



**Laura Diehl**

## **Why Drusilla's More Interesting than Buffy**



Mother's Milk is Red Today.

"Conversations with Dead People"

(1) The Buffyverse makes rich and fascinating use of the literary and scientific histories of Gothic female sexuality, particularly the discursive history of female sexuality as vampiric. While Buffy and other human characters at times seem to reinforce a conservative sexual morality (both Buffy and Cordelia are serially traumatized by their sexual decisions), Drusilla and Darla's sexual power and disruptiveness become attractive alternatives for those viewers who find Buffy's sexual trauma tiresome. In her groundbreaking essay on camp and the queer vampire, Sue-Ellen Case argues that the "queer . . . unlike the polite gay and lesbian, revels in the discourse of the loathsome, the outcast . . . the queer is the taboo-breaker, the monstrous, the uncanny" (383). As Gina Wisker and others have argued, Buffy and Angel are not as subversive in their use of the vampire figure. But vampires like Drusilla and Darla, with their pop-punk Gothic aesthetics, are fascinating character studies; they are obvious pastiches of bizarre literary and historical constructions that enable the viewers to relish their excesses as sources of transgression and disruption, and to dis-identify with the human characters who are disciplined according to a sexual morality. We are allowed—even encouraged—to identify with the female vampires as alternatives to the sometimes puzzling judgments made by Buffy and Angel's treatment of human female sexuality.

(2) Monsters can function to undermine and to break up patterns of identification and desire, exceeding traditionally misogynist discourses or bringing them to a crisis. Subversive feminist and queer rearticulations of monsters highlight the social and psychic violence under which bodies are organized, in effect subverting and recirculating discourses that inscribe transgressive sexualities as monstrous. Eschewing the good, the pure, and the beautiful (i.e. romantic love), feminist and queer rearticulations of the monstrous

embrace an anti-aesthetic of subversive excess, using the abject and the grotesque to undermine realism and romantic love. Contemporary vampire fiction, for example, embraces the subversive excesses of the gamut of transgressive sexualities inherent in the figure of the vampire. Rejecting enlightenment configurations of the subject (organically sufficient, coherent, autonomous and unique), the posthuman embraces the appeal of the abject and the monstrous, of pre-symbolic, revolting bodies. The posthuman recognizes the impurity of every available source of self; there is no retrievable authentic self. Because there is no "outside" position from which to critique ideology and representation, however, radical feminist and queer writers of genre fiction parodically immerse readers in traditional discursive histories of female sexuality in order to break up oppressive patterns and narratives of identification and identity, subjectivity and desire. Identity then becomes overwhelmed by impure, excessive discourses; it becomes a site of revolt and contestation.

(3) Postmodern, feminist and queer writers use monsters to embrace the self as a purely material, textual and intertextual identity, foregrounding the gap between signifier and signified, rejecting origins and depth models of interiority. Monsters such as Drusilla and Darla hold discourse at a distance, turning misogynist narratives into excessive performances that destabilize, disempower and recirculate their meanings. They embody vectors of oppressive constructions of "Woman" and female sexuality, but by foregrounding them as sets of embodied texts we can critique the mortification of women that incited these discourses in the first place. Drusilla and Darla are corrupt texts, hypersimulations of discourses of woman as sexed monster that creatively and affirmatively reduce the subject to a set of discourses that, by re-circulating their meanings, reject the oppressive structures of subjectivation that incited their initial ideological project. The feminist and queer figures that result disrupt patterns of identification (radical monsters don't trick women into femininity or models of morality) and desire—they are "functional dysfunctions" (Halberstam and Livingston 14)<sup>1</sup> that disrupt structured subjects and sexualities. Drusilla and Darla are delicious train wrecks.

### **Discourses of Degeneration: Women, Vampires and Sex**

(4) The Buffy and Angel creators draw upon a rich pool of mythological, religious and sexology discourses in their writing of gothic female sexuality. As palimpsests of society's dreads and obsessions, monsters, especially vampires, can mean anything. The female vampire has functioned in particularly threatening and fascinating ways over the last two centuries. Descriptions of female vampires in literature (by men) include almost verbatim characteristics found in criminal anthropology and sexology discourses

from the nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries. The female vampire in these texts is man's sexual nightmare and sexual obsession. Medical and criminology discourses, and older religious and folkloric discourses, explicitly took on vampiric terminology and imagery, reflecting a primal fear and loathing of the sexual instinct in women. In a world where the "ideal" woman as sex object is one with a big mouth and no teeth, the female vampire is an über-threat in a myriad of ways.

(5) Female monstrosity in these discourses is always attached to sexuality. The female vampire (especially the queer vampire) functions as a repository of patriarchal anxieties over female strength and sexuality. She is the aggressively phallic, castrating mother; her mouth is the devouring maw of female sexuality, a nightmarish disturbance, as Christopher Craft argues (1984), of traditional gender characteristics [(169) In "Dirty Girls," Caleb—the murderous, misogynist voice condemning all women as Biblical abomination and Whores of Babylon—echoes these centuries-old anxieties over female sexuality. Before he guts Shannon in his truck, he tells her: "You were born dirty, born without a soul. Born with that gaping maw wants to open up, suck out a man's marrow"]. The vampire's phallic, oral vagina dentata make her a literal man-eater: she engulfs, consumes, absorbs men. All the clichés of women's sexual insatiability and omnivorousness are played out in the female vampire. The hypnotic aggression of the female vampire, her bottomless pit of sexuality, and her predatory siphoning off of masculine (transcendent) energies, are usually neutralized in order for the happy dance of masculine bourgeois domination to continue.

(6) Folkloric, scientific, criminology and sexology discourses allied themselves during the Victorian period and pathologized female sexuality, relegating it to zones of sickness, madness and death. The medical and criminal literature explicitly yokes female sexuality and vampiric monstrosity. These texts had much to do with the male literary imagination and its writing of monstrous female sexuality. In *The Female Offender* (1893), Caesar Lombroso writes that the active enjoyment of the sexual impulse awakens an inherent criminal instinct in woman. She "becomes excessively erotic [and] weak in maternal feeling...[she] dominates weaker beings sometimes by suggestion, at others by muscular force" (187). Many of these texts equate overindulgence of sexuality in women (including masturbation) with pointed features, sharp teeth, a paleness of the skin, marked anemic constitutions, and erotic languorousness. In his book *Woman: A Treatise on the Normal and Pathological Emotions of Feminine Love* (1904), Bernard Talmey claims that the frequent exercise of the act of copulation in women leads directly to "anemia, malnutrition, asthenia of the muscles and nerves, and mental exhaustion" and elsewhere, paleness and melancholia (79). The "typical" female criminal in these

texts has a ferocious physiognomy, enormous lower jaws, receding forehead, forehead bumps, and “gigantic canine teeth” and “gigantic incisors” (Lombroso 90).<sup>2</sup> The overly sexed woman has an invincible tendency to masturbation, the signs of which (or effects of) are a livid pallor, loss of appetite, nymphomania, hysteria, even night sleeplessness and photophobia (!), and of course death. Again, the cultural demonization of sexed women is explicitly associated with vampirism. Female sexuality is seen as a self-polluting sapping of the vital reproductive functions of woman, a criminal misdirection of her reproductive duties. Sexual excess in a woman is a wasteland of sterility, a criminal instinct that leads to the decline of the race.

(7) These male endeavors embody a hermeneutic quest for degeneracy—they are detectives of degeneration, and their goal is the rooting out of sick, diseased, atavistic bodies. They are the Van Helsing of the medical world. After all, Van Helsing is undoubtedly more important as a doctor (a hematologist, which so many vampire hunters are) than as a Catholic. Featured in the medical detection novel par excellence—*Dracula*—Van Helsing and his Crew of Light are armed with the signs or symptoms of the atavistic, sexed female body. Here, (and in *Carmilla* as well) vampirism—or female desire—is the disease that needs to be detected, diagnosed and cured.

### **Bloody Women**

(8) As the most “important” biological moments in a woman’s life are marked by blood sacrifice (defloration, childbirth), Victorian medical men could thus proclaim woman’s body as a chronic ‘theatre of bloody manifestations’ (Ellis, “Auto-Erotism” 290 ). Because of women’s periodic blood loss, so it goes, they are innately anemic; their “hunger for seminal substance” is a “bestial bloodlust” precipitated by this periodic blood loss (Dijkstra 334). Monstrous women, then, renourish themselves on the seminal substances and blood of men and children. Aligning them with animals, these discourses claim women are feral and vital during their blood loss, subjecting them, as Bram Dijkstra writes (1986), ‘to the reproductive function and its attendant sexual cravings’ (334). In *Psychopathia Sexualis* (1886), Krafft-Ebing argues “[I]n women the sexual inclination is post-menstrually increased. At this period, especially in neuropathic woman, the excitement may reach a pathological degree” (48). Women supposedly experience a heightened sexual interest during menstruation; their loss of blood makes their hunger for men more precipitate. Erotic hallucinations and the climax of sexual feelings, Havelock Ellis argues (1899), are more likely to appear just before, during and after a woman’s monthly period (“Phenomena of Sexual Periodicity” 101). Ellis refers to specialists who advise women to have sexual intercourse just after or even during menstruation to alleviate their painful periods of “heat” (104). To begin his discussion of the sexual periodicity of

women, Ellis equates menstruation with estrus: "We may now regard as purely academic the discussion formerly carried on as to whether menstruation is to be regarded as analogous to heat in female animals" (97). Women's hunger for seminal substance precipitated by this periodic "wounding" renders them both metaphorically and literally vampiric. Female desire becomes an appetite that "consumes" men.

## **The Hysteric as Vampire**

A hysterical girl is a vampire who sucks the blood of the healthy people about her.

Oliver Wendell Holmes

(9) Women's minds, doctors believed, had to be protected from their rebellious, unruly and revolting bodies. Menstruating women were impressionable, suggestible, and diminished—they were hysterical. Women's emotional waxings and wanings (medical men had a penchant for linking women's reproductive cycle to lunar mythologies, which would more logically tie women to werewolves) were generally believed to be tied to their reproductive cycles, making them susceptible to 'moral madresses' of various kinds, the most frequent being hysteria. Medical misogynists were apparently enlightened as to the sexual etiology of hysteria early on in the nineteenth-century—and they ran with it. However, as Carol Smith-Rosenburg argues (1985), hysterical women were hypertrophied versions of the Victorian icon of femininity—sick, weak, passive and anemic. But at the same time, they often opted out of traditional roles for women, refusing to fulfill their "wifely" or maternal duties, often turning overtly hostile and aggressive (198, 215).

(10) To the male medical imagination, the liminality of the hysteric thwarted her full membership in the reality of the here and now; she was particularly susceptible to semi-conscious states—to mesmerism, hypnosis and somnambulism. The extraordinary emotionalism and excessive excitability of the hysteric made her impressionable and prone to suggestion and hypnotic states (the hysterical disposition was also believed susceptible to imagining itself in the presence of the mystical or the supernatural). The infamous Dr. Charcot believed that "only morbid personalities of hysterical temperament were susceptible to hypnosis" (Leatherdale 152). In light of these scientific observations, Lucy's tendency to sleepwalk and Mina's susceptibility to hypnosis in *Dracula* labels them hysteric. Lucy sleepwalks at least three times in the novel, Van Helsing puts Mina under hypnosis no less than five times (men in *Dracula* get a sexual thrill from paralyzing and immobilizing women).

(11) The hysterical woman, Charles Lockwood wrote in 1895, was “at the mercy” of a range of “evil and unrestrained passions, appetites and morbid thoughts and impulses” (qtd. in Smith-Rosenburg 205). Most frequently appearing with the onset of menstruation, hysteria was yoked to both the loss of blood and the onset of sexual awakening/maturation. A woman’s “compromised” immune system during this time made her prey to sicknesses and perversions of all kinds, namely sexuality. Hysterical women want to fuck. And the number one symptom of hysteria was anemia, the number one cure, re-sanguination.

(12) The hysteric is an uncanny figure, marked by her precarious straddling of the border between life and death. She is the vampire. Both are clearly liminal figures, straddling life and death, acting out their own irrelevance. While the *Bride of Corinth* in Goethe’s poem by that name (1797) formed the template for the hysterical woman as vampire, many others followed suit, for instance, Oneiza in Robert Southey’s ballad “*thalaba the Destroyer*” (1797), Lucy in Stoker’s *Dracula*, and several more hysterical female vampires from short stories in the early twentieth-century.<sup>3</sup> In many vampire-themed poems and prose works, women come back from the grave to consummate their relationships with their lovers. In these texts, women die upon their betrothal, or, when they’re sexually ripe. Because they have been cheated out of sexual knowledge, female sexuality in these texts figures as the uncanny—that repressed thing that always returns. It wants compensation. The female vampire/hysteric is an insatiable erotomaniac whose bottomless desires extend even beyond the grave. She is a cheated bride, a figure who is more or less dead anyway, literally in a “no-man’s land” between her father’s home and her husband’s. She is sex-starved, and her desires will always return to haunt and horrify men.<sup>4</sup>

(13) Anemia, photophobia (another supposed symptom or effect of hysteria), periodic blood loss, deprivation of the pleasures of love, griefs connected with unfulfilled sexual promises—the female hysteric as vampire literalizes her particular relationship to death in response to her cultural and political irrelevance. In Elisabeth Bronfen’s discussion of the “dead bride as revenant” (xiii) in her encyclopedic book *Over her Dead Body: Death, Femininity and the Aesthetic* (1992), she discusses Lacan’s work on the hysteric: because the hysteric’s “unconscious desire motivates her to remain lacking, because it tells her that she is a no-body, her life emerges as an impossible desire to be by not being, always spent in proximity to loss, symptomatisation and annihilation” (qtd. in Bronfen 289). “Beyond hysterization,” Žižek writes, “is the death drive at its purest” (qtd. in Bronfen 278).

## **The Hysteric as Vampire: Drusilla**

(14) In light of these discourses and others I will subsequently discuss, the representation of Drusilla in *Buffy* is inspired. Her character consistently rehearses, relishes and subverts these discourses. Sure, as others have noted, Drusilla (a mixture of Dracula and Carmilla?) is Nancy to Spike's Sid (complete with bruised, black and blue track-marked looking arms), but this is just one of the allusions inscribed in her character. Readings of monsters proliferate rather than cohere into a whole. Drusilla is a perfect example. She is a vampire, a witch, a siren and a mesmerist. She reads Tarot cards ("What's My Line? Part 1"), she reads minds (as she does with Giles in "Becoming, Part 2"), and her hypnotic aggression (not susceptibility) can bring people under her power—she mesmerizes both Giles and Kendra, killing the latter. She is Lilith (mother of all vampires) and Lucy, both vengeful, monstrously sexed "women in white" who stalk and kill the neighborhood children (more of this below). She is a nun and Gothic heroine/victim, stalked, "raped," and murdered by the ruthlessly sadistic, Sadean protagonist Angelus who slaughters her family and sires her on the day she takes holy orders (a "betrothal" of a different sort), becoming both her father and her lover (he even poses as a priest in "Becoming, Part 1," typical of the Gothic male villain). She is virginal and innocent, exactly the ingénue victim the Sadean villain delights in ravishing and murdering. She is also the mythological Cassandra, cursed by second-sight, doubly cursed (and driven mad) by the fact that no one will believe her visions. In "Becoming, Part 1," Drusilla confesses to the "priest" Angelus. She tells of a vision she had of men dying in the mine, which of course came true: 'this morning...they had a cave-in. Two men died. Me Mum says I'm cursed. My seeing things is an affront to the Lord. That only He's supposed to see anything before it happens. But I don't mean to Father, I swear! I try to be pure in his sight. I don't want to be an evil thing.' Drusilla has prophetic powers that would have made her a 'spawn of Satan' in the eyes of the church. Significantly, folkloric evidence has it that those cursed by their parents or the church (those excommunicated) became vampires. Drusilla would have been deemed a "devil child" by the church (as Angelus calls her), but even in the diegesis of the *Buffy*verse, her prophetic powers are often written off as the mad gibberish of an hysterical woman (except by Spike and Angelus).

(15) When Drusilla first makes her appearance on *Buffy* she is the incarnation of a consumptive tubercular woman, reminiscent of the Victorian woman in white, a divinely docile, virginal, anemic child-bride.<sup>5</sup> Her body is very thin, her arms black and blue. In the first half of the second season in *Buffy*, Drusilla always appears in a floor length, white baby doll dress, and she surrounds herself with children's dolls, a canopy bed, and a caged, dead pet bird. She is at various times called "pet," "ducks," "kitten," "baby" and "princess."

Drusilla is a parody of the fetishized child-woman of Victorian iconography and scientific discourse. Caesar Lombroso was one of many male scientists who fetishized a perceived innate childishness, frivolousness and shortsightedness in women. However, he argued that women's intellectual kinship with children could pose dangers:

women have many traits in common with children; that their moral sense is deficient; that they are revengeful, jealous, inclined to vengeance of a refined cruelty. In ordinary cases these defects are neutralised by piety, maternity, want of passion, sexual coldness, by weakness and an undeveloped intelligence...[but] when piety and maternal sentiments are wanting, and in their place are strong passions and intensely erotic tendencies, much muscular strength and a superior intelligence for the conception and execution of evil, it is clear that the innocuous semi-criminal present in the normal woman must be transformed into a born criminal more terrible than any man. (151)

In very frank terms, Lombroso argues that motherhood is the institutional civilizing of women—childish defects are “neutralized” by maternity. If women do not constrain their sexuality to marriage and maternity—the central cultural uses of their bodies—they are marked by deviancy and an evolutionary backslide (a primitive “childishness”). Motherhood is the dam holding back women's innate animality and bestial passions, and any behavior that vitiates reproduction or disaggregates female sexuality from procreation could result in intellectual infirmities and moral sicknesses. Sexed women are decidedly bad mothers, and their perversities are contagious (especially with the female vampire). And as we will see below, Drusilla is anything but a good mother, and she is no ingénue. (16) Meanwhile, Drusilla is closer to animals and to children than to men on the evolutionary stage—she growls like the former when sexually ravenous, and she eats the latter. Drusilla's character rehearses and perverts all of these discourses. For yes, she is the infantilized, fetishized Victorian child-woman, but there is a subterranean menace lurking beneath the surface of these playful roles. Drusilla as vampire represents the “inherent” bestiality of the female sexual instinct. At various times throughout *Buffy* and *Angel*, she growls, snarls, barks and purrs when sexually aroused. For instance, in “I Only Have Eyes For You,” she growls in pleasure when Angelus makes Spike sexually jealous, and then she digs a hole in the dirt: ‘maybe I’ll sleep underground, dig myself a little burrow...I’ll sleep naked, like the animals do,’ she tells Spike and Angelus. And



even more delicious is Drusilla's "taste" for children, which mocks misogynist discourses that oppressively tie women to motherhood. Both she and Lucy are demonic mother parodies, women in white who stalk the neighborhood at night. Perhaps my favorite line from the Buffy oeuvre is when Dru, wearing her white baby doll dress, slowly approaches a little boy on the playground and sings a song: "my mummy used to sing me to sleep at night," she tells the boy and then sings: "Run and catch / the lamb is caught in the blackberry patch." She had the sweetest voice. What will your mummy sing, when they find your body?" ("Lie to Me"). Mother's milk is indeed red today. (17) Another similarly perverse moment occurs in "I Only Have Eyes For You." We see Angelus in the courtyard scrubbing his naked torso with water, trying to get the taste of Buffy off of him (a prime example of how the show fetishizes the male body just as much as the female body—the camera lovingly lingers on his buff torso—he's a walking phallus). "I need a real vile kill before sunup to wipe this crap out of my system," Angelus tells Spike and Drusilla. Dru snarls and responds: "Of course. We'll find you a nice toddler." Female vampires mock repressive discourses that bind women's sexuality to reproduction and motherhood. A mocking inversion of the mythological moon goddess Diana, the virgin and mother deity, a "goddess of fertility and "guardian of children" (Dijkstra 123), the female vampire inverts all of these associations (even though she too is a "moon goddess"). She is anything but virginal, and she enjoys the occasional toddler for dinner. In Drusilla's first scene, she mocks the maternal life-giving "essence" of Woman. "Do you like daisies?" Dru asks of the Anointed One, "I plant them, but they always die. Everything I put in the ground withers and dies" ("School Hard"). The female vampire as "mother Earth" is voraciously hungry and threatening. Her "warm," "receiving womb" (woman as personification of a passive and nurturing nature that is plowed and seeded, see Dijkstra, 83, 87) gives birth only to death and destruction, or, to her own desires, a fascinating (if clichéd) inversion of the fetishization of women's "life-giving" capacities. Vampires are never daughters, wives or mothers in the traditional sense, and this is a powerful imaginative possibility for many women.<sup>6</sup>

(18) The cult of invalidism, the pathologizing of female sexuality, and the hystericisation of rebellious women often resulted in madness for women, and in psychological, social and literal death. Both society and Angelus drive Drusilla mad. In literature, two great climactic ends have been prescribed for women—madness and death. Death is woman's apotheosis. Drusilla is both mad and dead, yet she nevertheless rises and wreaks as much vengeance upon the symbolic order as she possibly can. Death and madness won't stop her. Her rage against Angelus (and a cruel society which has cursed her) is palpable during several different episodes. When Angel tells Dru to

leave town with Spike, she visibly seethes: "Or you'll hurt me? No—no you can't. Not anymore" ("Lie to Me"). We again see this menacing rage against Angel in "What's My Line, Part I" in the bedroom torture scene, where Drusilla has Angel tied to her girlish little bed and tortures him with holy water. She tells Angel "You've been a very bad daddy," and smacks him across the face. While torturing him she sings the same song as on the playground (this is her playground!), and speaks of her mother and her favorite foods, asking him if he remembers her. She then starts talking about her whole family: "Of course you remember...They used to eat...cake and eggs and honey. Until you came and ripped their throats out." Drusilla's monstrousness is made not born; but she is no longer a victim but a literal hell raiser. (19) Most interestingly, Drusilla is literally anemic when she first appears in Sunnydale. Like Lucy, she's in desperate need of a blood transfusion, and just as Lucy is infused with the blood of her four patriarchal father/lovers, metaphorically "having" them in a ménage à cinq, Drusilla gets a transfusion from her father/lover Angel. All of Sunnydale will be invited to her "coming out party." She is "born again" (she appears in reds and blacks throughout the rest of the season, into violent desire and a raging death/madness) from the blood of her sire, and like Lucy (when the transfusions don't "take") is ravishing in her monstrous power and sexuality. And both Spike and the fans (at least this one) are thrilled by the train wreck that is Drusilla (see "Crush" for Drusilla as literal train wreck).

(20) Drusilla is also the 'traditional' hysterical woman. As we've seen, the writers draw upon a long tradition of the hysterical woman as vampire in their writing of Drusilla. In her floor-length, white baby doll dress, with her canopy bed and with Miss Edith, Drusilla is childishly hyper-feminine and petulantly infantile, two classic descriptions of the hysterical woman (Smith-Rosenburg 215). Her language is impressionistic, incoherent, libidinal and nonlinear, implying that she is not the subject of her knowledge; she has no "language," only words. But of course this is not at all true—Dru is anything but shortsighted. Her real prophetic powers place her in the presence of the mystical or the supernatural (see paragraph 10 above). Typical of the female hysteric, Drusilla is also womb-driven, but in a shockingly perverse way. Her body is pure spectacle; it is excessive, undomesticated and sexually saturated. I love Juliet Landau's autoerotic snakelike dance where she makes a circular motion over her stomach. She does this when she's sexually excited, as if taking exquisite pleasure in the fact that she will consume men—sexually, and literally for food—and fulfill her dangerous desires (which will not result in a traditional child or birth). In the fifth season episode "Fool for Love," Drusilla comes upon Spike in an alley. She is going to "consume" him, and this is intensely pleasurable for her. She rubs her stomach, knowing she will satisfy her sexual hunger, yet her womb

will remain barren. In these bizarre dances of sexual excitement she's taking satisfaction in her new creation. What is born is her son/lover who is at the same time "delivered" to death (womb=tomb). When Spike and Drusilla show up at his mother's house, she asks him who Drusilla is: "I'm the other that gave birth to your son" ("Lies My Parents told Me"), she responds. And while Spike explains to his mother that he's changed, that he's no longer "bound to this mortal coil" but is a "child of the night," Drusilla is rubbing her stomach. This is a bizarre perversion of a multitude of origin narratives. Oedipus is gone and in its place are monstrous births.

### **The Prostitute as Vampire: Darla**

(21) And this brings us to Darla, the matriarch of our little vampire family. While the reproductive health of Victorian society had to be monitored through women's bodies—the central vessel for the rooting and (re)production of cultural norms—women were also central culprits in the degeneration of society. While women in the home were the most important moral force in the country, women out of the home were prostitutes, vectors of disease, contagion and degeneration. Because civilization depended upon the containing of sex in marriage, civilization was threatened by the prostitute, especially the syphilitic prostitute. As scholars have noted, AIDS was not the first blood disease to find expression in a reactionary rhetoric of vampirism. As David Skal argues, the scourge of syphilis in the late nineteenth-century left its mark on Victorian literature and iconography in connection with vampirism, obsession with "bad blood" and perverse sexuality, and above all else, the "demonization of prostitutes" [(6) and consequently, most "unruly" sexed women]. The syphilitic prostitute as vampire (or vampirism as syphilitic virus) was just one rhetorical maneuver in a series of moral panics that scapegoated sexually or otherwise deviant behavior as the source of social and national decay.

(22) The Victorian world got its first taste of the prostitute as literal vampire in Theophile Gautier's *La Morte Amoureuse* (1836). Clarimonde is an evil courtesan vampire who carnally seduces a priest and is later killed by holy water. In most identifiable folkloric traditions, the prostitute was one of several marginalized, outsider figures who were potential vampires after death (along with the godless, suicides, witches, the excommunicated and those cursed by their families). Drawing upon folkloric and 'scientific' discourses, the public furor over prostitution and the spread of syphilis coalesced around a rhetoric of female sexuality as vampiric and diseased. Both the vampire and the prostitute, after all, are predatory creatures of the night (Skal 163) who stalk their prey (even Lucy is a "nightwalker"). Both are fallen women and social outcasts. On her deathbed, The Master visits Darla disguised as a priest: "Are you prepared to renounce Satan and beg

God his forgiveness?" he mockingly asks her. "God never did anything for me," she responds ("Darla"). Darla has clearly been a victim of sexual hypocrisy, as the show draws upon historical fact that prostitutes were routinely forced to emigrate to the colonies in the seventeenth-century (Darla is a prostitute in the Virginia Colony in 1609). The prostitute's supposed atavistic hunger for man's seminal energies came as no real shock; after all, Lombroso argues, prostitution is woman's "natural" crime: 'the natural form of retrogression in women [is] prostitution and not crime. The primitive woman was impure rather than criminal. As a double exception, the criminal woman is consequently a monster' (152). The prototypical characteristics of degeneration in the prostitute are, according to Lombroso, hairiness, large jaws and cheekbones, and "anomalous teeth" (85). With the public rage over prostitution and its consequent cultural demonization of female sexuality, the sexual instinct in woman became both metaphorically and (supposedly) literally vampiric. The most common French term used for a prostitute in the nineteenth-century was a man-eater.

(23) In light of all this, it is certainly no coincidence that Darla is a syphilitic prostitute when she's sired by The Master. The Buffyverse clearly draws upon historical sources here. Stoker himself probably died of tertiary syphilis in 1912, contracting the disease as a young man (probably from a prostitute). As critics have pointed out, Lucy's symptoms and death suggest the ravages of venereal disease (Senf 67), with her "ghastly, chalkily pale" face, the "bones of her face [standing] out prominently" (Stoker 158), and her white lips and gums which 'seemed to have shrunk back from the teeth, as we sometimes see in a corpse after a prolonged illness' (Stoker 165). In Stoker's subconscious Lucy is a disease, and she may infect pure men. Scholars have interpreted *Dracula* as an extended melodramatic meditation upon sick, diseased, sexed bodies. Angel plays with these discourses—Darla is dying of syphilis when Wolfram and Hart bring her back to life.

(24) When we first see Darla in the second season of *Angel*, she is also the classic succubus figure. While in folklore there is the male incubus, the female succubus is the preferred gender of this particular demon, so much so that she gives us the word "nightmare." The succubus is a sexually draining night demon who seduces young men in their sleep, lies heavily on their chests, and violates them, withdrawing their vital fluids. The succubus renders men impotent (they can no longer 'stand up,' often seen drained and recumbent). According to Paul Barber (1988) the Slavic succubus, the *Mora* (cognate of *Mare*), assumes various shapes and visits men at night and tries to suffocate them. He quotes Jan Machal: "First she sends refreshing slumber to men and then, when they are asleep, she frightens them with terrible dreams, chokes them, and sucks their

blood" (187). Having tasted the blood/semen of a man, she returns for nightly visits with him. The bottomless pit of woman's bloodlust and seminal cravings for man is thus the literal "night-mare."

(25) Angel has fun with this traditional folklore. Over a span of several episodes Darla drugs Angel and enters his dreams. After these nightly visits Angel is fatigued and drained, and he is sleeping constantly (see "First Impressions," "Untouched" and "Dear Boy"). Darla is draining him of both blood and semen in a series of episodes inspired as well by Ernest Jones' influential psychoanalytic reading of the vampire myth (1931). In the unconscious mind, Jones argues, blood, semen and milk are indistinguishable:

The explanation of these [vampiric] phantasies is surely not hard. A nightly visit from a beautiful or frightful being, who first exhausts the sleeper with passionate embraces, and then withdraws from him a vital fluid; all this can point only to a natural and common process, namely to nocturnal emissions accompanied with dreams of a more or less erotic nature. In the unconscious mind blood is commonly an equivalent for semen.(119)

Vampirism has everything to do with wet dreams and nocturnal emissions of all sorts. Darla penetrates and drains Angel, inducing a whole body softness/detumescence. He can no longer physically 'stand up.' Darla threatens Angel's potency; his crime fighting abilities are severely hampered by the sexually draining embraces of a vampire succubus. 'mmm, I could just eat you up' Darla sexily whispers to a sleeping Angel ("First Impressions").

### **Buffy and Cordelia, or, 'sex is Bad'**

(26) Before discussing the potent sexual transgressions of Darla and Drusilla, I will detour through the shows' treatment of female sexuality for some of the central human characters. The Buffyverse explores the minefield of female sexuality more than any other mainstream television show. Buffy grants a voice to and constructs a narrative of female subjectivity by foregrounding Buffy's psychic, social and sexual desires, her desires for alternative family and community, her desire for power in self-knowledge, and her desire for sexual fulfillment. Buffy is about female desire, and though simple, there is no overestimating the importance of this. Most mainstream media is concerned solely with male desire; women's desires remain absent or subsumed under the male 'story.' The second season Buffy episodes beginning with "Innocence" are gripping in their depiction of female sexuality as traumatic. This is the stunning impact of the show

at its best. But eventually, don't we get tired of this trauma? After losing her virginity to Angel, she is terrorized by the monstrous Angelus, turning her loss of virginity into a stultifying traumatic event. Her intense desire for Angel can of course never be fulfilled because of his curse (and because the show would end). Buffy is used and abused despicably by Parker after their one night stand, an all too realistic event for many women (Spike likens it to the aftermath of her night with Angel, "In the Harsh Light of Day"). And the first season Angel episode "I Will Remember You," where Angel and Buffy have one intense day of sex after he is turned human—a day that is wiped out of existence and memory for all of the characters except for Angel—is frightening for many women in several ways. First, the episode is a typical—if not classic—masculinist narrative: the romantic, existentialist male hero who must carry the burden of knowledge, while the female must be protected from knowledge. Secondly, Angel frequently makes decisions for Buffy "in her best interests." This is a typical paternalistic power play, and Angel makes decisions for Buffy's "well-being and benefit" several times in his relationship with her (most poignantly in this episode, and in Buffy when he leaves her at the end of the third season "for her own good," and for his own show). At the beginning of the episode, Buffy complains to Angel that he makes decisions for her without her knowledge or consent (in the previous Buffy episode, Angel comes to Sunnydale and follows her around without her knowledge): "What is it, you can see me, but I can't see you?" she angrily asks him. The show criticizes Angel as a patriarchal voyeur, as a holder of the power of the gaze, but Buffy doesn't even have a chance to be angry in this instance; she has no memory of any of the events. And thirdly, the episode is a typical male fantasy: hot sex with a hot chick with absolutely no consequences. They have sex multiple times, but she doesn't remember because Angel has chosen to have her memories erased. When Angel tells her what he's done and that they will only have another minute with each other, she's beside herself with anger and frustration:

Buffy: (sobbing) "How am I supposed to go on with my life knowing what we had? What we could have had?"

Angel: "You won't. No one will know but me."

Buffy: "Everything we did."

Angel: "It never happened."

Buffy: "It did. It did. I know it did! I felt your heart beat! No. I'll never forget. I'll never forget. I'll never forget. I'll never forget!"

And the next second, her memories are gone. In an über-psychic rape, the show wipes out her memory of having had sex.

(27) Two other episodes in the first season of *Angel* deal specifically with female sexuality. 'she' features Jhiera, a runaway rebel from a deadly misogynist society that destroys female individuality and autonomy by clipping women's spines, rendering them docile automatons and slaves to male interests (an homage to *The Stepford Wives* and to Rider Haggard's famous sci-fi novel *She* which deals with similar themes, such as male dread of women's sexual potency, and female sexuality as a radiating force that kills). This is a powerful criticism of the male fear of female autonomy and sexuality, a fear that takes brutal form in societies that practice genital mutilation. But the episode treads some dangerous ground for women, rehearsing the misogynist story that women are sexuality; they do not have or own their desire, they are not the subjects of their desire; they are desire embodied, and they are always in heat. Here, women's sexuality is an uncontrollably deadly force that emanates from the female body.

Cordelia asks Angel if Jhiera "Carrie[d]" him, a fitting reference to the De Palma film that exploits the theme of female sexuality as monstrous if unchecked and uncontrolled. The supernatural "curse" of female sexuality is a deadly force that appears with the onset of menstruation and maturation, similar to the women in Jhiera's dimension: "When the Ko matures the girls can't manage it," Jhiera tells Angel, "We come to your world in a fever"—and burn men to death. While the episode is powerfully radical in some ways, in others it is not: women's desires still kill.

(28) "Expecting," the Rosemary's Baby episode just before 'she,' features Cordelia. She has sex with Wilson and wakes up the next morning hugely pregnant with a demon child, even though she used protection: "Oh God, I'm being punished," Cordelia painfully tells Wesley and Angel. While we know ultimately this isn't true, it still doesn't lessen the overall impact of the episode: if a woman has sex with someone she's known for only a month or so (it isn't even a one-night stand; she's supposedly been dating him for several weeks), she will pay the price. At the end of the episode after Angel and Wesley save her, Cordelia cheekily tells them that she's learned several valuable lessons, one of which is that 'sex is bad.' Indeed it is, especially for women. Cordelia is sexually disciplined in this episode.<sup>7</sup>

(29) "Expecting" is interesting when considered in conjunction with the third season *Angel* episodes featuring the grotesquely swelled, pregnant Darla. These episodes are critiques of and antidotes to the sanitized view of birth and motherhood as embodying all that is good,

natural and beautiful. Instead, the episodes foreground (along the lines of *Frankenstein*) that birth can be more violent than death and that reproduction can be a nightmare, a child in the womb an invading parasite that takes over your body and identity (Darla refers to the baby as her "little parasite"). Darla becomes the literal phallic and archaic mother; the latter, Barbara Creed argues, threatens 'to cannibalize, to take back the life forms to which she once gave birth' (83). She is reproduction as both nurturing and destroying, an agent of procreation and destruction. Women become womb monsters—fascinatingly ambiguous, reproductive nightmares (see Creed, chapter 4). As a side note, both these characters meet unfortunate fates. Darla sacrifices herself so her baby can live (and Angel can have a son), a very depressing moment for me (especially since Connor ends up being so annoying), similar to Cordelia's fate: in the recent fifth season Angel episode "You're Welcome," Cordelia comes back to intercede for Angel's soul. She wakes up out of a coma because she has a vision that Angel is in trouble. "Don't make it hard, Angel," Cordelia tells him as she explains at the end why she's leaving, "I'm just on a different road, and this is my off-ramp. The Powers That Be owed me one, and I didn't waste it. I got my guy back on track." Only when she's satisfied that Angel is "back on track" and that his soul is 'safe,' can she, safely, die. Here, Cordelia produces meaning for Angel; she doesn't produce her own meaning. Doesn't Cordelia deserve more than this?

(30) Finally, we come back to Buffy. While at times she seems to enjoy a healthy sexual relationship with Riley, it is more often unhealthy. In one episode their passion is driven by a malignant supernatural force that sexually traumatized innocent children ("Where the Wild Things Are"). In the episode "Who Are You?" Riley has sex with Buffy's body, but not with Buffy. He has sex with Faith in Buffy's body, before which she tells him he wouldn't have liked Faith: 'she's not proper and joyless, like a girl should be. She has a tendency to give in to her animal instincts"—a biting critique of the way young girls are raised to be passive and afraid of their sexuality. But frankly, Buffy is just not satisfied with Riley as a partner—he's too vanilla for her (after having sex in one episode she's not satisfied and has to go out and kill something), and he cannot shake his own feelings of masculine inadequacy. "You can't handle the fact that I'm stronger than you," Buffy yells at Riley after learning of his extracurricular activities with vampire whores ("Into the Woods").

(31) Buffy is certainly no virgin to Drusilla's whore (a patriarchal structure of seeing). In fact, she shares two (Angel and Spike) if not three (The Immortal) lovers with both Drusilla and Darla. While every fan of the show I know loved Buffy's sexual tete a tetes with Spike, the diegesis of the show seems to punish such erotic transgressions as dangerous and unhealthy for women. Buffy and Spike have raucous,



hot S&M sex several times in season six. Buffy has fun with her sexuality in these episodes, exploring desire in all of its exciting, violent, role-playing, dominant/submissive possibilities. Such erotic transgressions are powerful antidotes to the totalizing ideology of romantic love which functions so oppressively for women.

(32) In Spike's song "Rest in Peace" in the musical episode, Spike sings to Buffy that she's scared and ashamed of what she feels. When Buffy turns to the door of his crypt to leave, Spike intercepts her and goes down on his knees: "You know / You've got a willing slave / And you just love to play the thought / That you might misbehave." Spike makes it clear that he is willing to be Buffy's sexual plaything. Buffy scoffs at his masochistic desires. In "Smashed," Spike tells her that he loves her: "You're in love with pain," she responds, "Admit it. You like me because you enjoy getting beat down." After their wild, intense night of sex, Buffy rehearses the shame and guilt attendant upon her sex with Spike: "the only thing that's different is that I'm disgusted with myself. Last night was the most perverse, degrading experience of my life." Spike smiles fondly: "Yeah. Me too" ("Wrecked"). Whereas Riley is ashamed of his masculine inadequacy in the face of Buffy's desires, Spike revels in her domination of him. Phallic culture sexually dominates women, but male masochism, by confusing traditionally gendered sexual roles, deflates the phallic economy of desire that underwrites gendered sacrifices. Male masochism repudiates phallic hegemony, dismantling the penis's prestige. Riley can't get it up enough because of Buffy's superior physical prowess; Spike gets it up because Buffy cracks her whip.

(33) In the episode "Gone" invisible Buffy goes to Spike's crypt, grabs his ass, slams him up against a wall, rips open his shirt, and has wild sex with him. She later goes down on Spike after he tells her to leave: "Hey, that's cheating," he remarks. "Dead Things" opens up with another round of sex, after which they have an actual conversation: "I was just trying to keep up with you," Spike tells Buffy, "the things you do, the way you make it hurt in all the wrong places. I've never been with such an animal." "I'm not an animal," Buffy responds. "You wanna see the bite marks?" he cattily asks. Buffy and Spike have clearly been into bondage: Buffy later dreams of Spike handcuffed in bed while she ravishes him, and Willow tells Buffy that it's okay she hasn't been around because she's been "all tied up," upon which Buffy blanches and looks guilty.

(34) The narrative progression of the sixth season seemingly leads to the "inevitable" result of such S&M erotics—literal violence (not comic book violence) in Spike's attempted rape of Buffy. This effectively shuts down the erotic possibilities for women explored in Buffy's earlier sexual intrigues with Spike, intrigues which the show and the fans take pleasure in, but apparently cannot condone for Buffy. Her playful sexual escapades come to pathologize her sense of self. She

despises herself for her sexual transgressions, becoming a victim of her own desires.

(35) The dream sequence in "Dead Things" solidifies Buffy's intense guilt and horror at her own sexuality as the rapid cuts equate Buffy's pleasure in erotic domination with literal violence in the attempted rape and (actual) murder of Katrina. The sequence is worth reproducing in its entirety:

Creepy Voices: "What did you do, Buffy? What did you do?" []

Spike appears behind her, sliding under the covers, naked. []

Spike: 'shh, it's all right. It'll be our little secret.'" []

Cut to: Spike's crypt. Shot of Buffy's head and bare shoulders, sitting up, eyes closed in pleasure, moving rhythmically. She opens her eyes and looks down.

Shot of Spike lying underneath her, on the bed, looking up at her with an expression of pleasure, with his hands stretched up above him. []

She runs her hands up Spike's arms and we see that his wrists are handcuffed together above his head. Buffy slides her hands up to just below where the cuffs are.

Shot of Buffy's face as she throws her head back in pleasure.

Flash-cut to Buffy in the forest throwing a punch.

Cut to Buffy in the forest straddling Katrina, holding Katrina's hands which are cuffed together. Buffy throws Katrina's hands down onto the ground above Katrina's head. Katrina lies underneath Buffy, looking up at her.

Buffy: "Do you trust me?"

Katrina suddenly smiles. Then she makes an expression of pleasure and moans, but in Buffy's voice.

Cut to Buffy and Spike in his crypt, lying on the floor under the rugs, moving fast, with Spike on top. Buffy moans in pleasure.

Cut to Buffy in the graveyard punching Katrina.

Cut to the head-shot of Buffy straddling Spike on his bed. She lifts her hand, holding a stake. Shot of Spike lying underneath her, his eyes closed as if sleeping,

Buffy thrusts down the stake.

Cut to the forest. Buffy is straddling Katrina who lies with her eyes closed and the stake protruding from her stomach.

Katrina's eyes pop open. But they are the bright blue color of Spike's eyes.<sup>8</sup>

"What did you do, Buffy? What did you do?" While Buffy is obviously not to blame for Katrina's murder, she is apparently guilty of sexual transgression, which in this scene is directly visually linked to rape and murder. Buffy feels she must be punished.

(36) Buffy's entire sense of personhood becomes awash in guilt, shame and self-loathing. Her self-hatred climaxes in the truly nauseating scene (nauseating on purpose?) where she confesses her relationship with Spike to Tara. Tara has just told Buffy that there is nothing wrong with her: 'there has to be! This just can't be me, it isn't me. (starting to cry) Why do I feel like this? Why do I let Spike do those things to me?' Buffy pleads for someone to hate her for her deviancy, for someone to punish her erotic transgressions: "It's wrong. I'm wrong," she tells Tara. 'tell me that I'm wrong, please. Please don't forgive me, please! Please don't! Please don't forgive me!" Buffy sobbingly asks of Tara ("Dead Things"). Female sexuality and "alternative" sexual practices become horror. Erotic transgressions become suspicious, "unhealthy," "anti-social" (her sex with Spike alienates her from the Scoobies) and fraught with self-destruction and danger, guilt and shame. Erotic transgressions lead to psychological problems, and vice versa. This is in part why the show ends as it does—destroying the Hellmouth, and cutting down Caleb and the First, but also putting the question of romance to the side for Buffy, at least for the near future. The series ends by arguing that romance must not be the key to women's sense of selfhood.

(37) When Drusilla is "cured" (a significant reversal of the traditional sense of "cure" for a sexed woman), on the other hand, she once again becomes a devouring, vengeful Sadean menace. She and Darla remain sexually threatening, unrepentant and dangerous (although Darla's dead again). Drusilla's monstrosity becomes a source of menacing power, but also pleasure, especially for those viewers who

have tired of Buffy and Cordelia's sexual trauma and self-imposed shame.

(38) Maybe a woman must be two hundred or more years old before she can have a robust, unpathologized sexuality, or maybe she has to be monstrous or psychotic (psychosis is a rejection of the symbolic)? After all, Lacan argued that the subject is predicated upon and constituted by lack—it is the ontological structure motoring subjectivity. If you lack lack then you're either dead or psychotic. And Dru's both.

### **Drusilla and Darla, or, 'time For Another Pony Ride?'**

(39) Vampires are usually thought of as sadistic, penetrating males, and their victims as supine penetrated females. Traditionally, the vampire is the patriarch par excellence: a charming masculine predator and penetrator of young, "ripe," unmarried or betrothed girls, a mesmerizing connoisseur of women's sexuality and blood, not at all unlike the medical men. The male vampire as patented by Polidori is a romantic Byronic hero: a brooding, mysterious, deeply intellectualized social outcast, a man cosmically burdened by his doubt, despair and loneliness. Clearly, Angel is modeled on this species of the male vampire that culminated in Anne Rice's male vampires and Langella's *Dracula* (a movie Angel mentions as a favorite). As I argue above, in the episode "I Will Remember You" Angel purchases his existential knowledge through suffering, and at the high cost of a woman's knowledge. Masculine creative energies never tire of men becoming the subjects of their own knowledge at the expense of a woman. Through her mortification comes his existential knowledge.

(40) While Ruthven, Langella, Louis, Lestat, Angel and others are typical Romantic existential heroes, the subjects of their knowledge and cosmically burdened by the weight of it (and literally learning life from death), female vampires tend to be pure sadistic orality; they are all body and materiality—preying, draining, biting, sucking. In poems like "the Bride of Corinth" and Baudelaire's "metamorphoses of the Vampire" (c. 1852), the female vampire is much closer to the folkloric vampire, an agency-less corpse driven by a deathly desire that extends beyond the grave. And while Carmilla is a crucial exception to this trend, she too shares in the fate of most female vampires before 1984: death at the hands of some kind of Puritan who takes a sexual thrill in her murder. But of course the Romantic, existentialist male vampire is usually able to stick around. Social structures kill off women's monstrous sexuality, the prerequisite for a "civilized" society.

(41) However, in 1984 Jody Scott began the extended project of rewriting and reappropriating the female vampire in her novel *I, Vampire*. Since then, dozens of women and queer writers—from Scott, Tanith Lee, Jewelle Gomez and Anna Livia, to Patrick Califia, Katherine Forrester, Poppy Brite and Gary Bowen—have taken to the figure of the

vampire in the project of exploring radical and alternative sexualities, families and communities (in a hilarious opening chapter, the main character in Scott's novel "comes out" as a vampire to her family in sixteenth-century England, spoofing the hermeneutics of secrecy built around queer identity as the "guilty secret"). The feminist or queer vampire functions as a prodigious, parodic subversion of its traditional associations—sexual degeneration and pestilence, decay and disease. Transgressive sexualities have always been coded as monstrous. As I mention above, what more appropriate association than the vampire for distilling the perversions of queer sexualities? Transgressive sexualities have often been inextricably yoked to the image of plague-like, blood-borne infections that lay waste huge populations. Queers and prostitutes in the nineteenth-century were evil predators who infiltrated, infected and contaminated the public body with their bad blood. They were social outcasts, marginalized nocturnal predators who sexually corrupted and transformed innocents, bringing a new being or species (the "homosexual") into life. The homophobic cultural agenda of the right in the 1980s used vampiric imagery to stigmatize the queer community in the wake of the AIDS crisis. AIDS was the blood-borne wasting disease, and gay men and lesbians had an "innate" drive to 'turn' others to the life. Vampires and queers are sexual predators, vessels of contagion that "reproduce" through contamination. The "vampiric" queer body became an infectious disease, an emissary of impoverished, diseased blood and perverse sexual arrangements.

(42) However, since Scott's novel feminist and queer writers have embraced the vampire and turned it into camp, parody and radical transgression, dissecting and decoding mythologies, appropriating and cannibalizing the vampire canon for its homophobic and sexist associations. Vampires are pansexual, polymorphously perverse figures who straddle boundaries of life/death, man/woman, heterosexual/homosexual, in/out, healthy/unhealthy. They violate every taboo along the way from incest to S&M queer sex radicalism, exploring the relationships between sexuality and disease, pleasure and pain, death and desire. With their perverse sexual arrangements and promiscuous mixing of bodily fluids, vampires untie the binds between penetrated female bodies and (organically sufficient) penetrating male bodies. The vampire has become a politically perverse figure for exploring transgressive conceptions of family and community, critiques of origins, alternative potentials for selfhood, and the cultural and social inscriptions of sexual and gendered subjects. Female and queer vampires have traditionally embodied the horror of transgressive sexuality. Now they are unspeakably monstrous, threatening, and attractive.

(43) As critics of *Buffy* and *Angel* have argued, the shows pervert normalized conceptions of sexuality and the family in its depiction of

the vampire family. Darla, Angelus, Drusilla and Spike enjoy multiple perverse sexual arrangements, either blatant or coded. For example, while sex between Angel and Spike is never textually represented, it is always sub-textually implied by the queer bar culture of leather pants and Goth/punk style donned by the two vampires, and more recently, in a fifth season episode of *Angel* in a flashback: Angelus tells Spike that he looks forward to having a boy around to play with: "Don't mistake me, I do love the ladies. It's just lately, I've been wondering, what it'd be like to share the slaughter of innocents with another man. Don't, don't think that makes me some kind of a deviant, hmm? Do you?" ("Destiny"). Even after they regain their souls, Angel and Spike are both murderous and amorous. In her important essay "Crossing the Final Taboo: Family, Sexuality, and Incest in Buffyverse Fan Fiction," Kristina Busse distills the multiple textual and subtextual perversions of the vampire family that are foregrounded and developed in even more radical ways in Buffyverse fanfiction. Gina Wisker has also discussed contemporary vampire fiction and its potential for feminist and queer reevaluation and recirculation. Both of these writers argue that subversive vampire fiction makes the vampire function differently in an empowering, rather than victimizing, framework.<sup>9</sup> And with all of the torture and bondage scenes in the shows, erotic domination and S&M practices are no longer even sub-textual.

(44) The erotic transgressions of Drusilla and Darla in *Buffy* and *Angel* counter the ideology of romantic love that oppressively binds women to heterosexual monogamy and procreative sex. In a third season *Angel* episode flashback, Angelus recounts his escape from Holtz to the young vampire James. After his escape, Angelus later caught up with Darla in Vienna. Grinning with pleasure, Darla tells James that she "had to pay for [her] sins. Again and again" for abandoning Angelus in the barn. "Can you even begin to fathom the things we did?" Angelus asks James, "Of course not—you're in love" ("Hearthrob"). Drusilla and Darla enjoy multiple sexual arrangements within and without their vampire family, a privilege usually only accorded to men. In a recent flashback of *Angel*, Drusilla infuriates Spike because she refuses to be monogamous. "You knew she was mine!" Spike yells at Angelus when he walks in on them having sex. Angelus disabuses Spike of the notion that he can "own" Drusilla: "Just don't get it now, do you? There's no belonging or deserving anymore. You can take what you want, have what you want, but nothing is yours, not even her" ("Destiny"). The flashback ends with the titillating insinuation of a ménage à trois between Drusilla, Angelus and Spike. Angelus gets up, stands behind Dru and slips his arms around her body: "If you want her, come and take her," Angelus beckons to Spike, both he and Drusilla holding out their arms for him. In another recent episode, Drusilla and Darla enjoy a ménage

a trois with The Immortal, making both Spike and Angelus sexually spiteful. Spike taunts Angelus for being cuckolded by Darla, but he stops dead in his tracks when he sees Drusilla walk out: 'time for another pony ride?' she asks Darla:

Spike: (gasps) 'son of a bitch!'

Angelus: 'the both of ya?'

Spike: "Drusilla, you, you let him touch you?"

Dru: "He felt like sunshine."

Angelus: 'that's why he had us tossed. So he could violate our women. Violate in succession!'

Darla: (grinning wistfully)  
"Concurrently." ("The Girl in Question")

This flashback also ends with a hint of further pleasure to come. After Angelus whines that they never let them have a ménage à quatre, Darla and Drusilla walk off to take a bath together, but only if Darla promises to push Dru under the water—just a little bit: "Come on, Dru. Let's have a bath so the boys can weep in private," Darla touches Dru's hand and whispers in her ear. "Will you hold me under the water?" Dru asks Darla. "If you wish," she responds, as they walk out of the room holding each other.

(45) While Drusilla and Darla are phallic mothers (both punishing and disciplining), and aggressively sadistic, penetrating Sadean masters, they also enjoy the erotics of domination, their pleasure laced with a bit of pain. Angry at Angelus and Darla's sexual inattention, Drusilla runs off to turn Spike: "You won't even hurt me just a little bit," she scornfully rebukes them ("Guise will be Guise"). In the second season Angel episode "Reunion," Angel walks into the wine cellar where Darla and Drusilla are holding the lawyers hostage: "Daddy's home," Drusilla says when Angel walks in the door. "Come to punish us?" Darla asks of Angel. Hissing at Angel and doing her erotic dance, holding her arms above her head as if they were handcuffed, Drusilla purrs "Yeah, Yeah. Spank us till Tuesday. We promise to be bad if you do" ("Reunion"). When Angelus and Spike burst into Darla's room and learn of her "violation" by The Immortal, Angelus is afraid he hurt her: "Did he hurt ya?" he asks Darla; smiling naughtily, she responds "Not until I asked him to." ('the Girl in Question').<sup>10</sup>

(46) It 's important to mention Angel's dark transition (avec soul) to sadistic killer in the episodes following Drusilla and Darla's slaughtering of the lawyers. In "Redefinition," Angel brutally sets Drusilla and Darla on fire. In these episodes he is a sadistic killer. In "Epiphany," Angel supposedly comes "back" to himself, but only after he has sex with Darla and tells her to get out or he will murder her: "We're done," he tells her, "Let yourself out...Hey, you did me a favor tonight, now I'm gonna do one for you. Get dressed and get out. Because the next time I see you, I will have to kill you." Significantly, the writers make you despise Angel and sympathize with Drusilla and Darla. Angel's treatment of Darla after they have sex is eerily reminiscent of his treatment of Buffy after they have sex (except here he supposedly has a soul): "I don't understand.—Was I, was it, not good?" Darla asks Angel, crushed. In "Offering," Angel whines to Cordelia that it was a very dark time for him, trying to excuse his use and abuse of Darla. Cordelia retorts sarcastically "You used her to make you feel better during your dark time. Well, that makes it all heroic." Angel interjects: "It wasn't like that. It just—happened. It wasn't like I went evil or anything, I just..." "You just went male," Cordelia cuts him off. Later in Lindsey's apartment after Angel's brutal treatment of Darla post coitus, Lindsey asks Darla where she got the ring she's holding: "How did you get this?" he asks her. "It was my payment," she responds. Perhaps for the first time in their centuries-long relationship, Angel has treated Darla like a whore. As they've done before, the writers of Angel argue for the moral and ethical complexity of the world.

(47) Drusilla and Darla's vampire family radicalizes sexuality and threatens sanctioned relationships, foregrounding S&M eroticism and its exchanges of power, punishment and sensation in a ritualized theater of sexual dramas. Such erotics foreground role-playing and theater, deconstructing ideologies of sexuality such as the heterosexual alignment of gender with sex,<sup>11</sup> and the belief that women's bodies are to be penetrated by men as the only "healthy" form of civilized sexuality. Queer and feminist sex radicalism emphasizes roles in sexuality that are infinitely exchangeable and never align statically with gender (i.e. male sadism and female masochism). These erotics are embraced by the figure of the vampire, whose desire is ungendered and free-floating, a force that has no sense of man/woman, in/out, top/bottom binarisms. And while the Buffyverse is not as radical as contemporary vampire fiction by Califia or Brite, it does blur traditional distinctions between sex roles for men and women, a powerful source of fantasy (for a time we see this in Buffy and Spike's relationship as well). Drusilla and Darla are phallic, penetrating mothers (their mouths both suck and bite), subverting the misogynist argument that because women don't possess the phallus they occupy a space of non-being and lack, passivity and masochism.



The phallus is anything but a transcendental signifier of sexual and social power; as queer sex radicals have pointed out, how can it be when lesbians can strap on a dildo or crack a whip, or when female to male transsexuals can have one made? The phallus is pure simulation—an ontological joke. Only through psychological props can phallic male sufficiency be purchased by this suturing of woman into a zone of non-being and lack, a place of mutilation, castration, trauma and penis envy. By turning these psychic props into sex toys, as Drusilla and Darla do with their oral phallicism, their fetishes and their use of bondage, torture and role play (such as Darla's Catholic school girl and Drusilla's Victorian child-woman), the phallic economy of desire that underwrites gendered and sexual sacrifices is deflated.

(48) Queer sex radicals reject any notion of desire as sanitized and mystical. Recognizing that culture eroticizes domination and that domination and submission are intrinsic features of sex in general, they argue that "butch/femme role play and S&M scenarios" are vehicles "for channeling and controlling these tendencies" (Palmer 112); since "power and violence are intrinsic features of sexual relations, they are best channeled into forms of play and theater, as this will have the effect of rerouting them away from literal violence" (Palmer 116). Positions of domination and submission are just that—positions. They are "dynamic, determined not by gender but by role" (Gordon 53). A terrific illustration of just such a perversion of traditional gender/sexual roles for women is in the depiction of Drusilla as a frivolous, high-femme child-woman who surrounds herself with dolls. Drusilla as virginal, Victorian child-bride is an aesthetic role that she dons as a sex toy—she turns the persona into a bizarre style of sex play that turns both her and Spike on. S&M sexual dramas are an erotics of process that foreground theater and never calcify into the sum total of a person's being.

49 Finally, in light of the fact that, as Patrick Califia writes, the largest market for S&M pornography is heterosexual submissive males (179), the female vampire as sex radical gives the lie to the belief that the only safe kind of sexed woman is a dead sexed woman.

### Notes

1 Halberstam and Livingston are writing in a different context from the vampire. This is from their introduction to the topic of posthuman bodies. Editors' note: For a different view of transgressive sexual relationships in the Buffyverse, see Vivien Burr.

2 This all made sense to evolutionary scientists: the overly sexed woman was an evolutionary throwback to primitive stages of the human—the savage was a cannibal.

3 See stories by Clark Ashton Smith, F.G. Loring, Everil Worrell, F. Marion Crawford, Carl Jacobi and others.

4 An exciting exception to this is the dead bridegroom as revenant in

Gottfried August Burger's eighteenth-century poem "Lenore" (1773).  
5 This reading of Drusilla is inspired by Bram Dijkstra's book *Idols of Perversity*, a terrific study of this and other topics in Victorian iconography of the sexed woman (as vampire).

6 Darla has a "taste" for children as well. In "Offspring," Darla is in an arcade, and tells another woman that she loves children: "Oh, I love children. I could just—eat them up." In "Five by Five," Darla mentions to Angelus in a flashback that she too enjoys the occasional toddler: "they sound just like little pigs."

7 Cordelia, a la Jasmine, has sex with Connor in the fifth season and has yet another demon child.

8 This is a verbatim transcription by "Joan the English Chick:" <http://www.buffyworld.com/buffy/season6/transcripts>. Emphasis mine.

9 In this final section I will focus (more or less) on the recent fifth season of *Angel*, adding to articles by Busse, Wisker and others who have already documented the multiple perverse/subversive sexual arrangements of the vampire family in the Buffyverse. Editors' note: for further discussion of the literary forebears of the vampire lovers in *Buffy*, see Diane DeKelb-Rittenhouse.

10 See as well the Buffy episode "Angel," when Angel shoves Darla up against the wall: "You're hurting me" (she tells Angel, smiling seductively), "that's good." And in the Angel episode "Dear Boy," Angel again shoves her up against a concrete pole: "You're hurting me! I like it!" she growls at him.

11 In the Buffy episode "Doppelgangland" the writers comically ridicule the fixity of heterosexist arguments that lesbian desire is inherently narcissistic when lesbian vampire Willow comes on to heterosexual human Willow. The queer person, so it goes, does not successfully navigate the rapids of Oedipus, and when Oedipus fails, monsters are the result (Psycho is the classic example). In psychoanalytic sexual depth models of interiority, the queer exists in a zone of narcissism, excess and non-being: he or she is the vampire.

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