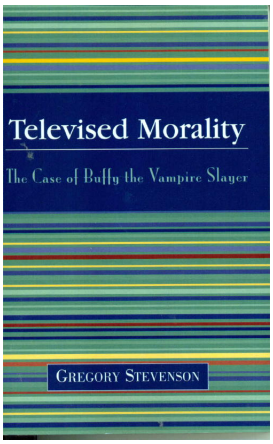
4.3
THE ONLINE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUFFY STUDIES
Fifteen

Greg Stevenson
The End as Moral Guidepost [in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*]

PDF Version

This is adapted from Chapter Eleven of *Televised Morality: The Case of Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and is reprinted here with the permission of Hamilton Books and the author. (Order from Amazon.com here.)



(1) After hearing tales of Buffy's exploits, Riley Finn tells her that he finds himself "needing to know the plural of 'apocalypse'" (4012). During the run of the series, Buffy faces more apocalypses than birthdays. Even Buffy herself loses count, once asking Giles, "This is how many apocalypses for us now?" (5022). The terror inherent in apocalyptic threats to end the world is significantly dampened when those threats are more common than political elections. Why then are there so many apocalypses on *Buffy*, and what is their function? Are they simply narrative devices for heightening suspense and providing the show's protagonists a challenging hurdle to overcome? I contend that they are much more than this. They function as a moral guidepost in that they bring clarity to life and thereby inform moral decisions. In order to establish my case, I must first define some terms and set the ideological context out of which my analysis unfolds.

JUDEO-CHRISTIAN ESCHATOLOGY

(2) "Eschatology" is the study of endings. How something ends, whether it be a piece of music, a novel, or a life, is often as significant (if not more) as how it began. An ending may bring closure to an action or idea or effect a transition to a new one. The most common

reference point of eschatology, however, is the end of the world.
(3) In this essay, I examine *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* from the perspective of Judeo-Christian apocalyptic thought, but not because I believe that to be the direct source of *Buffy*'s eschatology. Many of the eschatological ideas in *Buffy* are universal, even if they are given specific renderings in different religious and philosophical traditions. However, all modern fantasy from Tolkien on owes a debt to Judeo-Christian apocalyptic, and *Buffy* is no exception. The show's frequent use of the terms "Armageddon" and "apocalypse" acknowledges this debt. So the Judeo-Christian apocalyptic tradition serves as the lens through which I read *Buffy*'s eschatology, both because of the historical connection between the fantasy genre and apocalyptic and because this is the tradition that has most extensively shaped my own eschatological perspective.
(4) Speculation on the end of the world actually functions as a comment on the present state of the world. In contemporary parlance, the term "apocalypse" refers to a threat of imminent world destruction. Originally, though, the term meant something very different. "Apocalypse" has entered our vocabulary by way of the New Testament book of Revelation where it is used only one time. In Revelation 1:1 "apocalypse" simply means "a revelation" or "a revealing." An apocalypse, in this sense, is an unveiling of spiritual truth.
(5) P. D. Hanson draws an important distinction between the terms "apocalypse" and "apocalyptic eschatology"(Hanson, 29-30). Due to its usage in Revelation, "apocalypse" comes to represent a Judeo-Christian literary genre where the central focus is the unveiling of spiritual truth through divine intermediaries, heavenly journeys, and transcendent revelations. Because Jewish and Christian apocalypses, particularly Revelation, deal so heavily in end-time speculation, the term "apocalypse" later developed in reference to that specific event. By contrast, "apocalyptic eschatology" is a worldview. It is a means of conceptualizing reality. It is a way of talking about life. Under the purview of apocalyptic eschatology, end-of-the-world speculation functions to organize experience. When Hebrew or Christian prophets talk about the future, it is because they are really interested in the present. Looking ahead to the end offers a perspective on the now that cannot be gained any other way.
(6) It would be wrong to assume, however, that apocalyptic eschatology concerns itself only with the end of the world. Other types of cataclysmic endings –– of a life, for instance –– can be decidedly apocalyptic. After all, what is an apocalypse if not death writ large? Death is a great illuminator of life. That so many significant conversations about life on *Buffy* take place in a cemetery highlights the function of death as a source of enlightenment. In "Conversations With Dead People" (7007), Buffy encounters Holden Webster, a former

high school classmate now turned vampire, in a graveyard. Postponing their inevitable duel to the death, Buffy and Holden reminisce about old times. Holden, who majored in psychology in college, uses the opportunity to psychoanalyze Buffy, offering her counseling on subjects ranging from her work as the Slayer to her relationships. In a take on the classic psychologist's pose, we see Buffy laying down on a stone sarcophagus as Holden sits on a nearby tombstone and encourages her to open up by assuring her that "I'm here to kill you, not to judge you." Although initially reluctant to receive "emotional therapy from the evil dead," Buffy experiences an epiphany about her life through this encounter. Buffy's receiving of counseling from a dead psychologist in a graveyard is a clear representation of the power of death to give meaning and clarity to life.

LIVING ESCHATOLOGICALLY

(7) Living eschatologically means living one's life with an eye towards its end. This is not the doom-and-gloom mentality that comes from obsession with death and dying. A doom-and-gloom mentality robs life of its joy, whereas eschatological living is a means of embracing the joy of life. Awareness that an end is coming casts the present into clearer focus. Talk with a cancer survivor and he or she will typically articulate a renewed appreciation for life because he or she has tasted the reality of death. In this section, I analyze *Buffy*'s eschatological landscape by focusing on endings that create an appreciation for life, a prioritization of values, and a clarification of moral action. These endings include death, world-ending apocalypses, and metaphorical apocalypses.

Appreciation

(8) A Slayer embodies eschatological living. As a rule, Slayers do not live long and this colors their view of life. Buffy makes sure to impress this point upon potential Slayers by informing them that, "Death is what a Slayer breathes, what a Slayer dreams about when she sleeps. Death is what a Slayer lives" (7012). This constant awareness of death does not mean that Buffy ignores the value of life. She says, "I realize that every Slayer comes with an expiration mark on the package. But I want mine to be a long time from now. Like a Cheeto" (5007).

(9) What this acknowledgment of death does bring is a greater appreciation for life and a desire to live it to the fullest. Buffy's dating advice to Willow to "Seize the moment because tomorrow you might be dead" (1001) represents a philosophical outlook on life whereby the future informs present choices. Despite facing death on an almost daily basis and the ever-present prospect of the end of the world, these kids maintain an active social life. Neither death, nor apocalypse, nor rain of toads keeps them from celebrating birthdays

(2013), going out on dates (7014), or attending the Prom (3020). If anything, they make the celebration of life more necessary. In "Never Kill A Boy On the First Date" (1005), Giles warns Buffy of impending doom just when she is about to go on a first date with Owen. Refusing to let a little thing like the end of the world get in the way of her social life, she holds up her beeper and tells Giles, "If the Apocalypse comes, beep me" (1005).

(10) This renewed appreciation of life in the face of death affects other characters as well. Spike joins up with Buffy to fight Angel precisely because the very real possibility that the world might end sparks a confession of his fondness for humans ("Happy Meals with legs"), dog racing, and Leicester Square (2022). No character, however, exemplifies the life evaluation that eschatology can provoke better than Anya. After 1100 years of immortality, the newly mortal Anya's rediscovery of what it means to be human serves as a vehicle for commenting on the universal struggle of humanity. Her experiences with death thus cause her to question the meaning of life.

(11) Anya is so thoroughly literal-minded and devoid of nuanced thinking that her observations in light of death form an exaggerated portrait of our own insecurities. After sustaining a mild injury to her shoulder, Anya feels the dark hand of death descending upon her. Her response is to embrace life . . . and quickly.

ANYA: When do we get a car?

XANDER: A car?

ANYA: And a boat. No, wait. I-I don't mean a boat. I mean a puppy. Or a child. I have a list somewhere.

XANDER: What are you talking about?

ANYA: Just . . . we have to get going. I don't have time just to let these things happen.

XANDER: There's no hurry.

ANYA: Yes there is. There's a hurry, Xander. I'm dying . . . I may have as few as fifty years left (5003).

Anya's mortal panic represents the fear of a wasted life that many experience when contemplating death. Time, however, forces the panic to give way to a more sustained eschatological outlook as also represented by Anya, who announces after the healing of her

shoulder, "I'm feeling better. And I anticipate many years before my death. Excepting disease or airbag failure" (5003).
(1) Living eschatologically means letting the prospect of death enrich life. An awareness of the end counters the mental sedation that comes from day to day living and creates an appreciation for the joys of life. In the words of Buffy following the averting of an apocalypse: "We saved the world. I say we party" (1012).

Prioritization

(12) Living eschatologically is not only about gaining a greater appreciation for life, but also about learning what is most important in life. Cordelia's involvement with Buffy teaches her something about priorities. When she enters the library and sees Buffy crying, Cordelia announces: "Is the world ending? I have to research a paper on Bosnia for tomorrow, but if the world's ending, I'm not gonna bother." Of course, ever the pragmatist, Cordelia tacks on an addendum, telling Giles, "But if the world doesn't end, I'm gonna need a note" (3012). The experience of death and the threat of world-ending destruction relegates most aspects of life (like research papers) to insignificance and causes the more important values, such as relationships with others and service to humanity, to come into focus. The death of Buffy's mother taught her never to put things off and to spend more time with loved ones (4003; 5018). It likewise encouraged Xander and Willow to ascribe more value to time spent with family, although in Xander's case he prefers to spend more time with Willow's family (5017). Xander proposes to Anya in the midst of an apocalypse, not because he fears the world will end, but because he believes it will not. The mere act of facing the possible end causes him to prioritize their relationship (6003). Personal problems also get minimized in light of the end as Buffy and Angel work together to stop the Mayor's ascension despite a current strain on their relationship (3021). Willow even effects a kind of reconciliation between the always-bickering Xander and Spike by telling them that if they insist on fighting, "do it after the world ends, okay?" (5021). Principal Wood sums it up well when he says, "There's nothing like the end of the world to bring people together" (7015).
(13) In "Help" (7004), eschatology enlightens Buffy on the importance of service. This episode revolves less around Buffy the Vampire Slayer and more around Buffy the High School Counselor. Buffy took a counseling job at Sunnydale High out of a desire to help students. One of these students, Cassie Newton, wanders into Buffy's office and prophetically announces that she will die on Friday. Cassie's fore-knowledge of her own demise merely presents a challenge to Buffy, who is accustomed to fighting and winning against impossible odds. Buffy refuses to accept the inevitable and vows to keep Cassie alive. One of the hardest lessons Buffy has had to learn, though, is that

death is an enemy she cannot fight. Twice Buffy saves Cassie's life from external dangers only to have Cassie drop dead from heart failure.
(14) The title of this episode, "Help," contrasts with the helplessness that Buffy feels at her inability to save Cassie. Despite all her power and experience, she could not save this girl. Buffy asks, "What do you do when you know that? When you know that maybe you can't help?" The scene then immediately cuts to the final shot of the episode, which is Buffy back at work the next day sitting at her desk and going through student files. The death of Cassie gave her the answer to her own question. Even when you know that you cannot help everyone, you never stop trying to help those you can.

Clarification
(15) Eschatology clarifies moral decision-making. The renewed appreciation for life and prioritization of values that comes with living eschatologically feeds into the moral choices made. When Buffy is grounded and forbidden to leave the house, she has to make a choice between two right things: obeying her mother or saving the world. This is not easy ethics, but the looming end of the world clarifies her choice (1002). Willow best illustrates the principle when, following a brush with death, she has an epiphany about her purpose in life.

WILLOW: The other night, you know, being captured and all, facing off with Faith. Things just, kind of, got clear.I mean, you've been fighting evil here for three years, and I've helped some, and now we're supposed to decide what we want to do with our lives. And I just realized that that's what I want to do. Fight evil, help people. I mean, I-I think it's worth doing. And I don't think you do it because you have to. It's a good fight, Buffy, and I want in (3019).

(16) Making moral decisions in light of the end is not a guarantee those decisions will be the correct ones. Eschatology does not determine right or wrong, although it can inform moral decisions by revealing what is at stake. What it does is force people to make a deliberate choice, and in that process of choosing they come to grips with what they value most. On *Buffy*, characters sometimes make wrong choices in light of the end. Buffy's friend Ford is terminally ill with a brain tumor. Overwhelmed with the unfairness of his fate, Ford seeks self-preservation at all costs, even to the point of sacrificing the lives of Buffy and others so he can become immortal. When he tries to justify his inequity towards others on the basis that the inequity perpetrated on him has left him without a choice, Buffy corrects him:

"You have a choice. You don't have a good choice, but you have a choice. You're opting for mass murder here and nothing you say is gonna make that okay" (2007). Like Ford, Ben faces his own form of terminal illness –– Glory. If she succeeds at activating the Key and returning to her dimension, he will cease to exist. Facing extinction compels him to betray Dawn in an attempt to save himself (5021).

(17) Ford and Ben illustrate another aspect of the clarifying function of eschatology on *Buffy*. If eschatology forces a choice between good and evil, then on what basis do these characters choose one over the other? If the moral choices made in light of the end are the result of a prioritizing of values, then what is the central value on *Buffy* that marks the dividing line between a right and wrong choice? The moral decision making on *Buffy* is neither the product of adherence to a specific set of religious doctrines nor of a detailed conception of heaven and hell whereby moral choices occur in the context of fear of eternal punishment or hope for eternal reward. Rather, what distinguishes moral choices on *Buffy* is the value placed upon human life. An immoral choice is one that is self-centered with no regard for others. Both Ford and Ben valued their own self- preservation over salvation for others. A moral choice is one that sacrifices self-desire for service to others.

(18) When Buffy first learns of the prophecy that she will die at the hands of the Master, she makes the same choice as Ford and Ben and opts for self-preservation. In her own words, this choice was not "the right thing" (2004). What changes her "wrong" decision of fleeing to the "right" decision of dying is the realization that others will suffer if she takes the selfish path (1012). Likewise when facing an apocalypse, Buffy chose to sacrifice Angel, the man whom she loved, in order to save the world (2022), and she says that she did this because she knew "what was right" (5022).

(19) Anya, who operates on a moral learning curve, also demonstrates the principle that the extent to which one values human life affects moral decisions. In "Graduation Day, Part One" (3021), Anya shows contempt for the lives of others when she flees town before the Mayor's ascension. Xander, who has "friends on the line," stays to fight even though he believes he will die. The next time Anya faces an apocalypse, however, she chooses to stay. Acknowledging that "usually when there's an apocalypse, I skedaddle," Anya now stays because of her love for Xander. She has made a tremendous leap in her valuation of human life, although it has only taken her so far. She stays out of worry for Xander's welfare, but confesses to having guilt that "I'm not more worried about everyone else" (5022). With the final apocalyptic battle of season seven about to break, Anya chooses to stay once again, only this time her decision is based not on romantic love but on a genuine appreciation for human life. She confesses her view of humanity to Andrew.

ANYA: They're incapable of thinking about what they want beyond the moment. They kill each other, which is clearly insane. And yet, here's the thing. When it's something that really matters, they fight. I mean, they're lame morons for fighting, but they do. They never . . . never quit. So I guess I will keep fighting too.

ANDREW (sighs): That was kind of beautiful. (Anya nods) You . . . you love humans.

ANYA (indignant): I do not.

ANDREW: Yes, you do. You loooove them (7021).

The Anya of season three who runs away because she will not be bothered with concern for human life has learned its value, so the Anya of season seven stays and sacrifices her own life to save Andrew's (7022). Both instances where she confesses her growing appreciation for human life occur in full view of an approaching apocalypse. The end clarifies her values.

(20) The apocalyptic threat of season seven is particularly instructive due to its magnitude. As Anya notes, "Buffy seems to think that this apocalypse is going to actually be, you know, apocalyptic" (7016). Season seven of *Buffy* sets eschatology in the context of warfare. The book of Revelation offers a helpful perspective on this as it also combines eschatology with warfare imagery. Because the worldview of apocalyptic eschatology is predominantly dualistic, it is attracted to warfare imagery, which divides peoples into enemies and allies. In Revelation, this imagery functions to clarify the options before its audience. The author of Revelation insists to his audience that there is a war going on between God and Satan, and they are part of that war. The options are clear: you can be a part of God's army or Satan's army. While warfare imagery clarifies the options, eschatology forces the choice. The author of Revelation symbolically describes the end for his audience as a means of getting them to make a choice in the present. That choice is based upon foreknowledge of God's plan. By opening up the future to them, the author reveals what will ultimately happen to those who fight on God's side and to those who fight on Satan's. The determination of allegiance resides with the audience, but eschatology has clarified the implications of that choice.

(21) Warfare imagery and language permeate season seven of *Buffy* and clarify the choice set before the citizens of Sunnydale. That choice

is set in dualistic terms. Xander goes on a disastrous first date with a girl named Lissa who ties him up and intends to sacrifice him in order to open the hellmouth. She explains her reason to him this way: "The end is coming. The final fight, and everyone is hearing the drumbeat. It's telling us to pick our partners, align ourselves with the good or the evil" (7014). The factor that determines the choice of partner in this final apocalyptic battle is the value of human life. One side fights for the preservation of human life and the other for its extinction. Buffy has made her choice. She has declared war on evil, the First Evil that is. As Lissa correctly points out, the necessity of making a choice between good or evil becomes clear when "the end is coming." When the end is coming, the luxury of debating shades of gray ceases and the now becomes the moment of moral decision making.

THE AFTERLIFE AND "AFTER LIFE"

(22) In the preceding section I explored the role of eschatology in moral decision making and in the appreciation of life. In this section, I examine eschatology from a different angle; that is, how an eschatological experience of the spiritual affects the interpretation of the physical. Buffy's experience of heaven following her death at the end of season five and her subsequent return to mortal life at the beginning of season six establishes a contrast between spiritual and physical reality.

(23) Buffy's description of the afterlife comes in an episode titled "After Life" (6003). The depiction or description of heaven in television and film is nothing new, but most such attempts are very superficial. Heaven is a nondescript white light, a celestial family reunion, or a Norman Rockwell-like vision of harps, clouds, and St. Peter at the gate. With few exceptions, these depictions tend to be theologically vacant and sentimental to a fault. By contrast, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* offers a description of heaven that, while not flawless, reveals a theo-logical depth rarely witnessed in televised conceptions of heaven.

(24) While everyone thinks that Buffy's post-resurrection depression is due to time spent in hell, Buffy confesses the truth to Spike.

BUFFY: I was happy. Wherever I . . . was . . . I was happy. At peace. I knew that everyone I cared about was all right. I knew it. Time . . . didn't mean anything . . . nothing had form . . . but I was still me, you know? And I was warm . . . and I was loved . . . and I was finished. Complete. I don't understand about theology or dimensions, or . . . any of it, really . . . but I think I was in heaven.

This short description of "heaven" is not without problems from a theological standpoint. As with the rest of *Buffy*'s cosmology, God's presence in this heaven is ambiguous at best. The attempt to present

a heaven that is palatable across denominational and religious lines has relegated God to the background. Whereas the biblical depiction of heaven is God-centered, *Buffy*'s depiction is self-centered, reflecting American cultural values. It is primarily about *her* peace and happiness. Despite these shortcomings, however, this is a quantum leap forward for media descriptions of heaven. It avoids the sappy and superficial stereotypes in favor of emphasis on the completion of one's purpose, the peace of a life fulfilled, and immersion in true love. With specific reference to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, this scene transcends the existential secularism that often characterizes the show by asserting a spiritual reward for a life well lived.

(25) The focus of this scene, however, is less on the nature of heaven than on how an experience of heaven affects one's view of earthly life. In the early Judeo-Christian apocalyptic worldview, the unveiling of spiritual reality serves as a means for transforming how one understands the world. Spiritual reality does more than just comment on the physical world; it gets us to see the world through different eyes. Buffy continues her explanation to Spike by describing how her experience of heaven has altered her perception of this world.

BUFFY: I was in heaven. And now I'm not. I was torn out of there. Pulled out . . . by my friends. Everything here is . . . hard, and bright, and violent. Everything I feel, everything I touch . . . this is hell. Just getting through the next moment, and the one after that . . . knowing what I've lost.

As physical beings, our interpretive matrix for this world is thoroughly colored by our physical experiences. One of the reasons people fear death is because this world is familiar and therefore comfortable, while death is all about uncertainty. An eschatological perspective that includes a conception of heaven, however, suggests that this world cannot begin to compare to the glory to come. That kind of spiritual awakening recasts this world in new terms. Buffy's statement that this world is hell is a metaphorical comment based upon viewing physical reality through new eyes.

(26) Many of the personal difficulties that Buffy encounters in season six are a result of her inability to readjust to life. Loss of interest in the world is a common side effect of eschatological experiences, including existential encounters with death, near-death experiences, and even the "return to life" that forms part of the mythological hero's journey (Campbell, 36-37; Bowman). The eschatological metaphors of death and rebirth that frame the season provide the framework for

Buffy's eventual readjustment to life. At the opening of season six, Buffy is literally resurrected out of her grave (6001-2). Her body is resurrected, but not her spirit. Although physically alive, Buffy shuffles through season six emotionally and spiritually dead. In the final episode of season six titled "Grave" (6022), Buffy experiences a spiritual and emotional resurrection from her existential grave. While trying to stop Willow's rampage, Buffy and Dawn are in a cemetery and fall into a large hole in the ground. Willow then creates monsters out of rock and earth to attack Buffy. Buffy is in a makeshift grave, surrounded by coffins, and attacked by the earth out of which she came. In the midst of all these symbols of death, Buffy experiences a revelation about life. Having regained her desire to live, she crawls up out of the grave, both literal and metaphorical, that confines her.

METAPHORICAL APOCALYPSES

(27) Another way in which eschatology creates insight into life is through the use of apocalyptic language as a metaphor for the travails of life. Who hasn't felt, for instance, that a break-up with a boyfriend or girlfriend is the end of the world?

BUFFY: These things happen. People break up and they move on . . . for a while it feels like the end of the world, you know, but . . . big picture . . .

GILES: Not so huge.

BUFFY: Not so huge? I just said it feels like the end of the world, don't you listen? (5011)

Apocalypses on *Buffy* often represent personal crises in life. The real problems teenagers face are blown up to apocalyptic proportions as a way of illustrating their emotional impact. While grounded, Buffy tells her mother how important it is that she be allowed to leave the house. Joyce replies, "I know. If you don't go out, it'll be the end of the world. Everything is life or death when you're a sixteen year old girl" (1002). The irony is that in Buffy's case, it may very well be the end of the world if she cannot leave. That emotional dilemma Buffy finds herself in reflects teenage reality where every decision feels like it has ultimate consequences.

(28) In the episode "Doomed" (4011), the end of the world functions as a metaphor for how people imagine things as worse than they really are. An earthquake convinces Buffy that the end is coming. Although Giles thinks she is overreacting, Buffy becomes so obsessed

with the prospect of impending doom that she is unable to enjoy life. Her doom and gloom mentality becomes a self-fulfilling prophecy. Of course, this being *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, her fear turns out to have substance.

GILES: It's the end of the world.

XANDER, WILLOW: Again?

GILES: It's uh, the earthquake –– that symbol –– yes.

BUFFY: I told you. I-I said 'end of the world' and you're like 'poo poo, southern California, poo poo!'

GILES: I'm so very sorry. My contrition completely dwarfs the impending apocalypse.

WILLOW: No. It can't be. We've done this already.

GILES: It's the end of the world, everyone dies. It's rather important really.

Buffy eventually overcomes this apocalyptic crisis, learning in the process that her fear of the end of the world was more powerful than the real thing and that she allowed it to rob her of the joy of living. The human tendency to exaggerate normal crises to apocalyptic proportions is a hindrance to authentic living. When every ache becomes cancer and a huge car repair bill marks the end of financial stability, eschatological thinking gets distorted into a justification for despair. "Doomed" concludes with a scene in which Riley adopts the doom and gloom mentality. When he fails to hide his secret identity as government agent from Buffy's friends, he panics and says, "I'm finished. It's the end of the world." Buffy just smiles, kisses him, and says, "No, it's not." By facing the end of the world, Buffy has learned that eschatology is about allowing the end to put daily crises into proper perspective.
(28) The apocalypses that mark the end of virtually every season of *Buffy* metaphorically mark personal endings as well. Buffy's season one battle against the Master represents the end of her childhood illusions of immortality (Kaveney, 16). Buffy is a teenager whose illusion of invincibility is shattered when she truly faces her own

mortality for the first time. Her apocalyptic battle with Angel at the end of season two in which she "kills" him to save the world characterizes both the end of their relationship and the culmination of a lesson reiterated throughout the season that moral decisions are not always easy. Season three concludes with an apocalypse on graduation day. The blowing up of the high school is a metaphor for both the end of their high school careers and the end of adolescence. Oz highlights this connection as he and the gang survey the ruins of the high school. He announces: "Guys, take a moment to deal with this. We survived." When they comment on the fierceness of the battle with the Mayor, he corrects them: "Not the battle . . . high school" (3022).

(29) It is debatable whether the final battle with Adam in season four counts as an apocalypse as such, but it does mark the end of social division between Buffy and her friends. Their illusions of adult independence give way to the realization of how much they need each other. Buffy's climactic battle with Glory in season five brings to fruition her quest to understand her purpose and destiny, culminating in a noble self-sacrifice. Season six's apocalypse signals the end of Buffy and Willow's immaturity and their full advancement into adult-hood as they overcome their respective descents into darkness and addiction in favor of accountability and dependence within commu-nity. Finally, Buffy's sharing of her power with all potential Slayers during the final apocalypse of the series marks the end of her isolation as the Chosen One.

(30) This chapter demonstrates that the apocalypses on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* are far more than a device for ratcheting up narrative tension. They are a method for commenting upon life. *Buffy*'s eschatological program exposes life and its emotional struggles to the clarifying effects that come from conceiving of the present in light of the end. By giving greater clarity to life, eschatology thus allows for a more informed method of moral decision making

WORKS CITED

Bowman, Laurel. "*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*: The Greek Hero Revisited." Paper from the Department of Greek and Roman Studies, University of Victoria, 2002. http://web.uvic.ca/~lbowman/buffy/buffythehero.html

Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero With A Thousand Faces*. Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968.

Hanson, P. D."Apocalypticism." In *Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible Supplement*, edited by Keith Crim et al, 28-34. Nashville: Abingdon,

1976.

Kaveney, Roz. "She Saved the World. A Lot: An Introduction to the Themes and Structures of *Buffy* and *Angel*." In *Reading the Vampire Slayer: An Unofficial Critical Companion to "Buffy" and "Angel,"* edited by Roz Kaveney, 1-36. London: Tauris Parke, 2001; reprint, 2003.