. Although there are a number of ways that Angel, the vampire, could be said to function as a Christ-replacement figure (as Erickson does in his analysis “Sometimes You Need a Story” (2002)), theologian and scholar Bruce David Forbes (2002) suggests most any hero could fulfill this role. Forbes’s introduction to an analysis of religion and popular culture in North America (Forbes and Mahon, 2002) maintains that popular culture is largely scripted by an American monomyth that is religious in nature, the myth of a single God who operates through his singular and self-directed son. In this sense heroes, and particularly super-saviours, can function as Christ-replacement figures.

Until this point, my use of the term ‘religion’ has been, for the most part, synonymous with Christianity. This is not a reflection of a narrow view, on my part, but one predicated on the explicit presence of Christianity in the texts examined. However, a broader view is needed for exploring contemporary popular culture. Forbes suggests that while it may be tempting to simply define religion in postmodern popular culture as a “belief in God... or gods or a higher power... there is a disagreement among scholars about how to describe the focus of attention that makes religion identifiable” (8). In this sense, Forbes supports Erickson’s understanding of difficulties in the act of interpretation. Institutionalized forms, such as Christianity, may be the most readily recognizable manifestation of religion, but many of these institutions are also under attack, literally and figuratively.18 There are also “broad societal movements... and personal religious beliefs and practices that do not fit with any particular group” (ibid), but are often separated from institutionalized religions by the label ‘spirituality.’ Such an argument attempts to replace the word ‘religion’ with a more diluted term ‘spirituality,’ which is an unnecessary shift.
Religion is fluid and is a concept that flows with culture. What were to the ancient Romans religious stories are for many of us interesting old stories and valuable resources for fantasy films and video games. Witchcraft, or the charge of it, led to women’s burning at the stake in times past, but in recent decades it is pitched to young women as a form of grrrl power.\(^{19}\)

In moving from Europe to America, Christianity adapted to meet the needs of the new country and its inhabitants, so much so, suggests religious scholar Harold Bloom, that while masking itself under the guise of Protestant Christianity North America “has ceased to be Christian” (1992, 32), “building a Christ who is more an American than he is a Christ” (25). Yet religion persists as what Forbes, drawing upon Julia Mitchell Corbett, has called “an integrated system of belief, lifestyle, ritual activities, and institutions by which individuals give meaning to (or find meaning in) their lives by orienting themselves to what they take to be holy, sacred, or of the highest value” (9) (my emphasis).\(^{20}\) This definition is useful for understanding how we might approach the religious in postmodern popular culture’s discourse sensitivity, in ways that “take into account the centering power of individual discourses, or the power of individuals to make choices regarding those discourses” (Collins, 143-4). Corbett’s definition recognizes Collins’ figure of the bricoleur who can and must choose his or her own system for making meaning based on what he or she believes to be pivotal values. The vampire detective inserts himself into such a religious framework as one who believes in powers-that-be but feels compelled to act willfully in the face of them.

For all his superpowers Angel is not divine, he asks not to be worshipped and cautions us to beware of words from ‘on high’: “Don’t believe everything you’re foretold” (“To Shanshu in L.A.,” 1022). He reveals his own self-conscious awareness of his religious function throughout the series, but in the final episode he draws explicit attention to this connection at the team’s last meeting. “This might come off a little pretentious” Angel says to the team, “but one of you will betray me.” Spike responds “Oh! Can I deny you three times?” (Angel, “Not Fade Away,” 5022). On Angel messages from ‘on high’ are sought, often received, more often discredited. Organized
religion, in particular televangelism, is literally demonized (in the Jasmine storyline, for example, in season four) and hellgods are converted to the good fight (Illyria, season five). The powers that are revealed, those that might be imagined, at the very least, as benign or somewhat interested, are conspicuously uninvolved, and if they lend the champion a certain cachet by association they do not consistently contribute, or reveal any sort of reliable grand plan. Angel, unlike other heroic vampires, such as Yarbro’s Comte or Huff’s Lord Fitzroy, cannot use conventional religiosity to mark his goodness: “God doesn’t want you,” Darla tells Angel in “Dear Boy.” God is not present here nor perhaps in the lives of the series’ target audience who are “surprisingly well versed on the foibles of religious institutions” (Schofield Clark, 1999, 4).

The trope of detection, moreover, not only displaces the meaning of Christianity used by the early vampire heroes, but offers a form of religiosity that can be located in the stable actions of an investigating body -- through the presentation of a figure who can be trusted in the face of nothing to trust, one who does not rely upon higher powers for his authority, but can operate in the face of competing and often conflicting multiple powers. The trope of detection provides Angel with personal authority, a substitute for sanctioned sources. It offers a framework whereby detection operates as an act of contrition that acknowledges the conflict between his human self and his vampire self that the gypsy curse has put into play. One might argue that a number of features of detection resist religiosity, but those such as the level of violence and the flawed figure of the detective/hero can also be incorporated by religious reading into Forbes’ monomyth (2002). Christ and his popular replacement figures are always burdened by their humanity and their saviour function. Likewise connections between religion and violence are nothing new or even confined to fiction. Unlike these figures, however, Angel and Spike do not ask that ‘this cup,’ their mutual sacrifice(s) on behalf of a ‘hapless humanity,’ should pass, but emphasize that it is one they have chosen and are willing to fight for.

Bryan Stone’s (1999) analysis of religion and violence in popular films is grounded on the assumption that exposure to violent images desensitizes us to violence and the pain of victims.
Stone believes that one of the ways we might become ‘habituated’ to violent behaviors is by the widespread and frequent use of violence linked with religious faith. *Buffy* and *Angel* offer many examples of religion as leading to “immoral or unrighteous violence” (Stone, para 16), particularly on the original series. On *Angel*, although we do continue to see ‘bad’ religion (in season four’s Jasmine, for example), Angel’s violence is also “supportive of [the] redemptive and righteous violence” (ibid) that Stone identifies in popular film. Stone suggests that when religion does support violent action “one of three recurrent images is typically used: the crusader, the spiritual warrior or divine violence” (para 17). Unsurprisingly, given its hybrid status, all three of these images are present on *Angel*. Angel’s most often used forms of violence are those that arise from Eastern disciplines. This allows him to function as the spiritual warrior, “who may engage in violence out of a religious motivation... but even more importantly out of a proper spiritual discipline or power” (para 19). He has studied with spiritual masters in Tibetan temples and a number of episodes have featured him engaged in meditation or practicing Tai Chi.

Likewise the nature of his involvement with violent action is also a form of spirituality, atonement for past crimes against humanity.

Gods and monsters are blurred then, and the vampire as superhuman/semi-divine, is by extension, always religious. Angel is told he is “not a lower being” by the Oracles in the episode “In the Dark.” He possesses the supernatural strength of monsters and gods which, as Stone suggests, guarantees that the divine being be “most adept at exercising righteous violence” (para 23). Kate Lockley clearly connects Angel with faith and religiosity after he interrupts her suicidal ‘pillathon’ on the “Epiphany” episode. After Angel revives Kate, he tells her of his epiphany to help her reframe the feelings she experiences after her dismissal from the police force. Kate says that if she’s not “part of the force it’s like nothing I do means anything.” Angel tells her, “it doesn’t... in the greater scheme or the big picture, nothing we do matters -- then all that matters is what we do, ‘cause that’s all there is. What we do, now, today” (“Epiphany”). Angel advocates continual action, not because it will change the world or support a master plan, but
“because, if there is no bigger meaning, then the smallest act of kindness is the greatest thing in the world.” Kate, while willing to be convinced of the absence of a grand scheme, reminds Angel of the presence of grand schemers: “I don’t know what I believe, but I have faith, I think maybe we’re not alone in this... because I never invited you in.”

We can read the divine into Angel as a spiritual warrior, but his ability to function as a crusader does not rely on reading Angel himself as a religious character. The crusader, Stone explains, “may be established as a godsend despite his or her own lack of religious faith” (para 19). Whether or not we read Angel or the hardboiled detective as religious characters, by their actions alone, in this sense, they may function as them. In the context of vampire narratives Angel’s violence might always be considered naturalized, but in this context, where it is used to defeat a moral enemy, to crusade against evil, hardboiled action and violence are also sanctified. Yet it is a force of action that draws its power not from an absent and external source, but from subjective acts of interpretation. If Angel can teach us anything, it is that choice is both a burden and a reward, but gives us something that we are able to act upon. If good can only exist in the world through the act of interpreting what good is and acting on it, then the cultural need for sense-makers, for those skilled at interpretation is relevant. The hardboiled detective’s independence, his ability to find a moral stance in an immoral world and act upon it without reward, or fear of consequence, or the support of a higher authority, models a mission we can all participate in. The last words spoken in the series emphasizes action and self-determination in the face of hordes of demons and perhaps the final apocalypse -- not ‘let us pray’ for divine intercession, but “let’s go to work” (“Not Fade Away”).

Jean-Paul Sartre’s conception of the human actor in a godless world may resonate with Angel’s world view, particularly after season two’s epiphany. Sartre proposed that “man is nothing else but what he purposes... nothing but the sum of his action, nothing but what his life is” (1996, 75). Abbott (2002) explores the vampire detective’s links with existentialism, finding in the “Angel/Angelus hybrid... a self defining existentialist protagonist struggling within himself
to make the right choices, for the greater good, the good of his friends and for his own benefit, within an increasingly complicated world" (para. 4). That we can find what looks to be modernist thinking in a postmodern text is, as Collins reminds us, no surprise, but there is a significant extension to Sartre's vision. Unlike the existentialist, Angel does not operate in a world where God or gods do not and have never existed. The presence of gods as sources of good, albeit inconsistently, is one of the primary discontinuities that separates Angel's world from Buffy's. On Angel higher powers are sought out, they communicate via emissaries, and they interfere and intercede in what could be conceived of as worldly matters (Angel's recruitment, or Doyle's, and later, Cordelia's visions, or Kate's interrupted suicide attempt, for example). Angel's self-determination is not then in the face of an absent or non-existent divinity, but gods that are present, but cannot always be counted on. This condition, although it appears to offer the same responsibility for existentialist self-determination, also emphasizes a fundamental choice and a complexity of experience whereby self-definition is not the burden of a godless humanity, but an indication of heretical action in the face of inhumane, inconsistent or fallible gods. The existentialist has no choice but to believe only in human definitions of humanity, no choice but to hear only our own voices. On Angel, though, self-determination, self-orchestration must be undertaken in the presence of conflictive higher powers and multiple 'calls.' This is a difference that allows us to read in Angel a reenactment of postmodern subjectivity as conceived by Jim Collins. We may not encounter divine powers, but as a metaphor for contemporary experience, where we are constantly hailed by competing, conflicting, and often disembodied, voices, values and symbols of institutions and corporations, Angel is apt. If postmodernity's individual subject “must be engaged in processes of selection and arrangement” (Collins, 144), Angel reminds us that our choices, even if not entirely free, are crucial to our survival. That we should see our theories so literally expressed should remind us of the complex and interrelated conditions that shape our culture, its products, our religions, and our theories.
Angel experiences a world where divine powers are conspicuously present, but cannot be counted on, where they intercede and run. When they are visible they are most often malevolent and well-organized (the Senior Partners, or Jasmine, for example). Those that are well-intentioned never appear, but establish contact through signs or emissaries (Whistler, Doyle or the Oracles, for example). They may appear to be largely ineffective and unable to sustain any sort of divine plan or master narrative — but they are there. If we can read in Angel the sanctification of detection, I believe we can also read the insertion of divine powers within Angel’s world view as a recreation of the conditions of a postmodern subject. We are immersed in a world wherein we are constantly addressed, asked to ‘answer a call’ by the voices, images and products of competing higher powers — political, commercial, personal or religious. Angel’s ongoing example of continual focused action suggests we do not close ourselves off from, or surrender to the conflicted and increasingly congested calls, but reveals that in that multiplicity of ‘calls’ exists a form of empowerment in our seeming ability to choose. In the absence of master narratives, but multitudes of would-be masters, the ability to choose, rather than to be chosen is significant. For Collins we are “not only able to choose, but impelled to choose if [we] hope to gain any control of [our] culture” and our identities within it (147). Unlike the existentialist who is free to chose, Angel and the postmodern subject are able to choose, in the face of multiple and conflicting powers, and participate in a form of heretical action, a resistance to the forces around them, against being ‘chosen.’

1 Buffy the Vampire Slayer’s first ‘big bad,’ the Master, and season seven’s uber-vamps are an exception to this, but their constant vamp face seems to be a condition of their age and old world sensibilities.
2 This scene also refers to a moment in the 1994 film, Buffy the Vampire Slayer, scripted by Whedon but directed by Fran Rubel Kuzui.
3 Later flashbacks throughout the series will reveal Angel’s existence, between the restoration of his soul and Whistler’s approach, to have been varied, but all support an understanding that this is a low point in his souled state. For example, the fifth season episode “Why We Fight” (5013) is set in 1943 and finds Angel living in a hotel, not luxurious but a far sight better than the alleys he inhabits in the 90s. During his first tenancy at the Hyperion Hotel in 1952, he is surrounded by humans, although barely social, and has, at the least, the means to buy blood, shelter and clothe himself (Angel, “Are You Now or Have You Ever Been,” 2002). In the episode “The House Always Wins” (4003), set in Las Vegas, Angel reminisces with co-investigators, Gunn and Fred, about his visits to the town in the 60s and conversations he had with Bugsy Siegel, and members of the Rat Pack. He also claims to have been at Elvis and Priscilla’s wedding in 1962.
4 Doyle is, unfortunately, only with the series for nine episodes. He dies a hero, sacrificing his own life for a small community of Lister demons. Before his death he passes his ‘gift’ on to Cordelia (Angel, “Hero,” 1009).

5 Lorne is an analagic demon which invests in him the ability to ‘read’ the potential future, thoughts and feelings of a person/demon as they are singing.

6 Spike does not have the “passion for destruction” that Angel has. He likes the world that way it is, mostly for the “billions of people walking around like Happy Meals with legs” (Buffy the Vampire Slayer, “Becoming, Part 2”).

7 The Initiative is a covert government agency with military resources, and ‘operatives’ who, like Buffy, are trained soldiers.

8 Angelus takes his name from this encounter, when his little sister mistakes him for an angel (Angel, “The Prodigal,” 1015).

9 This doesn’t work out well; it turns out that the doting and supportive widow has harbored some resentment and perhaps, some inappropriate sexual feelings (Buffy the Vampire Slayer, “Lies My Parents Told Me,” 7017). Spike sums the situation up in a fifth season episode of Angel: “Try staking your mother when she’s coming on to you!” Ever the loving son, though, he goes on to explain, “she wasn’t herself.” (Angel, “Destiny” 5008).

10 Angel kills Darla for the first time on Buffy the Vampire Slayer (“Angel,” 1007) in order to save the Slayer’s life. Darla is resurrected as a human on Angel by the evil law firm, Wolfram and Hart, in season two, as a part of their plan to control Angel, but her human body is dying from a syphilitic heart condition she contracted as a prostitute before her turning by the Master in 1609. Angel refuses to turn her into a vampire, even if only to extend her life, but the firm contacts Drusilla who is happy to make Grandmother a vampire again (Angel, “The Trial,” 2009).

11 Harmony does eventually betray Angel and the team in the final episode, but even then, not because of any evil vampire tendencies, but because she was left out of the team’s plans.

12 There are some exceptions to this in the detective fiction that explicitly incorporates a religious character, such as a priest or a nun, as the investigating figure. G.K. Chesterton’s Father Brown series and Ellis Peters’ Brother Cadfael are two popular examples.

13 Qtd in Abbott (2002, paragraph 6).

14 On one episode, “Smile Time” (5014), Angel actually becomes a puppet.

15 Like her friend Harmony, Cordelia is also transformed following the graduation/apocalypse of Buffy the Vampire Slayer’s season three finale. Her transformation, though, is not from the bite of a vampire but from the IRS after an audit leaves the family bankrupt. She arrives in L.A. desperate to be a success and regain her former status. Cordelia undergoes many transformations throughout the two series, but most significant are those that occur as a result of her involvement with Angel Investigations in the series first few seasons. Cordelia’s growth, from cruel and spoiled teen to mature and selfless hero is interesting as it supports comments made by Gelder (1994) in connection with the film version of Buffy the Vampire Slayer (Fran Rubel Kuzui, 1994). Gelder concludes his analysis of a number of earlier vampire narratives to comment on the new film as noteworthy for using “what is ‘beyond’ culture... to produce a certain level of empowerment in culture for those who might surrendered themselves up to it” (1994, 144).

16 Kate’s professional relationship with Angel eventually places her career in jeopardy. Her father, a newly retired police officer is killed (by vampires), she is fired, and attempts suicide before leaving the show. Kate’s inability to cope with the insertion of ‘otherworldly’ elements in the landscape of detection is ironically and coincidentally underlined by the actor Elizabeth Rohm’s move to the more ‘realist’ criminality of Law and Order.

17 Connor is the son of Angel and Darla, conceived the night of Angel’s ‘epiphany.’ In a series full of great closing shots this episode stands out. In labour and in a dark, rainy alley the miracle child is born when Darla stakes herself so that he can live. As her body dissolves left on the wet pavement is a tiny male infant (Angel, “Lullaby,” 3009).

18 For example, Dan Brown’s fiction The Da Vinci Code (2003) challenges the mythology of the Catholic Church in print and on film (2006), while the institutions of justice charge her priests with pedophile activities.

19 Not without resistance. Underlining Collins’ conception of the co-presence of conflicting discourses, there has been a Christian reaction to this ‘movement.’ Linda P. Harvey, editor and publisher of Mission: America, a Christian newsletter, condemns the occulture aimed at teens, and at girls in particular. In the


21 The series premiere’s big bad, the Master, is a good example of a religious vampire.

22 *Angel’s* “In the Dark” and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer’s* “Revelations” both feature Tai Chi scenes.

23 Similar to many other vampire narratives (*Salem’s Lot*, for one), Whedon’s continues the idea that vampires cannot enter a private home unless invited. That Angel’s ability to do so to rescue Kate is without precedent is highlighted in this same episode when Angel faces a similar situation with Wes. At home and threatened by an invading Skilosh demon a wheelchair bound Wes cannot get help from Angel, hovering in the doorway, until Wes invites him in.
Beyond Closure: Vampires, Detectives and Audiences

Genres are open fields of possibilities, not closed books of discursive meaning. (John Docker, *Postmodernism and Popular Culture*, 1994)

If the boundaries between humans, animals and machines... are clearly under pressure in the digital and biotechnical age, the relationship between another supposed binary pair, ‘fact’ and ‘fiction’ is also central. Elaine L. Graham, *Representations of the post/human: Monsters, Aliens and Others in Popular Culture*, 2002).

I began my thesis pointing to the relationship that we share with our imaginary ‘other.’ I identified it as long-term, continually in process and intimately connected to how we have imagined ourselves. At this point in the continuum of culture we witness a moment wherein science, technology and medicine challenge boundaries once imagined as distinct, and which, until recently, we have only explored in works of speculative fiction. Exploring the lines between nature and science, man and machine, real and cyber-real, procreation and re-creation is no longer just the stuff of science fiction, fantasy or horror, no longer relegated to ‘lower’ genre forms or the secret laboratory of the mad scientist. How should we understand such developments? This may be the moment that *monstra* have anticipated, have pointed to.

It would appear, perhaps, that monsters can no longer effectively function as a sole or completely imaginary site of difference. I have argued that, on one hand, this may be a reflection of the impact cultural decentering has had on the formerly marginalized. It may signal a change in the way we have come to view ‘otherness,’ and, perhaps more importantly, mark changes to the systems that could make such distinctions. Vampires, in particular, have developed so that they can take forms similar to our own, and display a range of emotions and social complexity. Nonetheless, in the end, no matter how heroic and noble the postmodern vampire can be, the figure remains imaginary, not a ‘fact’ of ‘real’ life. In that way, the vampire will always be different. Undead, unreal, and seemingly inexhaustible in its use, re-use and never-ending
revisions, I believe vampires, whether as heroes or threats, continue to tell us what it means to be human, and to function as monstra who serve admonitory purposes.

Regardless of where and when they surface, I believe we can consider all vampires to display secondary differences from humans through one of two fundamental, but interrelated means: as examples of deviance (metaphysical or psychological/social), or as moral exemplars with extraordinary powers. There are two common, and related, uses of the term ‘example.’ One refers to the patterning of pre-established forms, and the other to the implications of not fitting into that pattern. In this sense vampires who consistently model threatening behaviors are examples of cultural transgressors, who cannot be tolerated. Whether particular ‘bad’ vampires can be read as metaphoric (Stoker’s Anti-Christ) or metonymic (Zanger’s serial killers), they may still serve as examples of deviance from conceptions of a human ‘good.’ The thematic persistence of punishment in the texts in which threatening vampires’ surface, such as Dracula, Near Dark, and The Lost Boys, also functions to set an example to other transgressors of the sort of justice that might be meted out against them.

Angel, Spike, Comte St. Germain, Henry Fitzroy and the other heroic vampires that I have mentioned operate as examples on many levels. They are examples of the ongoing ‘texts of Dracula,’ and simultaneously, examples of postmodern hero narratives. I have suggested that Angel and Henry are also examples of the types of monsters found in a distinct sub-genre of detection -- the preternatural detective story.¹ But for all that these vampires can function as examples, in that they connect to an accumulation of pre-existing representations, they do not fulfill the other semantic function of the term. They are not punished, but can punish, and in this work they are outstanding. The term exemplary also has a number of meanings, all of which are significant, not only for monstra, but for our theories, and for postmodern identity formation: model, warning and representative. I have argued that Angel, the monster with a soul, models postmodern subjectivity, and admonishes us to engage in heretical acts of interpretation. This is the mission postmodern theorist Jim Collins has suggested that we must all participate in, if we...
“hope to gain any control of... (our) culture,” and of our representations of ourselves within it (1986, 147). It is an observation worth underscoring because the vampire is a creature of contradiction, hellish and holy, living and dead, us and not us: these conditions are not exclusive. The vampire, as I have argued, must always draw on the past. This is a fact of its existence as ‘pure’ culture, as a symbol created to be read. This condition, however, highlights only the vampire’s existence as something we have created, which is to say the relationships they may share, vampire to vampire, from work to work. It does not account for the ways, as Gelder points out (1994), that the vampire creates us. It is for this reason my analysis is framed by the relationships we share with vampires, for what they can continue to tell us about being human.

One might argue that blood thirst and eternal life are the fundamental examples of ‘otherness’ displayed by vampires like Angel, Spike or Harmony, but these markers, though present, have become ambiguous and are not unequivocal examples of difference from human behavior. These vampires drink animal blood from glasses or mugs -- not that great a leap (at least emotionally or ethically) for those of us who enjoy beef tartar, sushi or blood sausage, or for those who participate on, or consume, Fear Factor (FOX, 2000-present). We can also no longer read the vampire as having an eternal life except, perhaps, for its presence in the popular imagination. If there is one thing that Buffy and Angel both make clear about vampire mortality, it is that vampires are only eternal until someone kills them, again. But while, as Auerbach explains vampires, “can be everything we are... they [remain] fearful reminders of the infinite things we are not” (6). In contemporary popular culture what is emphasized is their eternal appearance of youth and their super-strength.

It is not hard to read the importance of these sole markers of vampiric difference in the semiotic glut of popular culture. Our cultural landscape is plastered with images of youthful products, youth as product and products that promise youth. It is not difficult to support an argument that youth occupies a privileged position in popular culture, but it is a position we can occupy ourselves only temporarily. No matter what revelations the gods of consumerism, science
and plastic surgery may offer, it is only the vampire who can be ‘naturally’ eternally youthful. Perhaps that is why we have kept the vampire alive. It is also not difficult to read for the significance of super-strength in postmodern popular culture, or its relevance to identity formation, as answering to an absence. From cleaning products, to pain relievers, to the filmic resurgence of the super-hero, super-strength addresses a need within our culture, which the ‘regular’ can no longer satisfy. Global politics also offers opportunities to read super-strength as a source of cultural fear and anxiety as we watch super-powers juggle with our existence.

If youth and great strength are examples of our differences from our monsters, does this suggest we perceive ourselves to be an aging and vulnerable species? This is certainly an image that resonates socially, politically and environmentally. In this sense we might read the presence of the many heroic monsters who have surfaced in the past few decades to point not only to the moral righteousness of exemplary ‘others,’ but also their efficacy in dealing with cultural problems, and their ability to look good while doing so. If we take these understandings to the contemporary re-scripting of human borders by technology, science and medicine, perhaps the imaginary ‘good’ monster has been working to ease the tensions of contemporary slippages. We might then read in these monsters an admonition to let the new form, the super-power, take care of everything, to warn us of our own weakness, and engender in us faith in the ‘higher’ powers of science, technology and medicine.

*Angel*, though, consistently reminds us that we cannot place our faith with the powers that be, as consistently as we are warned not to place it with the vampire -- he is not stable. Not only have the ‘texts of Dracula’ developed so that the meaning of vampire must be determined with each entry, but this is underlined in Whedon’s vampires’ world. Angel is but one sort of vampire among many others -- good, bad and ambiguous. In the face of higher powers that are present and largely ineffective, Angel’s unstable body incorporates a form of exemplary action that comes with its own stability, and its own authority. In this way, I have argued, the trope of the private detective allows Angel to serve a higher purpose without serving higher powers.
I have emphasized detection as both a stable activity -- interpretation -- and an evolving form of authority, but one that may also reveal the ineffectiveness of sanctioned powers. In this way the private detective is a figure that can also function as an exemplary 'other.' Private detectives, different from both the criminal and sanctioned forms of authority, have consistently modeled an alternative form of justice. It is a form of justice, however, that has been consistently under construction, like the culture(s) that have used and still use them. In chapter one I drew attention to Sherlock Holmes's investigations as functioning 'in addition to' official forms of authority. In contrast, I argued, was the American hardboiled detective’s choice to act as a form of rebellion against official authorities. The hardboiled school’s rebel authority carries over into early feminist detectives. They, in the same manner, rebel against sanctioned authority. Their adversarial stance, however, is not always one of choice but frequently surfaces from pre-existing forms of oppression. If we can read the hardboiled dick’s moral stance to be higher than that of sanctioned forms of justice, the feminist detectives has came from below, from discourses of rejection. I believe this shift to be crucial to subsequent play with the private detective genre -- preternatural or not. It is a transfer of authority that makes the detecting body attractive or accommodating to those once on the fringes of culture. Perhaps more important, however, this shift privileges not only the interpretive skills developed in such spaces, but the moral position as well.

The postmodern monster also surfaces from discourses of rejection. When the imaginary ‘other’ emerges in the private detective’s story we might say that it infiltrates a form of discourse that had once rejected it (Van Dine's credo, for example). The insertion of fantastic or unnatural beings or events into the detective genre seems a breach of detection’s ‘rules of the game,’ but as I have argued, they do not change the game. That is, the nature of investigative action is not altered along with the form of the detective, the criminal or the crime. Regardless of the unrealistic aspects of the preternatural detective story or the presence of the irrational, the fact of investigative action remains stable. Tanya Huff’s Victory Nelson begins the series as a female
hardboiled detective and remains so even after she becomes a vampire. A conversation that occurs in the debut novel, Blood Price (1991), highlights the simultaneity of hybrid experiences when “facts” only support the impossible -- and it does not matter. When Colleen Fergus hires Vicky to find “the vampire that’s been terrorizing the city” (59), she makes clear that belief in vampires is not essential to the case. “So?” Colleen argues “the facts still fit. The blood is still missing” (60). Believing in vampires is not important to Vicky’s motives for taking the job. The investigation is not about vampire hunting; it is about finding “whoever or whatever killed Ian Reddick. Exactly what she’d be doing if she were still on the force” (61). The ultimate mystery in Huff’s series is not the disturbance of law and order, but how the unbelievable is incorporated into rational action. In other words, epistemology is not challenged, even if ontology is.

The imaginary sleuth, the preternatural detective, is also connected to the discourses of rejection that positioned the monster in opposition to cultural conceptions of ‘good.’ Yet, unlike feminist detectives whose ‘good’ works could repudiate former constructions of femininity, postmodern monsters’ ‘good’ works cannot repudiate their kind. The instability and diversity of postmodern monsters prevents such a move. The preternatural detectives, in this sense, can only redeem themselves, as individual agents, and they can ‘speak’ for the diversity of ‘otherness.’ Whether the preternatural detective is altogether imaginary, like Angel, or not, like Medium’s hierophant, such figures are bound by the choice to do good works, in light of obvious strengths or ‘gifts’ that could also be threatening if they chose otherwise.

Angel redeems himself only when he uses the authority of the private detective in Los Angeles. His acts of redemption, though, serve not only his own needs, but more importantly, communal needs. I have argued that Angel blends investigation with acts of contrition, and offers a form of justice that is a work of both remorse and hope. In doing so the detective shifts onto moral ground that resonates with Erickson’s understandings of the postmodern religiosity that is found in “acts of interpretation” (para 10). As I have argued, we can always read for the presence of religion in the vampire’s symbolic body. Detectives, though, are not generally perceived in
such a manner, other than in a very general way, as I mentioned in chapter three, as participants in a heroic narrative. Angel’s status as a vampire, his personal connections with the PTBs, his reframing of his action-based mission to one of detection/contrition, offers many ways to read for the presence of religion in the series and in a detecting character. Angel’s fusion of detection and contrition emphasizes the consistent need to engage in acts of interpretation, not only for the safety of the community, but for protection from it, in order to form an identity within it.

Throughout the series run, the action in Angel stresses the relationship between interpretation, choice and effective action. It is also important to note that while the ability to choose meanings is emphasized, the choices made are not all ideal, as one might argue to be the case in first season episodes “In the Dark” or “I Will Remember You.” Even well-intentioned and moral choices can lead to poor and catastrophic outcomes, but what is highlighted in the face of bad, and most often irreversible decision making is the relationship between bad choices and solitary activity. That is, the right choices are invariably those made for the greater good and/or by group activity. In what Maureen Reddy considers a “striking departure from the solitariness of the male hardboiled detective” (1990, 183), female-centered crime fictions incorporate relationships: sexual, familial and platonic. Henry Fitzroy and Angel’s investigations, with their emphasis on group activity and interpretive communities owe much, I believe, to the feminization of the crime genre and heighten my sense of the female dick’s crucial contributions to the figure of the preternatural investigator. Despite Henry and Angel’s physical similarities to hardboiled male detectives, they are not the isolated heroes of the American school. If anything, Angel, in particular, works to suggest that Angel is not a ‘good’ vampire when he works alone.

Regardless of how choices are made, the emphasis on the ability and the responsibility to take action, in light of the consistent appearance of repercussions, good or bad, also mobilizes strategies for acts of forgiveness, grounded primarily upon not what one has done, but what one can and will go on to do in the face of greater evils. This is particularly emphasized in Angel in Wes’s reassimilation into the group following his role in Connor’s abduction and his excursions
into real darkness during the separation that follows. Wes is not ‘born again,’ a new man. His errors in judgment do not ‘go away’ but are embellished and become part of the fabric of the worldview and its characters. Just as Angel is always Angelus, the repercussions of bad choices are always present and always relevant to experiences, in the present of the series, and in our own culture.

The acts of forgiveness and the continual nature of self-orchestration the team members are able to choose to engage in do not bring about a return to zero sum. They act instead, I have argued, as forms of postmodern experiences where meaning and identity formation is complicated, not only by the decentering experience of multiple calls, but also by the “co-presence of previous representations” (Collins, 1989, 134). I have mentioned that in season five, ensconced in their new suite of offices, surrounded by the material signs of Wolfram and Hart’s success, the team constantly questions its autonomy and what appears to be a movement away from helping the helpless. Although they now have a vast network of resources to aid their continual battle, they must also maintain the firm’s existing clientele, which represents the interests of previous management. As Eve, the team’s liaison with the firm’s Senior Partners, explains “this is the catch -- in order to keep this business running, you need to keep this business running” (Angel, “Conviction”). Although the ‘catch’ does highlight the inevitability of the past and the postmodern inability to return to zero and remake Wolfram and Hart anew, it also mobilizes the discourses about power and justice that also ground the private detective’s stance.

In the final season many of Angel’s actions suggest the end justifies whatever means are used to achieve desirable outcomes. However, as Roz Kaveney suggests “his ruthlessness is servant of his mission, not of his ego” (2005, para 31). What ultimately codes his actions as heroic is that he cares about the outcome, for the common good, regardless of personal reward. “People who don’t care about anything will never understand people who do” Angel tells new liaison Marcus Hamilton. Hamilton agrees “Yeah, but we don’t care” (Angel, “Not Fade Away”). Cawelti (1976) suggests that the hardboiled story conventionally displays hostility towards the
rich and women. In this moment Angel and Hamilton clearly articulate where the real hostility of
Angel's detective story is directed -- not at a particular group, but at those who do not care.

Although we cannot be vampires we too cannot change our pasts, our involvement in
the 'texts of humanity,' so to speak. By continually engaging in acts of detection, of making
sense of the sense-less, having faith in our own discoveries and acting upon them, Angel suggests
we can achieve a particular reward in the here and now. Angel reminds us that not only does the
good fight never end, but that it is hard to define. It might not be terribly effective in stopping the
spread of evil here on earth. The ability to try, nonetheless, and the necessity for doing so defines
not only who we are, but how we approach perhaps the one thing we all must face, our own
deaths. If Brian McHale's (1987) aforementioned 'principle of systematicity' holds true, all
postmodern works must simulate or model death as the ontological confrontations they
foreground transgress boundaries of reality. The glut of texts we must orchestrate, the diverse
identities through which we conduct ourselves, and the constant call of would-be masters may
offer little sense of a unified cultural sphere. In defining the one experience we can and must all
face as a sort of meta-context, the blood soaked texts of postmodern culture could serve as an
imaginative rehearsal space for our own destruction. If, like Angel, we cannot count on a final
reward beyond death, the only reward for continually choosing to fight the good fight and
simultaneously to figure out what that might mean, is the ability to choose our approach to death.
The acts that will ultimately define us are our only reward for choosing acts that might, at the end,
be interpreted as good. That we can see in Angel reflections of our own postmodern subjectivity
among moral monsters and ambivalent gods is of note, but that all are united by acts of detection,
points to something new. The preternatural detective, in this sense, does not stand alone, but is a
part of a broader cultural phenomenon manifest in the popularity of an interpreting figure.

I have argued that when symbolic bodies appropriate the mode of the private detective,
a sense-maker's form, they shift the landscape of detection onto religious territories. Forbes
suggests the very popularity of the crime genre has already made that move "because popularity
is seen as an indication of what the public values, and that may be called ‘religion,’ in its broadest sense” (2002, 9). His statement is perhaps too broad, for although I do believe there are ways in which we can consider the ritual experiences of television viewers or fiction’s readers, particularly one-genre audiences, to be like a religion, this is not my argument. Rather, I have argued, the private detective, on its own, may function as a symbol of postmodern religiosity and postmodern heretical activity. In this sense the vampire detective, the hybrid symbol/sense-maker, serves to underline connections already formed within the broader genre form of detection.

I began my thesis by pointing to the significance of both monsters and interpreters in the stories of ancient Rome. I suggested that the Roman Empire’s complexity, of peoples, powers and gods, had much in common with postmodern popular culture, including a heightened need for skilled interpreters. If we consider the contemporary popularity of all sorts of investigating bodies, in all kinds of popular narratives, in light of their potential to read the signs and provide stability in unstable times, the trope of preternatural detection might extend more than the ‘pleasures and politics’ generally thought to be offered by detective fiction (Raskin, 1992). Rather, the contemporary popularity of investigating bodies of all kinds may be related to the complexity of our culture(s), and may answer to a genuine cultural need.

We have arrived at a point, at the contemporary end of the continuum, where interpretation, the ‘real’ and stable activity of the detective, is invested in not only an unstable body, but in an ambiguous body, one that may or may not be real. It is in this sense that I read the preternatural detective, in all its fantastic kinds, as able to extend, at the very least, a form of imaginary consolation. It could be argued that all forms of detective stories offer fictional forms of consolation through the tension-reducing appeals that Raskin has identified. The fictive dick reassures us that there is justice, that crimes are solvable and that there are people fighting the good fight. The preternatural detective extends these appeals and offers a number of forms of consolation and reassurance that, in light of the cultural moment, seem cogent. Immediately
apparent is a reduction of the ‘thrills and chills’ of horror in the presence of an exemplary ‘other.’ Preternatural detectives may be, or may have, a fearsome power and strength from ‘beyond,’ but they are also on ‘our’ side. This reduction also signals a diminishing of the horror with which the ‘beyond’ has been traditionally imagined, and the lack of cohesion between the institutions largely responsible for putting those structures in place. While these breakdowns might be argued to increase cultural tensions, I believe the preternatural detective also responds by strategizing orientation in postmodern worlds. We live in unstable times, but the continual and stable act of interpretation, of searching for meanings, choosing from among them, can act as a form of identity formation and communal protection that we can engage in to ‘become someone,’ here and now. The form of consolation that the sub-genre extends may be offered by an imaginary body, but the reassurance it extends may be quite real if, as Roger Scruton has noted “the consolation from imaginary things is not an imaginary consolation.”

I chose “Beyond Closure” as the title for my conclusion to act as a sort of snapshot for ‘seeing’ my view of contemporary vampire, detective and preternatural detective narratives. It might also function as an admonition, not only for myself as I attempt to conclude, but also for those of us who explore the popular. I can be sure that Angel is a ‘good’ resource for approaching popular culture -- audience popularity and academic scrutiny point to Angel’s relevance. Likewise, the broader genre category of detection and its many sub-categories, that I argue the preternatural detective to be part of, is also, particularly contemporarily, very popular with audiences, producers and scholars. I must, nevertheless, conclude my analysis knowing that what I have offered here is but one interpretation. I comment on this not to dismiss my own efforts, or any others, but to point an absence and perhaps a direction for future studies.

Angel’s admonition to have faith in our own interpretations, a personal comfort at this point in my writing, simultaneously privileges the efficacy of interpretive communities. It is in this regard that I note within the breadth of academic communities devoted to vampires, detectives, Buffy-studies and any permutations, a conspicuous absence of another sort of
interpretive community -- the audience. Elihu Katz, Jay G. Blumler and Michael Gurevitch's (1999) "uses and gratifications" approach, is grounded on what I believe is a clear message to those interested in exploring how and why audiences choose and use media. The approach of Katz et al, points to an active audience whose "media use is goal directed... [and] link[ed with] needs satisfactions... that people are sufficiently self-aware [of] to be able to report on... or at least to recognize... and should be explored on their own terms" (63). Angel suggests that our theories may be wrong and our interpretations may be flawed, but in the act of interpretation we may reveal not only versions of humanity, but a stable form of action for unstable worlds. This may be, at the end, the symbol/sense-maker's message -- I interpret, therefore I am, and will be.

1 Angel and Buffy have captured academic interest. In this sense, this thesis could also be considered an example of, or contribution to, what David Lavery (2004) has referred to, and not disparagingly, as an 'academic cult' of Buffy-studies.
2 In this sense, in light of our proximity to the U.S.A., it's probably not surprising that Canadians were among the first to explore the possibilities of preternatural detection. I have noted previously Tanya Huff's fiction and television's Forever Knight are among the first vampire detectives to surface (and, in the case of the television series, perhaps the first). Even earlier, though, the CBC's Seeing Things (1981-1987) presented psychic investigator, Louis Ciccone. Written by and starring Louis Del Grande, the show is probably best described as funny and spooky, a mix of Canadian Howard Engel's Benny Cooperman character and the currently popular Medium.
3 This is an understanding that also resonates within the broader genre category of detection. The drug-using, pole-dancing, car-stealing female sleuths I mention in chapter one can be read in this light but so to can many of television's popular detectives who are obsessed with interpretation and use the activity to 'become someone' stable. Monk's (NBC, 2002-present) detective deals with an obsessive compulsive disorder and CSI's (CBS, 2000-present) ensemble consist almost entirely of characters whose works of interpretation redeem their brushes with the dark side of contemporary life. Catherine Willows was once an exotic dancer, Warrick Brown a gamblers, and Sara Sidle an alcoholic. Other forms of criminous stories also expose the saving graces of detection. In conceiving of Tony Soprano (The Sopranos', HBO, 2000-present) as a psyche detective, one who investigates and interprets his own criminality, his own source of evil, we can find many similarities to the ways that Angel, the vampire, uses detection.
4 I cannot locate an original source for Roger Scruton's comment. I came across it in P.D. James The Murder Room (2004), where the quote is attributed to Scruton by a character within the novel. It is also attributed to Scruton on "The Quotes Cache" website, under the heading 'Imagination' at http://quotes.prolix.nu/Imagination/
5 I am personally aware of one study that involves the audience and detective fiction. Research performed at the University of Amsterdam, by Joke Hermes with Cindy Stello (2002) attempts to link reading practices with cultural citizenship and politics. Nineteen detective fiction readers were interviewed.
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