Slayage 5 May 2002 [2.1]

David Lavery and Rhonda V. Wilcox, Co-Editors

Click on a contributor's name in order to learn more about him or her.

A PDF copy of this issue (Acrobat Reader required) of *Slayage* is available here.

A PDF copy of the entire volume can be accessed here.

1 [1.1]	**2 [1.2]**	**3 [1.3]**	**4 [1.4]**
5 [2.1]	**6 [2.2]**	**7 [2.3]**	**8 [2.4]**
9 [3.1]	**10 [3.2]**	**11-12 [3.3-4]**	
13-14 [4.1-2]	**15 [4.3]**		**Archives**

Recommended. Here and in each issue of *Slayage* the editors will recommend writing on *BtVS* available on the Internet.

- Jeff Jensen's "Buffy Watch" archive (on *Entertainment Weekly Online*)
- Emily Nussbaum , Confessions of a Spoiler Whore (Slate)

Sherryl Vint

"Killing us Softly"? A Feminist Search for the "Real" Buffy

(1) Feminism has a particularly close relationship with the study of popular culture. Feminist scholars have been concerned with studying the way ideology both maps and shapes the desires of women, offering critiques of texts that construct feminine identity in terms desirable to patriarchy and celebrating texts which offer visions of women's own desire. Feminist scholarship has also been important in forcing us to reconnect the researcher to the object studied. Feminism eschews that practice of "objectivity," wary of the pretense that the subjectivity of the researcher does not enter into the research practice, that intellect alone, not emotion, is relevant. Feminism as a cultural and scholarly practice is important to my sense of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* as a feminist text.

(2) First, I must confess that I am a *Buffy* fan. This was originally a closet obsession; it seemed wrong to announce my enthusiasm for something called *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* within hearing of Milton and Joyce scholars. Further, I had to accept the fact that my "favorite" show was also the favorite of 14-year-old girls everywhere. Finally, the enthusiasm I encountered among people my own age was largely that of—in advertising parlance–men 18-34, whose attraction to the show was clearly based on a sense of *Buffy* that was different from my own. Yet my shame was alleviated when I discovered that there were "others like me," cultural scholars who also found *Buffy* worth talking about. The varied responses to the text led me to question, who is the "real" Buffy Summers? Is it possible—or desirable—to defend a reading of *Buffy* as feminist text as the "correct" way to read the show? In this essay, I will explore how my thinking about this issue has led me to see new ways in which *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* can contribute to a feminist cultural politics.

(3) Clearly, phrasing the question in terms of a "real" Buffy conveys a naiveté about reading and identity, so let me rephrase it more precisely. One of the reasons I am attracted to Buffy is that she is a strong woman, a woman who saves the day herself rather than waiting for a man to do it for her. For me, Buffy undoes the helpless-female stereotypes of my youth—the girls who got the hero but who never got to be the hero. Buffy strikes me as a positive role model for young women, one which feminism should celebrate. However, I am aware of another Buffy that circulates among fans, a sexualized Buffy most often seen in the photos that accompany magazine articles. This Buffy still has power, but this power is always in the absent text of the show, while the present image is the body available to the male gaze. These photographs disturbed me because they seem to subvert what I found positive in the show. That is, for me, they were not the "real" Buffy. This sense of unease led me to ask a number of questions about the show, about young women as fans of the show, and about the circulation of images of Buffy/Sarah Michelle Gellar in what John Fiske would call "secondary texts." The key issues that I want to investigate are the relationship between the images in the primary text (the show) and the secondary texts (the magazine articles) in the construction of female identity and the problem of conflating the character Buffy with the actor Sarah

Michelle Gellar.

(4) My starting point for thinking through these questions is Fiske's understanding of popular culture as a space of "producerly" readings. Producerly readings are constructed by consumers of popular culture based on their own experience; they are meanings that allow the reader to impose his or her sense on the text rather than be helpless before its ideological message.[1] Fiske argues that television texts are particularly open to the construction of producerly meanings, contending that, for television, the meanings found in secondary texts—newspapers, magazines, advertisements, conversations, styles of dress, etc.—are in a dialectic relationship with the primary text, that is, the show: "Their meanings are read back into television, just as productively as television determines theirs" (*Television Culture* 118).

(5) I want to consider this dialectical relationship between primary texts and secondary texts as it concerns the representation of Buffy and sexuality. Fiske's discussion of primary and secondary television texts notes "how much attention these secondary texts devote to the lives and opinions of the actors and actresses who play the characters in television drama, and how these real-life biographies are mobilized to make the fictional characters appear more real" (119). Do the sexualized readings of Buffy/Sarah Michelle Gellar in magazines directed at male fans undo the powerful feminist role model offered by the primary text? Is the openness to producerly readings a liability rather than a strength for this show?

(6) The feminist flavor of *Buffy* as a primary text is acknowledged by its producers, critics and fans. The show emerged from Whedon's desire to reverse the stereotype of the blond victim common in horror movies: "It was pretty much the blond girl in the alley in the horror movie who keeps getting killed. . . . I felt bad for her, but she was always more interesting to me than the other women. She was fun, she had sex, she was vivacious. But then she would get punished for it. Literally, I just had that image, that scene, in my mind, like the trailer for a movie—what if the girl goes into the dark alley. And the monster follows her. And she destroys him."[2] As Jacqueline Reid-Walsh points out, *Buffy* also works against the gothic tradition of passive heroines. *Buffy*'s challenge to the female stereotype is not only evident to cultural critics but also accessible to teenage girls. For example, in "Halloween" (2006) Buffy becomes a "helpless" 18th-century maiden when Ethan Rayne's spell makes everyone become his or her chosen costume. Buffy has chosen her costume in the hope of attracting Angel by being similar to the girls he knew in his youth. The show speaks to a young woman's desire to be attractive and pleasing to her object of desire but also shows—humorously through the chaos that results when Buffy becomes passive and more seriously through Angel's affirmation that he loves Buffy for herself— the error of this kind of thinking.

(7) The show delivers this "message" by working through the desires and concerns of teenage girls (for acceptance and love, about sexuality and partnerships) rather than trying to "preach" to them about appropriate feminist behavior. This strikes me as an important strength of *Buffy* and why it matters to me to read *Buffy* as a feminist text. Young women often reject a feminist identity because they associate such an identity with the negative stereotype of a man-hater, or because they believe feminism is about a kind of "political correctness" that rejects the pleasure they find in culture and judges them for finding such pleasure. It is imperative that feminism find a way to connect with the cultural life of young women, and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* strikes me as one productive avenue through which this work can be done. It is inevitable that young women will be exposed to what feminism would label negative stereotypes of women and that they may be attracted to such stereotypes. Rather than condemning these stereotypes—and hence the desire that women might find in them—feminism should help young women to critically interrogate the stereotype and its constructed appeal. A feminism that seeks only to judge and condemn will continue to convince young women that this is a postfeminist age.

(8) It is important to note that the primary text does sexualize Buffy, although it always combines this sexualization with demonstration of her power. To a large extent, this juxtaposition is part of the point, something that is most apparent in the show's first two seasons, during which Buffy almost invariably wore a short skirt and a spaghetti strap top. However, in more recent reasons, we have seen Buffy's wardrobe

mature with the character. Buffy now appears in both sexy outfits and her workout clothes. She is more than a sex object, but she doesn't have to deny being sexy in order to be a strong woman. However, I still question the effect the sexualization of Buffy's power within secondary texts has on her ability to function as a feminist role model. In these secondary sources, Buffy's power is separate from her appearance as a sex object. Is the subversion of stereotypes in the primary text co-opted back into a reading of controllable women by the secondary texts? I will explore this question by analyzing both the representation of Buffy's sexuality in the fourth and fifth seasons of the show and some images of Sarah Michelle Gellar that have circulated in magazines based on her fame as Buffy.

(9) The major event in Buffy's love life during the show's fourth and fifth seasons was the replacement of Angel with a new boyfriend, Riley, and her breakup with Riley as he chooses to pursue his military career rather than the relationship. Buffy and Riley's relationship raises concerns about the connection between love, sex, and power that are central to adolescent girls as they seek to develop their adult identity, including their sexual identity. Once the Initiative is disbanded and he no longer has the enhanced strength provided by their medical manipulation, Riley is unable to accept his relationship with Buffy. He feels that Buffy doesn't "need" him, and he can't imagine a role in her life other than as needed protector. This story forces young women to confront some of the fears that they have about dating and competing with boys for accomplishments in school and in sports.

(10) The story doesn't offer a conventional happy ending—Riley does leave—nor does it suggest that the incident is trivial. Buffy struggles, wondering what is wrong with *her* to have made him leave. However, the episode "I Was Made to Love You" (5015) resolves some of Buffy's feelings in its exploration of the limitations of an identity constructed entirely around pleasing another. April, the robot-girlfriend character in this episode, provides Buffy with insight into identity and love. April has no identity because she is literally, as the title suggests, made to love her creator: her identity is to be what he desires. Further, it turns out that being the perfect woman will not guarantee a faithful partner. Warren, the "boyfriend," has moved on to a human woman, whose ability to surprise and challenge him is what keeps him interested. Over the course of this episode, Buffy moves from the painful attempt to be pleasing to Ben, who is at that point a potential romantic interest, by forcing herself to laugh at his jokes, to a decision to just "be Buffy with Buffy" for a time. Another relationship may come, but she is no longer interested in defining herself in terms of who loves her. Thus, *BtVS's* text on this (and other) occasions provides an explicitly feminist message that rejects the construction of female worth through sexual attractiveness.

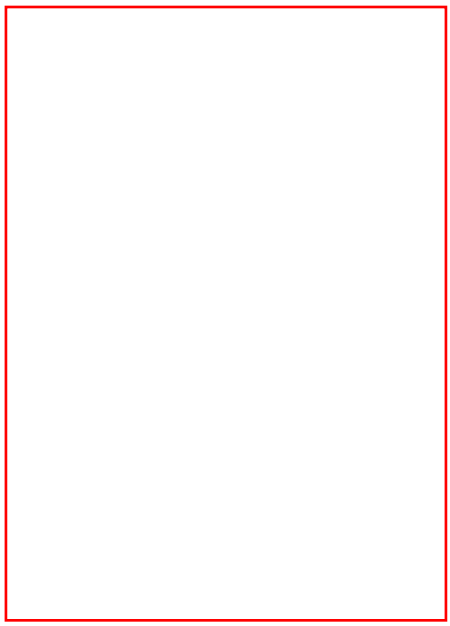
(11) Secondary texts, on the other hand, provide a less immediately accessible and more contradictory message, in part because they are directed to specific segments of *Buffy*'s heterogeneous fan groups. Based on her fame as Buffy, Sarah Michelle Gellar has appeared in magazines that range from *Seventeen* to *Esquire*. Part of what goes on in these texts is that Sarah Michelle Gellar as role model becomes conflated with Buffy as role model. Sometimes this can have positive effects. For instance, Gellar insisted that *Teen People* visit the Dominican Republic where she was working for Habitat for Humanity as one of the conditions for granting an interview.

(12) In an article in *Mademoiselle* magazine (March 1999), an angelic and wholesome Sarah[3] is pictured, accompanied by an article that discusses both her career and the show. In this photo, Sarah appears in a sleeveless, flower-print dress. She looks demurely up and to the right, her eyes not meeting the viewer's as she smiles wistfully. In this photo, Sarah looks neither strong nor sexy, but instead looks innocent and virtuous. Her hair is softly pulled back, a few loose curls escaping to frame her face in a halo-like effect. Articles such as this one emphasize the parallels between Sarah and Buffy, noting that both are working teens who have had to shoulder adult responsibility at an early age and that both have been raised by their mother alone. In such "girl" magazine contexts, both narrative and visual images offer a reading of Sarah that emphasizes the positive qualities she embodies as Buffy: her refusal to discuss her personal life stands as an insistence that her identity is more than just who she dates, and her professionalism and work ethic offer the positive role model of girls-as-achievers. The fact that Buffy can or should function as a role model is explicitly stressed by the *Mademoiselle* article. Gellar herself comments that the character Buffy offers her an image of strength that helps her respond with optimism to the challenges that she faces in her own life (134).

(13) In articles targeted at young women, then, the feminist agenda that influences the construction of Buffy as character also influences the construction of Sarah Michelle Gellar as media personality. But what happens when the image of Buffy/Sarah Michelle Gellar is moved to contexts in which the explicit addressees are not young women? I am interested in two questions here. How do young women receive these images from other contexts, and what are the consequences of conflating Buffy with Sarah Michelle Gellar? This strategy works positively to reinforce a reading of both as feminist role model in the articles targeted at young women. However, this conflation extends to images addressed to male fans who produce a sexualized reading of Buffy and Sarah. It is possible that the feminism that Buffy offers—tied to pleasure, linked to teenage concerns—can work on reshaping the subjectivities and sexual attitudes of adolescent boys as well as women. Whedon argues, "If I can make teenage boys comfortable with a girl who takes charge of the situation without their knowing that's what's happening, it's better than sitting down and selling them on feminism."[4] However, as I look at secondary texts directed at young men, this comfort with "a girl who takes charge" is not sustained in their representations.

(14) One example is an article in *Esquire* (January 2001) that provides text at odds with its visual image. The text—interestingly, an edited version of an article that originally appeared in the May 2000 issue of *Rolling Stone*—focuses on Joss Whedon and his vision of *Buffy*'s meaning, not on Gellar. The reading of the show produced by this text emphasizes the ways that *Buffy* challenges stereotypes of female sexuality, arguing that "the characters have sex with consequences, but are not defined by that alone. They also have friendships with consequences, school with consequences, popularity with consequences" (165). The text also points out that *Buffy* is arguably one of the most "realistic" shows on television because it deals with complex emotional issues without becoming trite or preachy. The metaphor of monsters made literal in the show is an emotionally-true depiction of life as a young adult; as Gellar sums it up: "When someone breaks

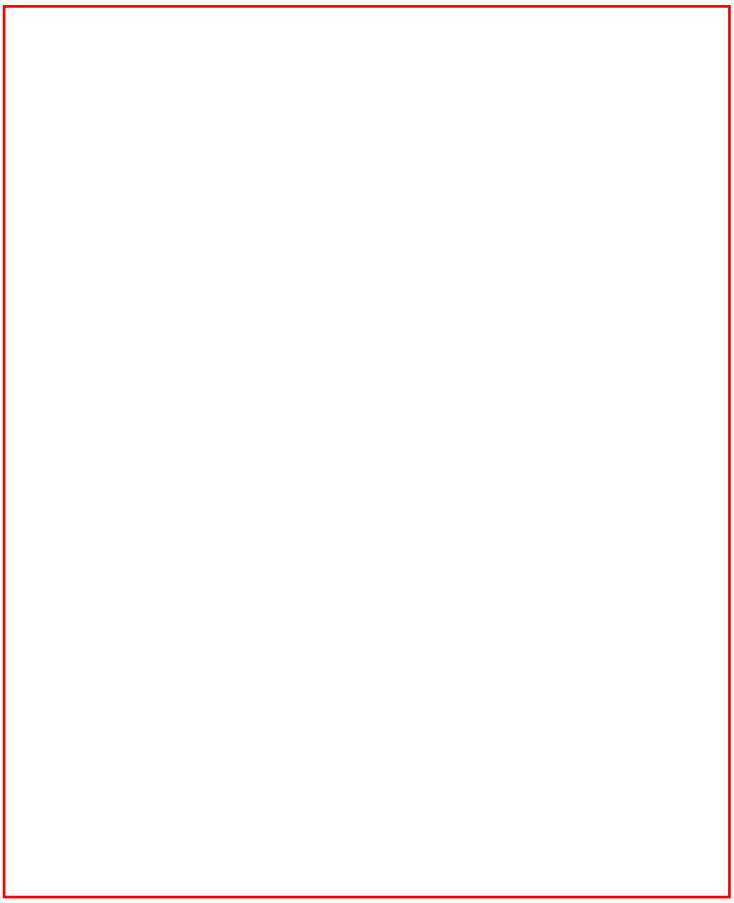
your heart, it feels like the world is ending. And in Buffy's case, that's true. But everyone feels that. And that's the point" (165). So, from an analysis of the text, the reading of *Buffy* in *Esquire* magazine is consistent with the reading of the primary text.



(15) The visual images, however, are another story. In the photo, Sarah faces the camera, head tilted down but heavily mascara-ed eyes raised to meet the viewer's gaze. Her expression is an insolent pout. Her hair falls straight to her shoulders, its style tousled and the lips dyed a deep red. Sarah wears only a locket and a small pink top whose neckline is a drawn string. The two sides of this top are not connected, each panel falling to cover most of Sarah's breasts. The curve of her right breast is partially exposed. This highly sexualized picture of Sarah—breast partially exposed and looking at the camera with a bowed head—seems to be the opposite of everything that Buffy as character and as text stands for. This is an image of the actor, not the character. However, as I have suggested above, the conflation of the two as role models is common in magazines that target young women. For magazines like *Esquire*, the main attraction is the image of the actor available for men's consumptive gaze, but it is the character that provides the occasion for the accompanying article. The conflation that is typical of secondary texts makes it more difficult to argue that this sexualized image is not the "real" Buffy, since ownership of the image does not reside in a single place.

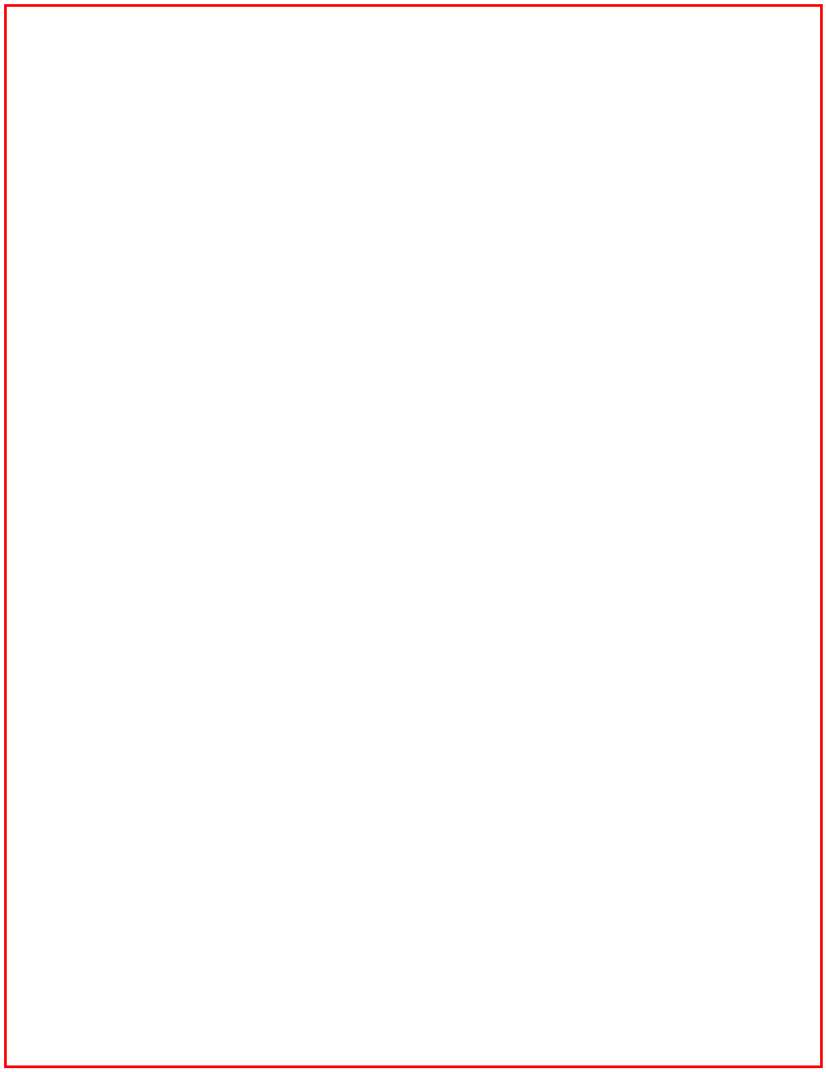
The January 2001 *Esquire*,
British Edition

(16) The secondary texts produce their hegemonic or dominant reading through the visual image rather than through the written article. My sense of this hierarchy is strengthened by the fact that the same written text from *Rolling Stone* is reproduced in *Esquire*, but the photographs are new. Clearly, the article functions as a context for photographing and displaying the image of Sarah Michelle Gellar. When the article originally appeared in *Rolling Stone*, the text was accompanied by photographs that displayed Sarah on the hood of a car. In this photograph, Sarah sits on the hood of the car, knees spread wide apart, pointed feet resting on the front bumper. She wears tight black jeans and a glittering silver top with spaghetti straps—a "favorite" style in the show's early seasons. Her head is tilted to the right, and a wind machine blows her hair in this direction. Hands braced on her out-stretched thighs, Sarah's breasts jut toward the viewer; her eyes meet the viewer's gaze, but she neither smiles nor pouts.



(17) This photographic scene was used to make the article on Gellar fit into the theme of the issue, “girls and cars and rock’n’roll.” Thus, secondary texts—like Jenkins’ poaching fans—take what they can use from the primary text and recontextualize it to serve their own needs and desires. In magazines targeted at men, the desire to show Sarah as an object for sexual consumption becomes the dominant meaning of the text. The concern I have is how young women accustomed to viewing Buffy and Sarah as conflated role models respond to these texts. Do they necessarily read all images of Buffy/Sarah through this structure of role model and feel compelled to “live up to” the sexualized standard set by these other secondary texts? Or can some secondary texts be rejected as failing to display the “real” Buffy?

(18) Before I answer these questions, I want to turn to one more example of a secondary text and the complications that arise when an actor is conflated with the character she plays. In this case, the picture is of Lucy Lawless, television’s Xena. In this photo, Lucy stands with legs apart in a striding position. She bends from the hips, keeping her long legs straight as she lowers her head and positions her buttocks in the photo’s highest position. Her arms reach down to hold her front ankle. Lucy wears high heels, a pink bustier laced up the back, and a very short black skirt. Just to make sure readers have the point that Xena/ Lucy is sexy, this skirt is also slit all the way up both thighs, held together only by its waistband. Lucy tilts her head up to look provocatively at the viewer, her mouth partially open.

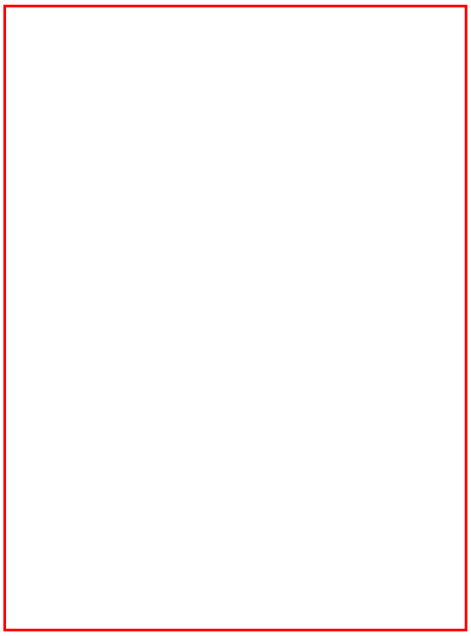


This image, taken from the June/July 2000 issue of *Stuff for Men* magazine, juxtaposes a sexually provocative Lucy Lawless with text that compares Buffy and Xena, focusing on the commonly posed question about who’s tougher. The text asks the question about the characters and their on-screen fighting ability. However, the image accompanying the text seems to me to suggest a comparison of Lucy Lawless’ willingness to produce more sexually explicit photographic images than those Sarah Michelle Gellar has been willing to pose for. While the text itself doesn’t make this comparison explicitly, I would argue that the primacy given to the visual text in these secondary sources makes the comparison implicitly. In fact, my memory of this magazine was that the “challenge” had been issued in terms of how sexually provocative each actor was (remembering that Gellar left an earlier photo shoot for *Rolling Stone* because they pushed her beyond her comfort level). I would suggest that my faulty memory in this instance is a product of the fact that these secondary texts do function through the circulation of images, that is, that the implicit message would be read and remembered by other readers familiar with the genre. I find this example particularly intriguing because of the way that the competition between the shows is translated to a competition between the two actors, the criterion for “best” being the image which most pleases the male reader.

(20) *Stuff for Men* magazine is clearly no friend of feminism, and it seems clear that the representation of Lucy/Xena within its pages does not suggest any increased comfort with the idea of powerful women who

can take charge. The Lucy that emerges from this article is clearly in charge, but what she is in charge of is being titillating. Indeed, when asked if she has a problem being a sex object, she enthusiastically responds, "It's great. Everyone wants to be an object of attraction" (102). What I'm suggesting here is not that it is a problem for Lucy to love being a sex object, but that it is a problem to suggest, as *Stuff for Men* does, that being a sex object is the only legitimate role for a woman. The *Stuff for Men* article's text is not in tension with its visual images—both emphasize the sexual appeal of Lucy Lawless. Both, however, are in tension with the show's construction of Xena as feminist hero. Images of Buffy and Sarah Michelle Gellar are often both more complex and more contradictory. The visual images may insist on a sexualized reading, but the written text shows Buffy's power. The juxtaposition of the two makes it clear that being sexual is not the whole story. When the comparison between Buffy and Xena is made in secondary texts, the location of the comparison and the primacy given to visual images within this location attempts to reduce all—characters, actors, show texts—to the level of sexual appeal.

(21) So, is it a problem that being sexual is part of the story in these texts? Does a sexualized Buffy in the secondary texts mean a return to the patriarchal stereotypes of women, undoing all the feminist ideological work performed by the primary text? Fiske has argued that "a program becomes a text at the moment of reading, that is, when its interaction with one of its many audiences activates some of the meanings/ pleasures that it is capable of provoking. So one program can stimulate the production of many texts according to the social conditions of its reception" (*Television Culture* 14). The question I want to ask about the various readings of Buffy produced by different social conditions is what happens when producers of one reading become aware of producers of another, competing text? Does the competing reading that returns Buffy to the category of sex object undo the "role model work" that a powerful Buffy might perform? My answer is a qualified "no."



(21) The power of fans to establish multiple readings of a text has been well established by many cultural critics including Fiske himself, Constance Penley. and Henry Jenkins. Through study of fan fiction, these scholars have demonstrated that fans do not feel compelled to accept a reading of characters that does not conform with the fans' own desires, even if this reading is produced by the primary text itself. *Buffy* fans have an established record of refusing to accept any reading as more valid than their own; therefore, the question that I started with—who is the "real" Buffy?—is simply answered, in a way. For each individual fan, the real Buffy is "my Buffy," the representation that best fits my desires about who the character should be. Additionally, the feminist ideas that circulate in popular texts like *Buffy* have produced young women—and others—as sophisticated, savvy readers, aware of the ways that sexualized texts attempt to manipulate their self image. Gellar, herself a young woman who has been formed by these cultural forces, has demonstrated the ability of young women to maintain an ironic distance from their exploitation. Commenting on her role in the typical teen sex/horror film *I Know What You Did Last Summer*, Gellar told *Cosmopolitan* magazine, "Jennifer Love Hewitt and I like to refer to that as I Know What Your Breasts Did Last Summer."[5] So, the first conclusion that I reach about the stereotyped images of Buffy/Sarah that circulate in secondary texts is that fans who identify with Buffy are sophisticated enough readers of culture to recognize constructions of Buffy *as* constructions, potentially even as "wrong" constructions compared with their "real" Buffy.

(22) However, I would go further than this, and suggest in addition that the multiple and contradictory

readings of *Buffy* are also a place where young women might begin to develop a critical consciousness about the construction of female identity and sexuality. *Buffy* may be a way to make feminism fun: a critical interrogation of the disparity between the magazines' readings of *Buffy* and their own is a way for young women to recognize the issues they will face as women in patriarchal culture. One way this kind of work might happen is to ask such young women to compare Buffy to the other "fighting females" who have suddenly become legion on television programs. I think Buffy has more in common with big screen heroines Sarah Connor and Ripley than she does with other television heroines like Xena, Sheena, and Sidney Bristow. One of the reasons for this difference is that the other television shows are willing to create their heroines as sex objects on the screen as well as off, while *Buffy* resists this impulse, thereby insisting upon a space where the powerful woman is taken seriously. The primary text of *Buffy* thus contains fewer gaps that allow readers to reconstruct the heroine in typical patriarchal terms, but the work of secondary texts to accomplish this demonstrates that the ideological battle over the construction of the female is far from over. What better way to show young women that feminism still has relevance in their lives?

(23) In *Yearning*, bell hooks argues, "students are much more engaged when they are learning how to think critically and analytically by exploring concrete aspects of their reality, particularly their experience of popular culture. Teaching theory, I find that students may understand a particular paradigm in the abstract but are unable to see how to apply it to their lives. Focusing on popular culture has been one of the main ways to bridge this gap" (6). In a similar vein, I would argue that the tensions produced by the heterogeneity of *Buffy* are themselves a kind of theory. They are concrete representations of the continuing ideological battle over the category of woman, and, while it may not be important to discuss this with adolescent girls in theoretical language, it is certainly imperative to help them become critical thinkers who can understand the import that such "theory" has in their lives. Being fans of *Buffy* is empowering for young women not just because Buffy is a strong feminist role model, but also because in some contexts she is not—and this discrepancy can introduce fans to a critical consciousness of ideology.

(24) In their article "Making 'Hope Practical' Rather than 'Despair Convincing': Feminist Post-structuralism, Gender Reform and Educational Change," Jane Kenway and others have argued that the most hopeful thing we can teach young women is that there is a politics of gender, that it is not a natural arrangement but a cultural construction made by people and open to change. Following from this insight, I would argue that it is not important to argue whether a particular representation of Buffy/Sarah is feminist or non-feminist. The fact that a single text or person can contain both readings opens productive space for getting young women (and others) to see how meanings are constructed. A debate over who is the "real" Buffy is one way of coming to understand the way ideology works to construct what we see and believe to be natural or "real." It is important to raise the questions that I have asked in this paper with young women. Why are some representations in tension? Who are they being produced for and what values or identities do they enforce? What does it mean if Sarah Michelle Gellar and Buffy become the same in these texts? My struggle in "placing" Buffy as feminist or not is related to the tension in feminism between critiquing and celebrating images of women in popular culture. In thinking about this project, I conclude that the binary of oppressive/ emancipatory popular culture unduly restrains the power of its interventions in life and our scholarly engagement with it. Instead, the most productive point of inquiry is precisely the way it is always both.

(25) Clearly, more work needs to be done to understand how young women are constructing images of Buffy and how they are incorporating these images into their own lives. I have suggested that the sexualized secondary texts privilege the visual images over other representations. One important site for further work is to investigate the relative importance of visual images in young women's consumption of *Buffy*. A recent experience has led me to believe that this issue may be even more complicated. As a trained literary critic, I think of myself as a sophisticated reader of culture, able to distinguish between Buffy and Sarah Michelle Gellar. However, when I looked at a *Buffy* comic book as one potential source of material for this project, I discovered a slim girl wearing blue jeans and a purple sweater cut to just above her waist walks down the sidewalk. Her medium brown hair falls in a curve to her shoulders. In the final close-up frame, the girl is labeled "the slayer" by the text as she lifts her sunglasses to reveal her face. It is an attractive, heart-shaped comic book heroine face, but it is clearly not an attempt to present Sarah Michelle Gellar in comic book form. My immediate response to this image was that it was not the "real" Buffy because the character looked wrong. Clearly, by "wrong" I meant, "not like Sarah Michelle Gellar." My response to this text privileged the visual, just as my questions about the tension between secondary texts and the primary text privileges the consequences of the visual image over the written text.

(26) Further research must explore the question of how young women perceive these visual images. Do they recognize a tension between them and other representations of Buffy? Do they seek these images out in magazines they would not normally consume because they are fans of the show? How do they relate these images to Buffy and to themselves? Exploring these questions by interviewing young women would provide an opportunity not only to gather further data on the reciprocal relationship between primary and secondary texts, but also to engage such young women in a dialogue about *Buffy* and the circulation of cultural images. Practice is what feminism should be about, and the opportunity to engage in this kind of practice is one of the reasons why feminists shouldn't be afraid to say, "I'm a fan of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*."

WORKS CITED

Bellafante, Ginia and Jeanne McDowell. "Bewitching Teen Heroines." *Time 5* May 1997:82-85.

Diamond, Jamie. "Que Sarah, Sarah." *Mademoiselle* March 1999:133.

Dietzel, Susanne B. and Polly Pagenhart. “Teaching Ideology to Material Girls: Pedagogy in the ‘Postfeminist’ Classroom.” *Feminist Teacher* 9.3 (1995):129-136.

Fiske, John. *Television Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1987.

___. *Understanding Popular Culture*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1989.

“Girlspeak.” *Off Our Backs* (December 1995):6-7, 15.

Goodale, Gloria. “Television’s Superwomen.” *Christian Science Monitor* 91.49 (February 5, 1999):13.

hooks, bell. *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics*. Boston: South End Press, 1990.

Jenkins, Henry. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1992.

Kenway, Jane, Sue Willis et al. “Making ‘hope practical’ rather than ‘despair convincing’: Feminist post-structuralism, gender reform and educational change.” *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 15.2 (1994):187-211.

Moy, Suelain. “Girls Who Fight Back.” *Good Housekeeping* April 1999: 86.

Reid-Walsh, Jacqueline with Krista Walsh. “Power Girl/Girl Power: The female action hero goes to high school.” *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 42.6 (March 1999): 495-504.

“Sarah’s Style.” *Cosmopolitan* June 1999: 14.

“Sarah Michelle Gellar Vamps it Up.” *Cosmopolitan* June 1999: 158.

Small, Jonathan. “Lawless: [adj]: unrestrained by law; unruly; illegal.” *Stuff for Men* June/July 2000: 100-105.

Udovitch, Mim. “What Makes Buffy Slay?” *Rolling Stone* 11 May 2000: 60-65.

___. “Buffy: On Set with Sarah Michelle Gellar.” *Esquire* January 2001: 114-119.

---

[1] See *Understanding Popular Culture*, 103-104.

[2] Quoted in Udovitch, “What Makes Buffy Slay?”

[3] In this and other descriptions of secondary texts, I use the actor's last name to discuss my impressions of her and statements she has made that I discuss. I use her first name only to describe the images produced in magazines, following the discursive strategy of the secondary texts themselves and their efforts to put their readers on a 'first name basis' with the actors portrayed in them.

[4] Quoted in Ginia Bellafante and Jeanne McDowell. "Bewitching Teen Heroines."

[5] See "Sarah's Style."

Victoria Spah

"Ain't Love Grand?" Spike and Courtly Love

To find Victoria's own version of this essay go here.

Your eyes two will slay me suddenly;
I may the beauty of them not sustain,
So woundeth it throughout my hearte keen.
And but your word will healen hastily
My hearte's wounde, while that it is green,
Your eyes two will slay me suddenly;
I may the beauty of them not sustain.

Upon my truth I say you faithfully
That ye bin of my life and death the queen;
For with my death the truthe shall be seen.
Chaucer, "Merciless Beauty" (14th Century)

In Castiglione's *The Courtier*, there is an impassioned discussion of the nature of love, in which one of the characters, Peter Bembo, describes the way that earthly love can become elevated to heavenly love through a Platonic process of stages, or steps on a ladder, beginning with the love of an unattainable, virtuous woman, and leading to love of God and all humanity.

Michael Best

(1) "Ain't love grand?" Spike bitterly and sarcastically remarks ("Into the Woods," 5010) alluding to the extent to which he has been a "fool for love" (or, if you prefer, "love's bitch"). But ironically, the development of Spike's passion for Buffy during season 5 has illustrated that the love that has possessed him truly is "grand" in the sense that it has transformed him into something better than he was before. The metamorphosis that Spike undergoes and the stages of that process bear a striking resemblance to the set of medieval romantic conventions commonly referred to as Courtly Love. The echoes of old stories of lovelorn knights and of the fair ladies to which they devote their lives and their swords add depth and weight to the story of Spike's love of Buffy.

(2) The term "Courtly Love" is used to describe a certain kind of relationship common in romantic medieval literature. The knight/lover finds himself desperately and piteously enamored of a divinely beautiful but unobtainable woman. After a period of distressed introspection, he offers himself as her faithful servant and

goes forth to perform brave deeds in her honor. His desire to impress her and to be found worthy of her gradually transforms and ennobles him; his sufferings—inner turmoil, doubts as to the lady's care of him, as well as physical travails—ultimately lends him wisdom, patience, and virtue and his acts themselves worldly renown. Sound familiar? Like any intricate allusion, references to the various pertinent aspects of the mythos (which itself has no definitive version) are woven subtly throughout without heavy-handed complete correspondence. Spike and Buffy are after all modern characters and as such must retain the psychological depth lacking in medieval stock characters, and thus their story is not informed solely by the Courtly Love tradition. The correspondence, ironic and teasing at times, straight-forward at others, is however quite fascinating and worth further examination.

(3) In the late twelfth century, Andreas Capellanus's *De Arte Honeste Amandi* (*Art of Courtly Love* [1]) describes love as:

> a certain inborn suffering derived from the sight of and excessive meditation upon the beauty of the opposite sex, which causes each one to wish above all things the embraces of the other.

This clearly describes Spike's state throughout the season. That he indulges in "excessive meditation" is spectacularly illustrated by the gradual growth of the Buffy shrine and other stalker-boyisms [2] and explicitly stated in "Crush" (5014):

> Something's happening to me. I can't stop thinking about you.

and later:

> I - Love - You! You're all I bloody think about. Dream about. You're in my gut . . . my throat . . . I'm drowning in you, Summers, I'm drowning in you. ("Crush")

And of course the desire for "embraces of the other" on Spike's part goes nearly without saying. [3] . Witness Spike's revelatory dream in Out of My Mind, the tense moments in the Bronze alley in "Fool for Love", the ecstatic sweater sniffing, the ragged "like I give a bloody damn" breath in "Into the Woods", various Harmony daydreams/sex-games, and of course the supreme proof: the BuffyBot. [4]

(4) In the Courtly Love tradition, the love engendered by this excessive meditation and supreme desire does not put the Lover in an immediate state of bliss. Rather:

> According to the system, falling in love is accompanied by great emotional disturbances; the lover is bewildered, helpless, tortured by mental and physical pain, and exhibits certain "symptoms," such as pallor, trembling, loss of appetite, sleeplessness, sighing, weeping, etc. He agonizes over his condition and indulges in endless self-questioning and reflections on the nature of love and his own wretched state. (*Handbook to Literature*)

(5) In the 5th season, we see again a correspondence. Even before consciously realizing that he's in love, Spike says of Buffy:

> She follows me, you know, tracks me down. I'm her pet project. Drive Spike round the bend. Makes every day a fresh bout of torture . . . You don't understand. I can't get rid of her. She's everywhere. She's haunting me, Harmony! (“Out of My Mind,” 5004)

And when he does realize [5], it's not a happy moment. Spike immediately perceives that this is not good news for him, waking with a horrified gasp and letting loose:

> Oh, god, no. Please, no. (“Out of My Mind”)

(6) In these and subsequent scenes (such as the "Out For A Walk Bitch" scene [“No Place Like Home,” 5005], run-away apology practice in “Triangle” [5011], and yelling fit in “Crush”) Spike clearly suffers "emotional disturbance" and other "symptoms" of that "certain inborn suffering" we call Courtly Love. He explicitly mentions sleeplessness in “Crush” ("I lie awake every night!"), and we've seen the weeping (after his rejections in “Fool for Love” and in “Crush”). As for "self questioning" and "reflections on his own wretched state"—that much is implicit especially throughout the beginning stages where we see Spikes old "kill-Buffy" instincts at war with his new "help-Buffy" ones. [6] He also clearly exhibits another key symptom of Courtly Love, jealousy, when he says to Riley:

> Sometimes I envy you so much it chokes me. (“Into the Woods”)

His jealousy and the pain it causes him are also evident when he watches Buffy and Ben together in “Crush” and “Spiral” (5020).

(7) Why does Courtly Love insist on identifying love with suffering? Perhaps the reason lies in the fact that the object of all this affection is by definition an unobtainable or nearly unobtainable woman. By reason of a higher social status or previous marriage, she is literally out of reach, but also her virtue and goodness puts her above the lover, who is a flawed morta, and a professional soldier (predisposing him to be rough, violent, uncivilized, etc) to boot. She is out of his reach [7] and he knows it, and yet his ruminations on love all bring him back to a helpless state of abject love. So even before she has had a chance to reject him, the lover is already suffering from the mere contemplation of the inappropriateness and futility of his love. And then of course when he does declare himself, the lady in question is expected to be—required to be—hard-hearted and aloof (at least initially [8]). But ironically, her refusal of his advances only increases his ardor. [9] As Capellanus' 14th rule states:

> The easy attainment of love makes it of little value; difficulty of attainment makes it prized.

Clearly Buffy ranks pretty much at the top of the list for unobtainable women for Spike. If there's one thing that everyone in the Buffy-verse agrees on, it's that a Spike/Buffy romance is out of the question. Xander's fit of uncontrollable laughter and refusal to take "one of Spike's fevered daydreams that's not gonna happen" (“Crush”) seriously says it all. But in case that wasn't enough, we have Riley's "If you touched her . . . you know I'd kill you for real,” Dawn's "you know she'd never touch anything from you anyway,”

Joyce's advice that Buffy "nip this in the bud," Giles' "There is no way to Buffy . . . move the hell on," the normally mild Tara's "She's nuts!" when BuffyBot's mistaken for Buffy. Willow gives the following bit of advice:

> you made it clear, right? That it could never happen. That there's no possible way. Ever . . .. If he thinks there's even a little chance with you, there's no telling what he'll do. ("Crush")

Of course Buffy herself contributes the unequivocal: "The only chance you had with me was when I was unconscious."

(8) Perhaps a natural reaction, but actually very unlikely to have the desired effect, especially with someone whom we know was already 100 years previously philosophically inclined to agree that difficulty of attainment makes something prized. During a heated confrontation with Angelus, Spike says:

> When was the last time you unleashed it? All out fight in a mob, back against the wall, nothing but fists and fangs? Don't you ever get tired of fights you know you're going to win? ("Fool for Love," 5007)

Even without love in the equation, we see that for Spike there is a certain glory and exaltation to be had in facing desperate odds with nothing but your own personal resources standing between you and defeat. So that when the following exchange occurs between Riley and Spike in ""Into the Woods"," we cannot be surprised at Spike's perspective:

> RILEY: You actually think you've got a shot with her?
> SPIKE: No, I don't. Fella's gotta try, though. Gotta do what he can. ("Into the Woods," 5010)

Despite not knowing if (and in fact rather doubting that) he has any chance of success, being disdainful of those restricting themselves to fights they know they're going to win, he's bound to try.

(9) So what's a poor love sick fool, uh, I mean knight, to do? How does he go about "doing what he can" in the face of overwhelming odds? He does what his experience as a soldier tells him to do, of course: he enlists. The Courtly Love relationship is frequently likened (and thought to be modeled on) the vassal relationship between a knight and his lord:

> the lover submitted to his lady as a knight to his lord, swearing loyal and enduring service. Drawing attention to his pretz (worth) and valor (courage)—further increased by his pure and noble love- he would request merce (pity) and some reward. (Damaris Lockewood von Lubeck)

As successful performance in battle could advance him in the eyes of his noble lord, our lover hopes to advance in the regard of his lady by doing what he does best: fight things. In the chivalric tradition, success in battle was proof positive that God was satisfied with his virtue and worth, and thus embarking on a quest or some other war-like feat (slaying a dragon, destroying an evil knight, etc) was the perfect way to demonstrate that one was indeed worthy of affection. The metaphor of Lady as Liege Lord works especially well in the case of Spike and Buffy, since unlike the courtly lady who must after all remain at home attending to domestic duties, Buffy actually is the commander of the fighting unit which Spike gradually becomes a fully participating member of. [10] The key word is "gradually" however. Like any neophyte, it takes time and effort to establish his credibility and value to the cause.

(10) Being the typical impatient lover, Spike thus embarks on several perhaps premature attempts to

"draw attention to his worth" and to promote the value of his aid to a decidedly unreceptive Buffy:

> SPIKE: I wouldn't be here if I didn't have a good reason. As usual, I'm here to help you . . . (“Into the Woods”)
>
> BUFFY: What are you doing?
>
> SPIKE: Making this woman more comfortable. I'm not sampling, I'll have you know. Just look at all these lovely blood-covered people. I could, but not a taste for Spike, not a lick. Know you wouldn't like it. (“Triangle”)
>
> SPIKE: I saved you.
>
> BUFFY: I was regrouping.
>
> SPIKE: You were about to be regrouped into separate piles. You needed help. (“Checkpoint,” 5012)
>
> If kid sis wants to grab a midnight stroll, she'll find a way sooner or later. I just thought she'd be safer with Big Bad looking over her shoulder. (Blood Ties)
>
> It's just, we took on that Glory chippie together, I was right there with you, fightin' the fight. (“Crush”)

And of course, in explicit bid to prove his love, he sets out to kill Drusilla for Buffy: [11]

> You still don't believe. Still don't think I mean it. You want proof, huh? How's this? I'm gonna kill Drusilla for you. (“Crush”)

(11) Reading this turn of events by the light of the Courtly Love tradition, we see one of the lines of reasoning behind this plan: In killing Drusilla, an agent of evil, he proves that he is good [12] and thus worthy of love on that account. Of course Spike's motives here are much more complex than that, and we can say with fair certainty that had he killed Drusilla, he would have been doing the right thing (killing something evil) for the wrong reason (to impress Buffy), that is to say without an innate desire to do good but rather with a selfish desire for personal gain. This scene however continues to reference the mythos of Courtly Love when, like our legions of love-sick medieval knights, Spike begs his lady for some sign that his sacrifices and pains are not to go on rewarded forever:

> Just . . . give me something . . . a crumb . . . the barest smidgen . . . tell me . . . maybe, someday, there's a chance. (“Crush”)

Chaucer himself penned a line remarkably similar to this:

> And therfor, swete, rewe on my peynes smerte,
>
> And of your grace, graunteth me some drope;
>
> For elles may me laste no blis ne hope,
>
> Chaucer, “Complaint to his Lady” (14th century)

Chaucer's 14th century lover, begging to be granted some drop of "grace," without which he will have neither "blis" nor "hope," is every bit as abject as our modern lover, Spike.

(12) One might find all this groveling about and dashing off to do good in pursuit of a reward morally questionable at best, but the key point to Courtly Love literature lies in revealing the power of love to ennoble the lover, to elevate him to a higher moral plane. He may start out with purely selfish motives and physical desires, but eventually, by serving loyally and undergoing great trials in her service, the virtue of the woman he loves comes to spiritually enrich and ennoble him [13] and lead him to a higher, purer love.

(13) Because in loving the lady, he worships also her virtues, the Courtly lover comes to incorporate them into his own self, leading him gradually up the "steps on a ladder" [14] from his beginning base nature up through true moral goodness. And in fact, we see in moments of rebellion, Spike does protest that Buffy is somehow invading and changing him:

> You're in my gut, my throat. I'm drowning in you, Summers, I'm drowning in you. (“Crush”)
>
> You think I like having you in here? Destroying everything that was me, until all that's left is you, in a dead shell. You say you hate it, but you won't leave. (“Crush”)

Seeing Spike's long-standing identification with Evil (note the continued insistence on referring to himself as "Big Bad" despite evidence to the contrary) what he is actually saying here is that this invasive Buffy-force is rooting out ("drowning") the Evil within him ("everything that was me") and relentlessly replacing it with her own innate goodness.

(14) Outright rebellion against the lady's influence such as Spike demonstrates here is not quite the courtly lover's style, but he does conceive of her beauty and/or existence as wounding [15] him in a way similar to Spike's accusations that Buffy is "destroying," "drowning," and "torturing" him. The knight/lover may plaintively protest this torture early on, but at last he comes to a final state of ennobled fatalistic calm, where his humility is such that he is willing to continue toiling for her despite his pain, without hope of reward:

> "Well may that love prosper through which one hopse to have the joy of successful love and serving loyally! But I expect nothing from mine except death, since I ask for love in such a lofty place. And so I see nothing in it but my own end, if my lady does not take pity on me or if Devotion and Love do not ask it from her. . . . In Love there is such great nobility, that it has the power to make the poor rich; so I look for its mercy and help. . . . Loyal love (of which I have a great abundance) will kill me." Gace Brule, Codex Buranus, 13th century

(15) And of course, this part of the tradition ties in perfectly with the evolution of Spike's love of Buffy, starting with the turning point of his resistance under Glory's torture in “Intervention”:

> SPIKE: Anything happened to Dawn, it'd destroy her [Buffy]. I couldn't live her being in that much pain. I'd let Glory kill me first. Nearly bloody did. (“Intervention”)
>
> BUFFY: I told Willow it would be like suicide.
>
> SPIKE: I'd do it. Right person. Person I loved. I'd do it. (“Tough Love,” 5019)
>
> BUFFY: We're not all gonna make it. You know that.
>
> SPIKE: Yeah. Hey, I always knew I'd go down fighting. (“The Gift,” 5022)

In these three exchanges, we certainly see the sentiments of the ennobled courtly lover, who has resigned himself to "expect nothing from [my loyal service] but death, since I ask for love in such a lofty place.” The "loyal service" itself has become a sufficient motivating factor.

(15) Interestingly, early on Buffy is willing to accept responsibility for the effect she has on Spike:

> GILES: . . . you can't be responsible for what Spike thinks or feels.
>
> BUFFY: Well, aren't I responsible? I mean, something about me had to make him feel that, right? Something that made him say, "woof, that's the one for me!" (“I Was Made to Love You,” 5015)

But rather than being flattered that "something about [her]" made Spike want to "turn his back on the whole evil thing," she is quite upset and disgusted. In essence she is blind (willfully or not) to her role as the inspiring courtly Lady. Later, however, she tacitly accepts Spike's humbly offered tribute to her treatment of him (and seems willing to stand above him on the stairs and assume this elevated role:

> I know you'll never love me. I know that I'm a monster. But you treat me like a man, and that's . . . (“The Gift”).

Here Spike acknowledges that she has elevated him from his basic nature ("monster") to a level above ("a man"). He also accepts that his hopes of reciprocal love are futile, but by trailing off indicates that that point is no longer of such great moment. What is important is the change she has wrought upon him, and what he is now calmly willing to do for her: "go down fighting.” Later, when Doc questions Spike's motivation, we see that this has indeed progressed beyond the question of reward (in terms of the satisfaction of physical desires) to a question purely of devotion and honor:

> DOC: I don't smell a soul anywhere on you . . . why do you even care?
>
> SPIKE: I made a promise to a lady. (“The Gift”)

To be bound by one's word is one of the key injunctions of chivalry, the hallmark of the noble knight, and thus referring to Buffy as a "lady" here has a certain significance. Spike is now someone whose word of honor means something, thanks to the civilizing influence of his idol, which stands in lieu of the soul he does not have.

(16) And thus we see how the progress of Spike's love for Buffy during the course of the 5th season works remarkably well within the generic principles of Courtly Love. Von Lubeck sums up the power of this set of romantic conventions in this way:

> True love was not an unregulated passion. Its essence was absolute loyalty and self-denial, service and travail, in favor of one's lady. Only by suffering and by the accomplishment of great deeds could the knight-errant prove his mettle and demonstrate the unblemished quality of his courtly love. The lover's inner struggle between his desire for immediate fulfillment and his awareness of the moral value implicit in striving for the unattainable; between individual ambitions and outward social constraints; between the self-imposed state of submission and the overwhelming need to express pain and resentment: these are the antitheses that lend the poetry of Courtly Love its dramatic tension and emotional richness. (Damaris Lockewood von Lubeck)

Indeed I think we can say that in antitheses lies the success of this particular story arc. To von Lubeck's list of antitheses inherent in the Courtly love tradition, we can of course add the conflict between vampire and vampire slayer, the question of Good vs. Evil, the long history of being "mortal enemies" versus the possibility of forgiveness, the simultaneous existence of intense love and intense hatred, etc. The liberal use of the Courtly Love mythos in the development of this story arc has been tremendously satisfying at least in part because tension between strong opposing forces has always been a big part of Spike's character.

(17) From his debut in “School Hard” (2003), we were presented with an arrogant, violent villain with a wicked tongue. And yet as the season and subsequent ones drew on, it was the ongoing diametric contrast of his humanity with his evilness that kept the character interesting: his doting tenderness towards Drusilla and immediate humility after having snapped at her, his perfectly understandable jealousy and hatred towards Angelus, his maudlin depression at losing Drusilla, his frustration and despair at the impotency wrought by the initiative chip. Willow's attempts to comfort him when he found he could not bite her and later to prevent him from staking himself perfectly expresses the way in which Spike's very human qualities at times completely overwhelm our ability to register his evilness, even before there was any reason to question that evilness. As Willow says, "we know him” (“Doomed,” 4011), that is to say, we know his human side, and as such have a certain sympathy for him despite the evil.

(18) And this is I think why the Courtly Love tradition works so well here. After all, the courtly lover does indeed—put in the most unflattering terms—start out a depressed loser with a penchant for violence and an illicit lust for someone else's girl. But the Lover evolves, becomes something better, as his lust is transmuted to love and that love leads him into nobility. Love as catalyst for change for Spike is quite fitting given that most of his more human side has been revealed through love (his love of Drusilla). Thus we find in Spike's new found devotion to Buffy a perfect vehicle for moving him from one side of the Good vs Evil conflict to the other all the while staying true to the character developed throughout the last several years. And of course, most importantly, it was great fun to be along for the ride and tremendously satisfying to see our favorite Big Bad reinvented.

[1] Part of Capellanus' treatise on love is composed of 31 rules describing how the lover should or does behave. The following list includes those of interest (for the full list, see bibliography below)

- He who is not jealous cannot love.
- That which a lover takes against the will of his beloved has no relish.
- No one should be deprived of love without the very best of reasons.
- A true lover does not desire to embrace in love anyone except his beloved.
- When made public love rarely endures.
- The easy attainment of love makes it of little value: difficulty of attainment makes it prized.
- Every lover regularly turns pale in the presence of his beloved.
- When a lover suddenly catches sight of his beloved his heart palpitates.
- A new love puts an old one to flight.
- Good character alone makes any man worthy of love.
- Real jealousy always increases the feeling of love.
- He whom the thought of love vexes eats and sleeps very little.
- Every act of a lover ends in the thought of his beloved.
- A true lover considers nothing good except what he thinks will please his beloved.
- Love can deny nothing to love.
- A lover can never have enough of the solaces of his beloved.
- A man who is vexed by too much passion usually does not love.
- A true lover is constantly and without intermission possessed by the thought of his beloved.

[2] And of course the wicked little in-joke that the stylized, stiff & romanticized hero of Courtly Love is really a hair's-breadth away from being an obsessed stalker is just one example of how much fun this decidedly archaic set of love conventions can be, providing they're not taken too seriously. Another little poke we might make in this direction is to view Spike's snagging Buffy's underwear as a twisted (and amusing) parallel of the knight's insistence on obtaining his Lady's "favor" and tying it on to his armor as he goes off to battle.

[3] Though Capellanus' description implies that this physical attraction must be mutual ("each one" to desire "the embraces of the other"), other sources do not. And either way, during the initial stages, the beloved in rejecting the advances of the lover keeps her true feelings secret so that Buffy's overt rejections in the 5th season of Spike's physical advances do not necessarily invalidate Capellanus' description. The 6th season, of course, has verified the mutual attraction.

[4] Though not universal, typically the courtly lover's physical lust is strongest during the beginning stages of his love, and as his moral character improves gradually ebbs away, replaced by chaste worship.

[5] The fact that this revelation comes to Spike in a dream is quite fitting, given that dream-visions are prevalent in the medieval literature of Courtly Love. See for example Chaucer's Book of the Duchess or the Roman de la Rose (Guillaume de Lorris & Jean Clopinel).

[6] It might be taking the analysis a bit too far, but it certainly is fun to consider the innate "pallor" of vampires and Spike's "loss of appetite" (due to the Initiative chip) as further "symptoms."

[7] Buffy's scathing "You're beneath me" certainly emphasizes this point, as did Cecily's rendition of the same comment to pre-Spike William. Morally and physically (Buffy has just shoved him effortlessly to the ground, reminding him of her superior strength and his inability to fight back) Buffy is on a higher plane than Spike, just as the Courtly Lady would be above her suitor by reason of birth or marriage.

[8] Nevertheless, whether married or not, she was almost always unattainable, by virtue of her high rank or physical distance, and by fear of social censure; it was, paradoxically, her very distance that lent value to the lover's patient suffering. The lady's worth could be increased by dispensing merce to a worthy and deserving suitor, yet the lady who submitted too soon was to be condemned. Damaris Lockewood von Lubeck

[9] The Lover is however expected to restrain himself from pressing the issue against the Lady's wishes. Capellanus' 5th rule reads: "That which a lover takes against the will of his beloved has no relish." Force and coercion are dishonorable and not to be used, though persuasion, especially in the form of lengthy letters, songs, poems, etc is perfectly acceptable. And with the set-up of pre-Spike-William's interest in poetry and Buffy's declaration that she likes poetry, we may yet see something along these lines.

[10] Spike's gradual integration into the Scooby corps, starting in 4th season, could be a whole other essay, but in brief lets just say that Spike goes from "pitching in when [Buffy] pays [him]," to happening to be around to render services ("Family" [5006], "Blood Ties" [5013], "Checkpoint" [5012], "Listening to Fear" [5009], etc) to being on official Dawn-watch in "Tough Love" [5019] ("Dawn's safe with Spike") and finally to being an essential part of the fighting team in both "Spiral" (5020) and "The Gift," working with Giles & Xander while Buffy is out in "Weight of the World" (5021) and generally giving immediate (if not completely unquestioning) obedience to Buffy's snapped orders.

[11] Interestingly, way back in season 1, Angel killed his own sire, Darla, to save Buffy and prove that he was not "an animal." Whether or not Spike knows this when he sets out to kill Drusilla is unknown, but as Drusilla has recently told him of Angel's attempts to rehabilitate the revived Darla, he may well know what happened to Darla in the first place, and thus he could have this precedent in mind.

[12] As part of his initial argument to Buffy, Spike declares "And I can be [good] too. I've changed, Buffy." He goes on to state that "Something's happening to me" . . . "And if that means turning my back on the whole evil thing . . ." So I think we can say that though during this scene he explains that he wants to prove that he loves her, he can also be said to be attempting to prove this earlier point, that he can be good, can turn his back on "the whole evil thing." Of course chaining her up doesn't exactly win him brownie points; but given subsequent demonstrations of moral growth (see bloodyawfulpoet.com for a great essay on this subject), I think we can chalk this up to "great emotional disturbances" rather than true regression.

[13] We find the following in Capellanus' writings on love:

> Love makes an ugly and rude person shine with all beauty, knows how to endow with nobility even one of humble birth, can even lend humility to the proud; . . . Oh, what a marvelous thing is love, which makes a man shine with so many virtues and which teaches everyone to abound in good customs. . . . ("What is the Effect of Love?" Capellanus, *A Treatise on Courtly Love*)

This ties in nicely with the unspoken continuation of Spikes' reference to Shakespeare's St. Crispin's Day speech:

For he to-day that sheds his blood with me

Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,

This day shall gentle his condition.

Henry V

Through honorable battle in a just cause (well Henry thought so anyway), and unselfish motives (Henry's soldiers were under strictly enforced orders not to plunder) the simple soldier elevates himself above his initial condition ("vile," that is to say, a commoner) and is endowed with nobility.

[14] It's probably just coincidence, but nevertheless interesting that in "Fool for Love", the 20 seconds of the song by Crushing Velvet played in the background at the Bronze happens to include the following lyrics (which occur in the 4 m 32 s song just once)

> You see my song is like a haiku

You sit and stare at me until I'm not about you

And if that's wrong, it doesn't matter

I'm gonna climb my way to heaven on your ladder

And it comes over the bit of dialogue ending with Spike's declaration that he's "always been bad" (and the cut that reveals that "bad" in this context is not "evil," more like awful.)

[15] The following exchange occurs after Buffy has given her final orders before heading after Glory:

SPIKE: Well, not exactly the St. Crispin's Day speech, was it?

GILES: "We few . . .we happy few . . ."

SPIKE: "We band of buggered . . ." (“The Gift”)

The line Spike is deliberately misquoting is of course "We band of brothers.”

Philip Mikosz and Dana C. Och
Previously on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* . . .[1]

> The spectacle is not a collection of images, but a social relation among people, mediated by images.
>
> Guy Debord, *The Society of Spectacle*

(1) Anyone proposing to essay an academic treatment of *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* would do well to bear in mind the 1999 season premiere episode, in which Buffy, an incoming freshman at UC Sunnydale, is all but driven out of the classroom by an imperious Professor of Popular Culture. The incident takes place towards the beginning of the episode, where it helps to mark Buffy's estrangement from her new milieu, while the episode itself marks a big-time reterritorialization of The Buffysphere. Not only are we no longer in high school, if we stick around for another hour, two of our erstwhile companions will be starting new careers on another series predicated upon a rather different generic conceit (but then *Buffy* has always been "about" the queering of generic conceits). Given the momentousness of this moment, and bearing in mind that *Buffy* is so well-schooled in popular culture," it's worth noting that Buffy is not allowed to stay in the class long enough to find out what it could possibly be about (not to mention that her departure soon finds her in a certain psychology course with a certain hunky teaching assistant . . .). It strikes us that there is a sense in which *Buffy* itself is also expelled from class—does not, in other words, lend itself to any "academic treatment," strictly so defined.

(2) In our minds at all times is the question: How is it possible to write well about television, and particularly about a series currently in production? The interpretive and rhetorical tricks of literary and film criticism, though useful, are ultimately not adequate to the task, because they tend to be calibrated to the level of "the work," even in the case of criticism that speaks of "intertextuality." Whereas, with TV in general and *Buffy* in particular, the basic "unit" of discussion is not "the work," but the series itself. Sure, particular episodes stick out, but these are more like songs by your favorite bands, while the series itself is something like a mixed tape. To write about *Buffy* is to write about a relationship, a certain investment across a serialized duration, as well as the cognitive relations that are elaborated at all levels of the series, from the season right down to a single shot. From this perspective Giles's opening tagline, "Previously on *Buffy The Vampire Slayer* . . . ", can refer to any number of previous episodes, but also to an action that's happened just seconds ago, as well as to decades of cinematic and televisual history.

(3) The difference between "the work" and what we're calling serialized duration can be illustrated by thinking back briefly to the *Buffy* movie. Its form was that of standard narrative cinema, and the entire film hinged upon the incongruity of the terms "Buffy" and "Vampire Slayer." The film was, in effect, an extended Dumb Blond Joke (and when we say "dumb" we refer to the joke). *Buffy* the series, by contrast, although it

partakes of elements of narrative, does not amount to a narration. Season by season, and even episode by episode, the series accumulates a multiple past, elements of oftentimes incongruous combinations. Moreover, the series seizes upon the clichés "Buffy" and "Vampire Slayer" and posits them as axioms, as simultaneous conditions that nonetheless retain their incommensurability (this is, after all Buffy's existential crisis!).

Jonathan Uber Alles

(4) On the evening of April 4, 2000, we each of us independently watched an episode of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* that totally freaked us out. It begins innocuously enough with Giles's voice intoning "Previously on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer . . .*", the introduction at the beginning of every episode, during which the viewer is presented with a variety of sequences (both recent and archival) with which to contextualize the action to follow.

(5) One of the primary antecedents of this episode was a show entitled "Earshot" (3018), which was scheduled to air—and was suppressed—in the Spring of 1999. In and of itself the episode was not particularly memorable. Through an inadvertent act of magic, Buffy attains the ability to hear the thoughts of others (Cf. the opening sequence of Wim Wenders' *Wings Of Desire*), including an anonymous plot to commit mass homicide of the students of Sunnydale High. Suspicion—erroneously it turns out—falls upon a short, dumpy loser named Jonathan, whose parodic re-enactment of the Charles Whitman University of Texas sharp-shooting scenario actually turns out to have been a spectacular suicide attempt, which Buffy thwarts before thwarting the real villain. All in all a forgettable episode—had it not originally been scheduled to air immediately in the wake of the atrocities at Columbine High. In reaction to said atrocities—a reaction perfectly illustrative of the mode of non-thinking that Gramsci, citing Vico, calls common sense ("judgment without reflection")—"Earshot" was postponed for several months. And it is the subsequent anti-climax of the episode's eventual screening that, inadvertently or not, lends "Superstar" (4017) its peculiar flavor and funky historical charge.

(6) The introductory "Previously . . ." montage karate-kicks in, comprised of (1) Buffy and Jonathan in the clock tower ("You all think I'm an idiot, a short idiot!" cries the would-be suicide); (2) the Faith/Buffy body switch; (3) the seduction of Riley ("I love you") by Faith-in-Buffy; (4) the switchback; (5) the accusation ("You slept with her") stemming from said betrayal; and (6) Adam: "I was created to kill." And the episode itself begins, as episodes of Buffy often do, in the middle of a fight scene in which Buffy, more or less unassisted, slays one or more vampires. This time, however, something seems off somehow. The difference is subtle but palpable. Buffy, for whom the slaying of several vamps is usually effortless by now, appears to be relying overmuch upon the assistance of her fellow Scooby Gangsters; the outcome of the struggle actually appears to be in doubt; one of the vampires gets away! "Where did he go?" Buffy asks. Xander's reply—"He scampered over there like a big bumpy bunny!"—is certainly in keeping with the series' ongoing history of crafty banter (you see, not *everything* is out of whack). Yet the ensuing shot cuts rather too abruptly to a crypt in which five vampires are glutting themselves upon a hapless victim, which crypt Buffy and her Slayerettes enter with obvious trepidation, and exit without so much as a single staking:

> *WILLOW [huffily]:* I don't care if it IS an orgy of death; there's still such a thing as a napkin.
> *BUFFY:* A nest. No biggie. I bet I could do it.—I mean I know I could take at least two. . .
> *ANYA:* Yes. And then we can run for help while the other three suck your heart out through your neck.
> *BUFFY [sighing]:* You're right. It's too many for just us. You know who we need.

Another rather-too-abrupt cut takes us to the exterior of a palatial white mansion, illuminated in the darkness; which gives way to an overhead shot of the Sunnydalers walking through a well-appointed chamber; which gives way to a shot of the four of them, rather sheepishly and in awe, approaching the camera and Buffy, rather sheepishly and in awe, "Uh, hi, we have a problem," which gives way to a mid-

distance shot of a chair behind a well-appointed desk, its back to the camera. As the camera zooms in the chair pivots to face front and . . . who should be seated before us but Jonathan himself, looking rather rakishly suave in his signature (or is that Angel's?!) black mock-turtle-neck sweater, smugly smiling and with folded hands. "Sounds like you can use my help," says Jonathan, as a surf guitar and a horn flourish redolent of James Bond flicks flare in the background. (Cut to the opening credits, which is when things REALLY get weird, as we shall elaborate shortly.)

(7) In film studies, the diagesis is the fictional world/ milieu/ universe in which the story takes place; the story, meanwhile, is what the spectator constructs on the basis of the plot, i.e. material organization of shots, montage, mise-en-scene, etc. What's so weird here is this. First, insofar as this particular show has a diagesis, it is clear that Jonathan, through his sorcery, has fundamentally altered it, and this episode shall elaborate upon the consequences of said alteration. And it's as though the story actually occupies real time. Second, however, there might not even be a diagesis, which is to say that Jonathan (rather like the putative hero of *Dark City*) relates to the episode not only as a character, but actually as though he were a big-time fan of the series itself.

Is It Live Or Is It Audiovisual Circulation?

(8) Earlier we suggested that the principle "unit" for a discussion of a television show like *Buffy* (not that there have been many such shows!) should be the series itself. To explain this more lucidly it'll be necessary to talk more about serialized art forms in general, placing them in a more general context of audio-visual circulation.

(9) A starting point could be "Interpreting Serials," in which Umberto Eco establishes a typology of serialized aesthetics—e.g., the retake, the remake, and, most germane to our discussion, the series. "The series," writes Eco, "works upon a fixed situation and a restricted number of fixed pivotal characters, around whom the secondary and changing ones turn," which latter characters "must give the impression that the new story is different from the preceding ones while in fact the narrative scheme does not change" (*The Limits of Interpretation* 86). Of the viewer/consumer Eco writes that this "recurrence of a narrative scheme that remains constant . . . responds to the infantile need of always hearing the same story, of being consoled by the return of 'The Identical,' superficially disguised" (87). Prototypically, the series is characterized by mere repetition masked by the novelty of the latest individual installment.

(10) Now, we don't deny that many a series—televisual and otherwise—fits Eco's description. But, if it isn't already apparent from our preceding account of the opening moments of "Superstar," it strikes us that such a sweeping account of the series as such might not be entirely adequate to account for the fabulous phenomenon that is *Buffy*. (Indeed, we cannot but call to mind Buffy's Professor of Popular Culture—although a rather different avatar of Eco will appear below . . .) Do let's read a bit further. For Eco the Typologist, the series fundamentally abstracts from concrete, historical time: "Instead of having characters put up with new adventures (that would imply their inexorable march towards death), they are made continually to live their past . . . Characters have a little future but an enormous past, and in any case, nothing of their past will ever have to change the mythological present in which they have been presented to the reader from the beginning" (86).

(11) In a striking contradiction of this formula, "Superstar" posits a serialized world in which the past is neither fixed nor forever and yet which paradoxically partakes of previous events (fictional and factual) with properly *historical* precision. *Buffy* gives us a way of inhabiting and thinking about serialized duration that is historical, which is to say that it compels (or at least invites) what Gilles Deleuze, reading Bergson, might call attentive recognition (on which more anon, vis-à-vis the category of cliché). Seriality is precisely ubiquitous, and serialized and serializing aesthetics permeate all aspects of daily life, be they on the clock or off of it.

(12) Even beyond the level of generic and narrative conceits—inter-dimensional portals, the ubiquity of

monsters and magic in suburbia, the persistence of the primal slayer, etc.—*Buffy the Vampire Slayer* screws with temporality. But *Buffy*'s past, i.e. what happened previously, is not fixed, is multiple, is subject to recombination and variation, a past which constantly inflects and alters that which is present. One way to think about this is that *Angel* is not a spin-off series. By its very nature, *Buffy* already contains, more or less implicitly, any number of spin-offs: every episode of Buffy is a potential spin-off. Keeping this in mind, the absolute materiality of the alternate universes that proliferate on *Buffy*, as well as the great mystery on entering Season Five, represent the magic as a surrogate for the technology, which is to say for the aesthetic potential of audiovisual circulation itself (like, you can have a world both with and/or without shrimp!).

(13) Writes Paul D. Miller, aka DJ Spooky That Subliminal Kid, DJ, conceptual artiste, and cultural theoretician:

> In the electronic milieu that we all move in today, the DJ is a custodian of aural history. In the mix, creator and re-mixer are woven together in the syncretic space of samples and other sonic material to create a seamless fabric of sound that in a strange way mirrors the modern macrocosm of cyberspace where different voices and visions constantly collide and cross fertilize one another. The linkages of memory, time, and place, are all externalized and made accessible to the listener from the viewpoint of the DJ who makes the mix. Thus, the mix acts as a continuously moving still frame a camera lucida capturing moment-events. The mix, in this picture, allows the invocation of different languages, texts, and sounds to converge, meld, and create a new medium that transcends its original components. The sum created from this audio collage leaves its original elements far behind. (10)

Clearly, it would be a mistake to assimilate *Buffy* to Miller's formulation without a certain degree of modification. Most obviously, perhaps, a television series represents an investment and accumulation of capital circulation, over and against the much more "life-sized" level of the circulation of commodities: e.g., Miller's DJ is at liberty to mix and match and re-make found sounds regardless of their current currency, demographic orientation, etc. The point is that *Buffy* is acutely sensitized to the ongoing fluctuation and turnover of what Miller calls "moment-events," that this particular series wrests from the ephemeral an image of endurance.

(14) Such "fields" as "Film Studies," "Media Studies," and so on, tend to be myopic. Perhaps a better way to approach this is that film, television, literature, music . . . ought to be subsumed under the overall rubric of audiovisual circulation. Audiovisual circulation would be co-terminous both with the circulation of capital and of commodities, and this is to say that audiovisual circulation is precisely mundane and ubiquitous, which is to say that audiovisual circulation is precisely *historical*. Any number of moments in Buffy (or rather should that be all moments?) can be seen working within this sense of historicity: Jonathan as the Jordan poster, Giles's serialized romance across a span of Taster's Choice commercials, Buffy's former incarnation as the most heinous of heinous villains in *All My Children* history as Kendall [Cf. Urge Overkill: "Erika Kane, another Emmy's passed you by . . ."], Oz's (Seth Green's) presence in the *Austin Powers* movies. This sense of intra-textuality also allows for different sorts of relationships to be possible, e.g. the circulation of *American Pie* and *Cruel Intentions* as well as the presence in "Doppelgangland" (3016) of bisexual, vampire Willow ("I'm so evil and skanky. And I think I'm kinda gay") in relation to a more open sexuality.

(15) Intertextuality assumes that texts are already themselves singular, that they are not already part and parcel of audiovisual circulation; whereas intratextuality recognizes the interiority of any number of references, each with its own complicated history, in current circulation, e.g. Jonathan's coaching the US Women's Soccer Team, the similarities between The Bronze and The Peach Pit, or the recurrence of references to William S. Burroughs. So, what would it take to trace Spike's entrance into Sunnydale in

"Lover's Walk" (3008)? The elusive Dru and Spike premiere in "School Hard" (2003), running down the Welcome to Sunnydale Sign? The blaring of "My Way" (Gary "I Too Have Played a Vampire" Oldham's *Sid and Nancy* version of Sid Vicious' version of Frank Sinatra's tune)? Audiovisual circulation is promiscuous, at the same time as it is historical.

JONATHAN PART 2: SHE'S A MAN, MAN

> The dominant fiction neutralizes the contradictions which organize the social formation by fostering collective identifications and desires, identifications and desires which have a range of effects, but which are first and foremost of *sexual difference*. Social formations consequently depend upon their dominant fictions for their sense of unity and identity. Social formations also rely for their continued survival upon the dominant fiction; both the symbolic order and the mode of production are able to protect themselves from interruption and potential change only so long as that ideological system commands collective belief—so long, that is, as it succeeds in defining the psychic reality of the prototypical subject.
>
> (Kaja Silverman, *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*, 55; italics mine)

(16) With audiovisual circulation, culture is non-biodegradable and the ephemeral (e.g. a single song or episode of television) endures through and across a multiplicity of contexts. In a brilliant scene from *Fame Whore* (Jon Moritsugu, 1997) Jody George—recently become the # 1 tennis player in the world and very much in the closet—is flopped on the couch of his hotel room, watching television. The shot is framed so that we are watching Jody George watching and reacting to the TV set, the sounds of which we can hear (and it is quite difficult to say what exactly we are hearing—is that perhaps even Jonathan?) but the screen of which is invisible to us. Jody George, who refers to himself as "Jody George," is channel surfing. Each time that Jody George flips channels, Jody George comments, with escalating vulgarity, assertiveness, and discernment, to the effect: "Oh YEAH! Jody George could get some of THAT . . .", "that" being the portion or portions of the female anatomy requisite for the proverbial Money Shot. This goes on for some time (there are a lot of channels, what with the infinite sub-division of the bandwidth and all), immediately after which the screen cuts to a rapid montage of "glamour shots" of what, alluding to that song by Air, would have to be described as Sexy Boys, each of whom wears a t-shirt bearing the name of a portion of the female (but not just female) anatomy: "vulva," "aureole," etc.—The sequence is put together in such a way as to make it impossible to tell what Jody George was actually looking at; it may as well have been the glamour boys all along.

(17) "When all the archetypes burst out shamelessly," writes Umberto Eco (in "good professor" role), "we plumb Homeric profundity. Two clichés make us laugh but a hundred clichés move us because we sense dimly that the archetypes are talking among themselves, celebrating a reunion" (*Travels in Hyper-reality* 209). At what point does *Buffy* become a cliché on *Buffy*? A hint at this ability to play with the cliché was already hilariously suggested in "The Zeppo" (3013), but the celebration of the hundred clichés peaks with "Superstar." Despite the momentary lapse of reason in the overt feminization of Buffy in season 3 (just how many times could she cry that season while Faith took over all the badass-ness?), Jonathan obviously felt that Buffy of season 3 was still too much of a man for his liking, resulting in—taa daa—the regular old gal Betty ("I'm the Slayer, the Slayer, isn't that supposed to mean something?"), who is a fluffy battle kitten rather than the owner of the umbrella or star of the opening credits. Instead, we have the Jonathanization of the credits: Here is Jonathan upstaging all of the usual suspects: shooting a crossbow; disarming a bomb; smiling back at Xander (Oh Xander you dawg!); some smarmy dude in a tux; secret agent-like in a tux with a gun; doing a kung-fu move; and, finally, walking in grim- reverse-Angelesque-slow-mo towards

the camera, trench coat and all.

(18) Part of what "Superstar"—like *Fame Whor*e—does is precisely to dramatize, i.e. externalize and render palpable, the processes of cliché (whereas many serialized texts, as per Eco's description, tend to do the opposite), of the production of use-value, of the reiteration of what we already knew and yet are discovering again, yet once more, for the very first time. Thus, the juxtaposition of Jody George—who is a fag in drag as a straight stud—against the montage of the glamour boys is almost directly analogous to what we're looking at and listening to when the assembled cast of *Buffy*—and most especially Xander and Giles—are totally erotically fascinated with this Jonathan character. Yay verily, their commitment to and investment in the apparently natural and timeless reign of Jonathan Uber Alles (and especially poor, poor Xander) heighten and intensify the sense of incongruity on the part of even the casual viewer. Jonathan has become *the* cliché. He is one cliché, yet he—rather, his *image* (for he is nothing but an image: Adam recognizes this instantly, Buffy actually intuits it from the opening scenes) has proliferated to the degree that it has acquired a monopoly over all of the other images. This is why he can simultaneously be Michael Jordan, a swimsuit model, the inventor of the internet, the author of the book *Oh, Jonathan!*, Hugh Hefner, Frank Sinatra, Angel, James Bond, a hard-boiled detective type, a witty roué, friend and advisor to the traumatized and the lovelorn and the downtrodden, military tactical analyst, and so on, and so on. Jonathan literally becomes all things and everything to all people. He is not a superstar, he is THE super-duper-star.

(19) Flat out, one of the things that we see happening in "Superstar" is the exposure of cliché in terms of *Buffy*—transgender action is not usually a cliché across the board but within the series it has become exactly that that is habitually recognized. So, in this spirit, Buffy is *the* example of transgender action, with a healthy dose of teenage angst (sole topic of otherworldly scary teenage shows like *My So-Called Life*, etc.) thrown in for good measure. The category of transgender action derives in part from Judith Butler's theorization of gender in *Gender Trouble*. As a tenet on which to base this thinking, we should keep in mind that "when the constructed status of gender is theorized as radically independent of sex, gender itself becomes a free-floating artifice, with the consequence that *man* and *masculine* might just as easily signify a female body as a male one, and *woman* and *feminine* a male body as easily as a female one" (6). If gender is seen as the necessary subjugation of the sexed body under cultural law, what we then have in *Buffy* is a jamming of sensory motor schemata usually associated with a set of common sense givens about society. Television, out of the various media, leaving far behind here Eco's work on typologies and repetition, can more effectively work to challenge or subvert codes and clichés (for Deleuze, cliché is principally a function of automatic or habitual recognition—as in common sense) exactly because of its serialized form, e.g. *Twin Peaks* and *Buffy*, in that the continued presentation of difference, a promiscuous contamination, can be presented weekly or, with syndication (at the end of the fifth season), potentially indefinitely.

(20) As you may well have surmised, it is not that transgender action is a category cornered by *Buffy*; it certainly already has a history of its own (*Wonder Woman*, *Charlie's Angels*, Thelma on *Scooby Doo*). But *Buffy* offers a more elaborated example of transgender action than previously watched, in that transgender action encompasses multiple characters—yes Buffy is still special but this notion of fluid gender construction is not individualized to just her and her special status. The serialization is one of an elaborated plot, with the supernatural and the everyday intimately connected, versus, say, the lack of attention to mundane development in other transgender shows. Buffy's physical prowess is unmatched by any human character or (at this point) inhuman as Spike has become the harmless fangboy. This traditionally *male* attribute (physical power) is then combined with Buffy's overwhelmingly banal *feminine* appearance, an appearance which is intensified by her consistently overtly feminine and—dare we say—sexy attire. So, while opening a can of whupass on any number of demons (human or not), Buffy is often wont to wear short skirts and heels in battle (seldom bruising or messing up her hair, or for that matter, making the cheerleader squad or becoming prom queen)—visually reinforcing the anachronistic use of gender in relation to her character. Buffy's fluid gender construction is furthermore highlighted through the pairing of Buffy and Riley "The Only Reason I Have Physical Strength Is Because They Shot Me Up With Steroids" Finn, aka "Cowboy Guy" ("Restless," 4022), the stereotypical, hyper-male hero with his military connections (*A-Team*), machismo, and six-pack abs.

(21) Earlier we briefly mentioned how *Buffy* implicitly contains any number of spin-off series. This is the whole point of the "Previously." The incidental detail—the relatively lame episode ("Earshot")—can suddenly attain monumental proportions vis-à-vis the ongoing recombinant accumulation of the series across a duration that is simultaneously fictitious and historical, fantasy and reality (after all, there was a movie called *The Matrix*—whose thematic relevance to this episode should be clear enough; after all, the US women's soccer team really did win a stunning world title, and it's probably safe to imagine that Jonathan had something to do with the manufacture of the new-and-improved Nike sports bra that Brandy Chastain revealed precisely at the moment of Triumph).

Next time on Buffy . . .

(22) On Tuesday, July 25, 2000, we each of us independently read an article in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* that again shocked us—this being some two-odd months after the Season Finale and some three- or four-odd months after we started to try to work out our ideas on the series. (Yet again, how do you write on a series currently in production?) We found out in this extra bit of audiovisual circulation that "Hush" was up for an Emmy. Stunned—"No Jonathan?" Yet . . .

(23) But Buffy is still an only child. Or is she? (David) Fury (supervising producer of *Buffy*) said Dawn will be introduced at the end of the season premiere. For the first five episodes of the season, everyone will remember Dawn as part of Buffy's life. (Rob Owens D-6)

We have talked extensively about how *Buffy*'s history is endlessly open to recombination, a recombination that changes the present and the way we view past history. While many a series has pulled a loop at the end (or middle), such as *St. Elsewhere* or *Dallas* or any number of conflicting governmental administrations (Bautista, Peron, Reagan, Clinton, Hussein), *Buffy* has been known to, and obviously will be known to, self-referentially play with that which we think we know constantly and consistently.

(24) In our discussion of these episodes, we have been making reference to a number of theoretical texts. However, we think that it would be a mistake to assimilate *Buffy* to these texts, as though the series were merely an example of various theoretical abstractions. To the contrary, if "theory" gives us ways of talking about *Buffy*, *Buffy* (which is itself a theoretical text) gives us ways of thinking about "theory." Thus, our attempt to write about television also represents an attempt to re-imagine the relationships between "popular" and "academic" knowledge.

[1] Editors' note: As the reader will no doubt realize, the present essay was written at the end of the fourth season of *BtVS.*

Works Cited

Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity.* New York, London: Routledge, 1990.
Debord, Guy. *Society of the Spectacle*. Detroit: Black & Red, 1977.
Eco, Umberto. *The Limits of Interpretation*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1990.
___. *Travels in Hyper-reality*. Translated Weaver, William. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1986.
Miller, Paul D. (aka DJ Spooky). *Songs of a Dead Dreamer* (liner notes). BMI, 1995.
Owen, Rob. " 'Buffy' Raises Stakes With Introduction of Vampire Slayer's Little Sister." *Pittsburgh Post Gazette* 25 July, 2000, D-6.
Silverman, Kaja. *Male Subjectivity at the Margins*. New York and London: Routledge, 1992.

Rhonda V. Wilcox

"Every Night I Save You": Buffy, Spike, Sex and Redemption

For Godsake hold your tongue, and let me love
.....
Call us what you will, wee are made such by love;
Call her one, mee another flye,
We'are tapers too, and at our owne cost die,
And wee in us find th'Eagle and the Dove.
The Phoenix riddle hath more wit
By us, we two being one, are it.
So to one neutrall thing both sexes fit,
Wee dye and rise the same, and prove
Mysterious by this love.
John Donne, lines from "The Canonization"

"When I kiss you, I want to die."
Buffy to Angel, "Reptile Boy" (2005)

"When I kiss you, it'll make the sun go down."
Dream Riley to Buffy, "Hush" (4010)

"The sun sets, and she appears."
Spike to Buffy, "Once More, with Feeling" (6007)

"Every night I save you."
Spike to Buffy, "After Life" (6003)

[1]Love, death, rebirth, redemption—the connection of these is certainly not new to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer.* In the late sixteenth and early seventeenth century, the word-play equating sex and death was a favorite of John Donne and other Metaphysical poets. The relation of sex and death might be causal—a *carpe diem* appeal to a mistress—or metaphoric—a representation of the transcendence of the intercourse of lovers. While the Metaphysical poets' striking conversational style and exuberantly noticeable metaphors suggest that they are part of *Buffy*'s distant literary lineage (on language and symbolism, see Wilcox, "There"), the connection of love and death runs throughout literary and cultural history. The physical act of love and the physical experience of death can both be seen as threshold events, as scholars such as Victor Turner and Joseph Campbell have acknowledged; they can both be seen as transformative, involving a sometimes transcendent change of condition. Most of these terms can, of course, be applied to vampires, those liminal creatures who revisit, night after night, the edge of life and death. and whom many scholars see as representing the id, the unconscious, repressed urges let loose. The pre-vampire version of the character would then represent the ego or conscious self. We recognize this two-sidedness as metaphor; but those with a knowledge of literary history may also at this point find themselves thinking of the strange case of Dr. Donne, a very two-sided personality: Jack Donne, the wild young author of bawdy love poetry, who was converted to the Reverend Dr. Donne, Dean of St. Paul's, a famed and powerful preacher. The metaphor resonates because it touches reality. And today, the text in which this metaphor and reality converge most powerfully is *Buffy the Vampire Slayer.*

[2]Not only horror scholars in general but *Buffy* scholars in particular, such as Diane Dekelb-Rittenhouse, Tanya Krzywinska, Roz Kaveney, and Mary Alice Money have discussed the vampire versions of characters

in *Buffy*. Multitudes of vampires in *Buffy* are fated to be nothing more than dust, but for a few we know both the human and the vampire version, and those few are generally allowed to live. They are thus also allowed to display the ego-to-id relationship of the human-vampire elements of the personality. As has often been noted, when the alternate-universe Vamp Willow makes her appearance in Sunnydale, we get our first inkling of Willow's lesbian leanings; and in a variation on the order of the change, the vampire Angelus's cruel obsession with Buffy is a transmutation of the love of Buffy born by Angel, the vampire with a soul: as Willow says to Buffy, "You're still the only thing he thinks about" ("Passion," 2017). Drusilla, the chaste nineteenth-century girl who was to have become a nun, the bride of Christ, becomes instead the sadistically sexual paramour of the vampire Spike. The alternative world's harder side of Xander feasts on Cordelia with Will—clearly a vampiric extension of the urges the normal Xander felt for Cordy. We also see vamp/nonvamp versions of both Darla and Harmony—who, however, seem to have lived their lives in fuller expression of their ids, since the change is not marked for either: Darla goes from colonial prostitute to bloodsucker, Harmony from high school ditz to vampire ditz. Only briefly, in the episode "Nightmares" (1010), do we see the vampire face of Buffy—and so briefly, in fact, that we do not see any evidence of a vampire personality.

[3]We do, however, see an extensive exploration of Buffy's dark side through two other characters: Faith and Spike. And as we move to this variation, we will move from Freudian analysis to include Jungian. To quote a very simple expression of the idea by Jung, "the realm of the shadow [. . .] is [. . .] the negative side of the personality" (147). As Don Keller and I, among others, have discussed, the dark-haired, violent, promiscuous Slayer Faith is Buffy's Shadow figure. In Faith, Buffy has battled the dark side of herself, and they have yet to come to resolution—though, interestingly, Buffy's Shadow Faith has taken Angel as her Vergilian guide through hell in her search for atonement on his eponymous series. And Buffy has at least recognized the need to allow that search, because, as Faith says to her, "[You] kill me, you become me" ("Enemies," 3017). Less obvious but even more interesting is the relationship with Buffy's second shadow, Spike.

[4]It is not until the fifth season episode "Fool for Love" (5010) that we see the late Victorian human version of the vampire we have known as Spike, or William the Bloody. Certainly the living William qualifies as an exemplar of repression of the id: when asked to join a conversation about a rash of recent, presumably vampiric, disappearances, he remarks, "I prefer not to think of such dark ugly business at all. [. . .]I prefer placing my energies into creating things of beauty," such as his poetry, which his acquaintances term "bloody awful." The Spike whom viewers have come to know since season two is a cheerfully vicious black-leather-wearing punk with peroxide blond hair, starting out as half of a Sid-and-Nancy set, with the raven-haired Drusilla, and later sidetracked by the implantation of a chip in his head which prevents his harming humans. The Victorian William, however, is dressed in a foppish suit that recalls not only the three-piece outfit Spike wears in "Tabula Rasa" (6008), but also the one in Xander's dream in "Restless" (4022), when Xander imagines Spike training to be a Watcher under the guidance of Buffy's mentor the Watcher Giles (and in fact Spike has recently performed some of a Watcher's informative functions). Furthermore, instead of white-haired, William is as blond as Buffy.

[5]In the excellent short essay, "Spike as Shadow," Delores J. Nurss explains:

> Spike has devoted a century to acting out William's shadow [and that also], Spike particularly reflects Buffy—he forces her to confront the fact that she is as much of a killer as he is, however much of a good guy she tries to be. But [the] Shadow doesn't just hold the bad things you've suppressed, but also the good you've turned your back on. When Buffy has difficulty relating to her Mom [sic], she comes home, to her horror, to find Spike sipping tea with Joyce and crying on her shoulder. When Buffy fears to ever fall in love again, Spike falls in love with her. In the context of [the] Shadow, Spike has not made one inconsistent move, ever.

Nurss's remarks on Spike as Shadow are, I think, very illuminating. Certainly Jung's words about the Shadow seem very apt: it "behaves more or less like a primitive, who is not only the passive victim of his

affects but also singularly incapable of moral judgment" (146). However, if we wish to be strictly Jungian, we might note that Jung says that "the shadow [. . .] is always of the same sex as the subject" (147). For a "contrasexual figure," "we meet the animus of a woman, and the anima of a man, two corresponding archetypes" (147), a male element of the female, and a female element of the male. Spike might be seen as Buffy's animus, and Buffy as Spike's anima. I find it interesting that one of the terms Jung mentions for the anima is the phrase "My Lady Soul" (though he dislikes the term as "too vague," 150-51—and sounds a bit like Barry White), a phrase which seems poignantly appropriate if we see Buffy as representing Spike's, or William's, anima. Despite the occasional felicity of application, I choose not to be too strictly Jungian, since that would involve acceptance of declarations such as Jung's remark that "In women [. . .] Eros ["the function of relationship"] is an expression of their true nature, while their Logos ["cognition"] is often only a regrettable accident" (152). With comments such as these in mind, I am more than willing to overlook Jungian gender specifications and stretch a point to call Spike Buffy's Shadow as well. As Ursula K. Le Guin says, "Jung's terminology is notoriously difficult, as he keeps changing meanings [. . .]" (58). In fact, if one employs the connection of the animus to the "paternal Logos" (152), it seems hardly Spike-like at all. But using another emphasis in the definition of the animus, Spike (not William) as quintessential masculine seems quite appropriate. As I have written elsewhere ("Who" 6), the name Spike is clearly phallic; the whole Spike persona seems a highly masculinized compensation for the relatively feminized poet William. Whether animus or shadow, it is still true, as Nurss says, that it is dangerous to ignore it, destroy it, or be seduced by it.

[6]And thus we return to love and death. In "Fool for Love," the episode in which we first see William, the softer side of Spike, we also see Spike kill two Slayers. As he describes their deaths at Buffy's request, he explains to her that "Every Slayer has a death wish—even you." He warns her that she's "just a little bit in love with it," that someday she'll feel the desire and "the second that happens, you know I'll be there—I'll slip in." In this emotionally charged scene, the image of the phallic Spike "slip[ping] in" unquestionably joins visions of sex and death. So, of course, does Buffy, when she tells the ensoulled Angel, "When I kiss you, I want to die"—not an idle comment, made to a vampire. When Buffy imagines Riley in her dream in "Hush" (4010), she has him say, "When I kiss you, it'll make the sun go down." As Don Keller suggests, the sun going down suggests the unconscious (170). I would add that, despite this statement's coming from Buffy's imagined sense of Riley, who is soon to be her boyfriend, still the combination of the kiss, the unconscious, and the setting sun evoke the image of a vampire again. Of Buffy's three major sexual relationships, two—the first and last—have been with vampires—the very notably named Angel and Spike. (I plan to write an entire essay on naming in *Buffy*.) Angel can never make love with his beloved Buffy because he will lose his soul if he does; his absolute restraint puts him in the position of the superego, while Spike at first clearly expresses the id. And of course, their names correspond to these functions. As for Riley, only in Buffy's dream does he make the sun go down, does he access the unconscious in his relationship with her; as Spike tells him, Buffy wants some "monster in her man" ("Into the Woods," 5010), and Riley does not have that in him.

[7]As for Buffy herself, as Spike notes, "The sun sets, and she appears." The Slayer, who fights the forces of darkness, is, like the vampires, a liminal character, on the edge between light and dark. To fight for the light, she must move through the darkness; and, after her dream encounter with the first of all Slayers and her actual encounter with Dracula, she agrees that, as they say, her "power is rooted in darkness" ("Buffy vs. Dracula," 5001)—i.e., her connection to the unconscious. In the context of the musical episode in which Spike says "the sun sets, and she appears," we are also aware of the fact that he means she has come to him again (though at this point their relationship is not actively sexual); in her unhappy state after her own return from death, she is drawn to his darkness. In sum, at this stage Buffy's desire for Spike and her desire for death are equivalent.

[8]What are we to make, then, of the last epigraph—Spike's declaration that "Every night I save you"? It contains at least two thematically important points. The most literal and obvious, paradoxically, contradicts the direct statement, because Spike does *not* save Buffy. The context is this: He makes the statement in "After Life," the third hour of the sixth season. At the end of the fifth season, Buffy had sacrificed her life to save the world and her sister in particular. In spite of the efforts of her friends the Scooby Gang (including Spike), a wound has been opened in the world, which Buffy has healed with her own body. Her sister Dawn

(another of the significantly named characters) has been chained to the top of a giant tower (Is there a Freudian in the house?) at which the opening is located, and into which Buffy flings herself. Despite Dawn's offer, Buffy will not allow her fourteen-year-old sister to take that plunge. The only other member of the Scooby Gang we ever see at the top of that tower is Spike, who has promised to protect Dawn and is flung down hundreds of feet to the ground, the fall of the white-haired vampire recalling the fall of Lucifer. The entire scene, with the tower and the glowing opening, can be seen as a Freudian representation of sexual joining. And Spike does come close to joining Buffy there, but he is not quite ready, not quite worthy; when she falls, she falls into the light; when he falls, he falls into the earth (literally, almost into the cracks of earthquake, though he pulls himself back just in time).

[9]One hundred and forty-seven days pass (the precise figure is of Spike's providing), and Willow, Xander, Tara, and Anya cast a spell which brings Buffy back: they fear that, like Angel in similar circumstances, she has been suffering in a hell dimension, and indeed she seems withdrawn and unresponsive. She goes to visit Spike in his crypt, pausing on the way in front of a funerary angel statue which creates a visual of Buffy outlined by wings. Spike, in the lower level of his crypt, smashes his hand against the rocks as he thinks of her: he knows Buffy has smashed her hand as she "clawed her way out of her coffin," emphasizing again the mirroring of the vampire and this Slayer ("Done it myself," he says). These two are both emotionally wounded, and when Spike emerges from below to find her in the upper level of his crypt, they each acknowledge the other's wound. Then he begins a more formal speech. In "After Life," Sarah Michelle Gellar and James Marsters perform what I call "mutual soliloquies"—each delivers to the other a speech which is in effect (in terms of both length and revelatory content) a soliloquy, while the other actor silently responds. It is an acting challenge which few could meet with the extraordinary skill of Gellar and Marsters. Gellar's responses are muted because of Buffy's condition, which we only know for certain by the end of the episode after the second "mutual soliloquy" in which Buffy informs Spike that she thinks she was in heaven, and was "torn out" by her friends. But for now we hear Spike's confession:

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

[10]Of course literally, as he is very unhappily confessing, Spike does *not* save Buffy. I can remember, after the second season of *The X-Files*, actually counting up the times Scully rescued Mulder, and vice versa (and at that point they were actually about even). Buffy is never the passive recipient of rescue by a solitary male. Sometimes males help her, or participate in a group effort, as Angel and Xander do in "Halloween" (2006) or "Reptile Boy," or as Spike himself does in "Family" (5006) (unseen) or "Blood Ties" (5013); but Buffy is never simply rescued by a solo male hero. [1] In fact, as many viewers know, she began her existence as a reversal of the stereotype of the little woman in need of saving. It is thematically positive that Spike does not literally save Buffy. But listen again to his words: "Every night I save you." For this line's second thematically important point, we must return to the underlying pattern of Buffy's relation to the night, the unconscious, the id, the shadow, or the animus. The hero must embrace this darkness to become truly strong—to save herself; and as the sixth season proceeds, Buffy embraces Spike.

[11]Even before her death, Buffy has been concerned about her deadening emotions. In the fifth season episode "Intervention" (5018), she says to Giles, "Maybe being the perfect Slayer means being too hard to love at all." At the beginning of the fifth season, she has asked Giles to help her investigate her roots in darkness; now he directs her to a quest during which she speaks with a Spirit Guide in the form of the First Slayer. Buffy asks if she's losing her ability to love—"not just boyfriend love"—and the Spirit Guide tells her: "Only if you reject it. Love is pain. And the Slayer forges strength from pain. Love—give—forgive—risk the pain—it is your nature. Love will bring you to your gift. [. . .] Death is your gift."

[12]This cryptic pronouncement has already been given one resolution, as Buffy realizes in the one

hundredth episode, "The Gift" (5022), that she can give her life in place of Dawn's. With this essay's discussion in mind, however, I would like to propose another application, though the explanation may take some time. By the sixth season it is generally accepted that Spike actually loves Buffy; his actions at the time of and after her death—a time when he, unlike the other Scoobies, was not planning for her return—show that he has not been motivated simply by lust; and in "Dead Things" 6013), the wise Tara tells Buffy, "He does love you." Buffy, however, repeatedly rejects this belief. In episode after episode, she says that, as a soulless vampire, he cannot feel anything. And in this view, of course, she projects her own emotional deadness. Especially after her literal return from the dead, she has felt emotionally detached. In the musical episode "Once More, with Feeling" (and note the last word of the title), just before she and Spike engage in their first romantic kiss (which closes the episode), she sings, "This isn't real, but I just want to feel"—whereas he sings, "I died so many years ago; you can make me feel as though it isn't so." It should be noted that the device of the episode is that a magic spell makes the characters sing their innermost feelings.

[13]Many critics (including me) who have discussed Faith's doubling of Buffy have cited the scene in which Faith has possessed Buffy's body and, in the shape of Buffy, batters the body of Faith, calling herself "disgusting, murderous" ("Who Are You?" 4016). It is a powerful image of self-hatred. In "Dead Things," the scene is recapitulated with Buffy's other double, Spike. Again we see Buffy above, battering the figure that represents the hated quality—in this case, Spike. Why does she strike him until his face looks almost as damaged as it did after Glory tortured him? Because, in trying to save her, he has insisted that he loves her, whereas she says (punctuating the words with punches), "You don't have a soul—[. . .] you're dead inside—you can't feel anything real." And yet at the end of this episode, Buffy is telling Tara that the only time *she* feels anything is when she is with Spike; and she sobs to her friend that Tara must *not* forgive her.

[14]As the Spirit Guide says, Buffy does need to forgive; she needs to forgive herself; she needs to forgive Spike, and the side of herself represented by him; as the Guide says, she needs to "risk the pain." In "Hell's Bells" (6016), the episode of Xander and Anya's failed wedding, a meddling demon comments, "Sometimes two people—all they bring each other is pain," just as we cut to a scene of Buffy and Spike meeting. In the preceding episode, she has broken off their torrid affair with the words, "I'm sorry, William"; with the use of his human name, there is an implicit (and rare) acknowledgment of that other self in him. At the wedding, both of them are pained by their meeting; but the two are so genuinely kind to each other that there is as much *caritas* as *eros* in the scene. "Not just boyfriend love," indeed.

[15]While I thoroughly enjoy observation, when it comes to *Buffy* I am not good at speculation. I will suggest, however, that despite the months of a passionately sexual affair and despite the apparent resolution of the kindness of the scene in "Hell's Bells," Buffy has not fully recognized her darker aspect; Buffy has not fully embraced her Spike. She cannot accept the possibility that he could change. In her essay on "The Undemonization of Supporting Characters in *Buffy*," Mary Alice Money expands on a comment by Golden and Holder to define the ability to change and to feel as the primary criteria for humanity. Buffy is barely beginning to conceive of the possibility of darker, even demonic elements in herself (see, e.g., "Restless"); and it may be even harder to contemplate the possibility of humanity in Spike; what would the implications be for her work as Slayer? Spike's is a metaphysically interesting case because of the difficulties it poses. As many critics have noted, *Buffy* is important in part because of the increasing moral complexity of its universe. The character Angel clearly contributed to the building of that complexity by being a vampire capable of good. However, since Angel is good because he possesses a soul, he still represents an essentialist definition of good. Spike owns no human soul, yet repeatedly *does* good; if he can be seen as capable of change, capable of good, capable of *love*, then he can represent an existentialist definition of good. The chip which prevents him from harming humans can be paralleled to psychiatric medications which allow sufferers a respite and the chance to work through their psychological issues. The subsequent change is thus not simply physiological.

[16]The change may be indicated in part by the metaphor of light and dark in the series. Just as coming to know the night within herself may help to save Buffy, so too Spike may need to come into the light of day.

In "After Life," just before she confesses to Spike (and only to Spike) that she thinks she has been in heaven, Buffy comments with surprise on his being out in the "daylight" yet, as he says, "not on fire? Sun's low enough; it's shady enough here." Along with this serious scene, there are many comedic instances (beginning as early as the fifth season) when Spike bundles himself up under a blanket in order to be near Buffy--and hence in the daylight. "Normal Again" (6017) provides another serious moment illuminated by light imagery: As Spike advises Buffy to "Let yourself live, already" and announces that he will tell her friends about them if she does not, he steps towards her but flinches and physically recoils: he has moved directly into the sunlight, and that is something he is not able to withstand. The expression on his face recalls his reaction to pain from the chip. He says that if her friends won't accept her having a relationship with him, Buffy can join him in the dark. However, the room in which he stands is actually lighter than the place he occupies in "After Life." As Buffy rests in the sunlight, he is unable to reach her, but he has tried--and it seems he is closer than he once would have been.[2] Not only such imagery, but words and actions in other scenes also suggest some degree of change. In "Hell's Bell's," when Buffy tells him that it hurts to see him with a woman they both know he has brought to the wedding solely to make Buffy jealous, his first, unthinking response is to say "I'm sorry"; then corrects himself to say "or—good." When (in "Smashed," 6009) he believes his chip has completely stopped working (before discovering that it has stopped reacting to Buffy alone among humans,[3] he goes hunting for a human to eat; but when he chooses one, he seems to have to talk himself into the vampiric act, with a diatribe of some length in front of the intended victim. With remarks like, "Just 'cause [Buffy's] confused about where she fits in, I'm supposed to be too? 'Cause I'm not," he seems to protest too much. He appears intent on convincing himself that "I'm evil," yet he also delays the vampiric attack: "I know what I am. I'm dangerous. I'm evil. [. . .] I am a killer. That's what I do. I kill. And yeah—maybe it's been a long time. But it's not like you forget how. You just do it. And now I can again—all right? So here goes." In the end, he almost apologizes to the intended victim: "This might hurt a little." In the next episode, "Wrecked" (6010), he goes with Buffy to locate the floating hideout of a master of dark magic, Rack, to which Will has taken Dawn. Rack's place, Spike explains, can only be sensed by witches, vampires, and others "into the Big Bad." Interestingly enough, Spike never finds the hideout; he complains that Buffy is interrupting him too much; and after searching for some time, they simply hear Dawn scream. Why is it so hard for Spike to find Rack's place? Could it be that Buffy is affecting him—that he is no longer so deeply "into the Big Bad"?

[17]It is also worth noting that Buffy and Spike do not make love until they discover that he *can* physically harm her—and though they do engage in their usual violent "dance" ("That's all we've ever done," he tells her in "Fool for Love"), he never really hurts her. One might certainly argue that she is drawn to him all the more powerfully because of the literal danger of death; "Every Slayer has a death wish." But one might also suggest that that there is an unacknowledged trust between them (as indeed Spike argues in "Tabula Rasa," though Buffy denies the idea in "Dead Things"). In any case, these two characters, who could have killed each other and have each literally died, die in each other's arms only metaphorically.

[18]John Donne would have enjoyed them. Donne was said to be ruined by his marriage to a woman above him; only after years of struggle and difficulty and, finally, conversion, did he emerge as the preacher who reminded us that "no man is an island" (a prime theorem in the Buffyverse)—and that the bell of death "tolls for thee," tolls for us all. Buffy and Spike, who have each physically died, have access to the unconscious, and their love-making is powerful—but sex and death are not enough. Spike tells Buffy that he knows her, that she is like him—and he is right; he knows her dark side in both its strengths and weaknesses. But he does not know all of her; and even more significantly, he does not know all of himself, any more than she knows all of him or of herself. Whether or not there is backsliding or a slow, straight climb up, I expect to see more from both Spike and Buffy. The quest for self-knowledge is part of life and growth; as Joss Whedon says, "I think of *Buffy* as life [. . .] Life doesn't stop [. . .] We're always changing and growing" (Kaveney cover). And as Ursula K. Le Guin says, "the shadow is the guide [. . .] of the journey of self-knowledge, to adulthood, to the light. 'Lucifer' means the one who carries the light" (61). To the degree that we can live with the failure, face the darkness, and risk the pain, then we can find hope, faith, and maybe even love in the words, "Every night I save you."

Works Cited

Campbell, Joseph. *The Hero with a Thousand Faces*. 2nd ed. Princeton: Princeton UP, 1968.

Dekelb-Rittenhouse, Diane. "Sex and the Single Vampire: The Evolution of the Vampire Lothario and Its Representation in *Buffy*." Wilcox and Lavery, 143-52.

Donne, John. "The Canonization." *The Complete Poetry and Selected Prose of John Donne & the Complete Poetry of William Blake*. New York: The Modern Library, 1941. 8-9.

Golden, Christopher, and Nancy Holder. Buffy the Vampire Slayer: *The Watcher's Guide.* Vol. 1. New York: Pocket, 1998.

Jung, C. G. *The Portable Jung.* Trans. R.F.C. Hull. Ed., introd. Joseph Campbell. New York: Penguin, 1976.

Kaveney, Roz. "'She Saved the World. A Lot': An Introduction to the Themes and Structures of *Buffy* and *Angel*." *Reading the Vampire Slayer: An Unofficial Critical Companion to* Buffy *and* Angel. Ed. Roz Kaveney. London: Tauris; New York: St. Martin's, 2001. 1-36.

Keller, Donald. "Spirit Guides and Shadow Selves: From the Dream Life of Buffy (and Faith)." Wilcox and Lavery, 165-77.

Krzywinska, Tanya. "Hubble-Bubble, Herbs, and Grimoires: Magic, Manichaeanism, and Witchcraft in *Buffy*." Wilcox and Lavery, 178-94.

Le Guin, Ursula K. "The Child and the Shadow." *The Language of the Night*: *Essays on Fantasy and Science Fiction.* Rev. ed. London: Women's Press, 1989. 54-67.

Money, Mary Alice. "The Undemonization of Supporting Characters in *Buffy*." Wilcox and Lavery, 98-107.

Nurss, Delores J. "Spike as Shadow." *Fists and Fangs*. 2001. <http://ficbitch.com/fistsandfangs/spikeasshadow.html>.

Turner, Victor. "Liminality and the Performative Genres." *Rite, Drama, Festival, Spectacle: Rehearsals Toward a Theory of Cultural Performance.* Ed. John J. McAloon. Philadelphia: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1984. 18-24.

Wilcox, Rhonda V. "'There Will Never Be a "Very Special" *Buffy*': *Buffy* and the Monsters of Teen Life." *Journal of Popular Film and Television* 27.2 (1999): 16-23. Republished in *Slayage: The Online International Journal of Buffy Studies* 1.2 (2001). < www.slayage.tv >.

___. "'Who Died and Made Her the Boss?': Patterns of Mortality in *Buffy*." Wilcox and Lavery, 3-17.

Wilcox, Rhonda V., and David Lavery. *Fighting the Forces: What's at Stake in* Buffy the Vampire Slayer. Lanham, Md: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002.

For episode documentation, see Wilcox and Lavery.

[1] In “Prophecy Girl,” Angel and Xander work together to first find (Angel) then breathe life into (Xander) Buffy. In "Angel," Angel stakes Darla; in "Fool for Love," Riley intervenes when Buffy has been stabbed; but in these and similar cases, Buffy is certainly in on the fight and might have succeeded in the end without help. Cf. Spike in "Intervention," as he allows himself to sink down in the elevator only after he knows Buffy has arrived to fight Glory's minions; he had previously prepared himself to go on fighting alone.

[2] The preceding material in paragraph 16 was revised April 28, 2002. The following passage originally appeared at this point in the essay. Thanks to Dawn Heinecken and Susan Wright for pointing out to me the fact that Spike was flinching from the sun.

> In "Normal Again," when Spike confronts Buffy about their relationship, he physically recoils as he is about to hurt her emotionally, the gesture recalling his standard reaction to pain from the chip. Yet attentive viewers know that his chip no longer reacts to Buffy (as he and Buffy discovered just prior to their first lovemaking); therefore his flinching without chip-stimulus suggests that he has internalized the response to causing pain. Furthermore, he is reacting to the thought of causing not just physical but nonphysical, emotional pain. Other scenes also suggest some degree of change.

[3] In "Dead Things," Buffy asks Tara to find out if Buffy has "come back wrong" from her resurrection. The idea that she is "wrong," changed to be closer to evil, may have made it easier for Buffy and Spike to come together sexually. However, Tara says that while Buffy has undergone a slight physical change which apparently fools Spike's chip, she is still the same person. Thus Buffy must confront the fact that her reaction to Spike is something within her "normal" self. In “Normal Again” (6017), it is when Buffy is confronted by Spike about their relationship that, in apparent avoidance, she decides to throw away *her* medication (cf. Spike’s chip) and thus leave the “normal” Sunnydale Buffyverse to take asylum in the otherverse’s mental institution.

THE ONLINE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUFFY STUDIES
Slayage Five

Zoe-Jane Playdon

"The Outsiders' Society": Religious Imagery in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

Eve am I, great Adam's wife,

I killed Jesus long ago . . .

Irish lament

Theoretically there would be no such thing as woman. She would not exist.

Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*

A shorter version of this essay appeared in *Reading the Vampire Slayer,* ed. by Roz Kaveney (London and New York: Tauris Parke Paperbacks, 2001: 120-47).

For Molly and Emily

Invitation

(1) "As a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world." [1] The famous declaration is Virginia Woolf's, championing in *Three Guineas*, women's rights both to education and entry into the professions, in a seminal feminist manifesto, important aspects of which, I shall suggest, are reflected in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

(2) In this essay, I should like both to celebrate and to critique the *Buffy* series, by placing it in the larger contexts of Western feminist spirituality and political thought. Especially, I intend to argue that Buffy

represents a particular combination of knowledge and power which places her outside the mainstream of super-heroes and leads to particular ideas of learning, of spirituality, and of citizenship. These ideas place Buffy and the Scoobies outside the dominant discourses of Western patriarchy and closer to Virginia Woolf's idea of a group of women, which:

> would have no honorary treasurer, for it would need no funds. It would have no office, no committee, no secretary; it would call no meetings; it would hold no conferences. If name it must have, it could be called the Outsiders' Society. (*Three Guineas* 232)

(3) Over the years, the feminist project has been concerned to slay its own vampires, in the form of ideas that, hundreds of years old, have prowled and fed on society's marginalized communities, especially women. My invitation, therefore, is to come on patrol with a select group of Slayers, to join Buffy, the Scoobies, and feminist thinkers, and to help in doing the dusting. [2]

Cemeteries and Sunlight

Cemeteries

(4) Let me map out the territory you will be working in. On the one hand is a monumental cemetery full of dead white males, the grand narrative of Western thought from Freud back to Plato, which, as Irigaray points out, consistently excludes women, by denying them subjectivity, that is, an existence of their own, in language, thought and imagination. [3] They provide the patriarchy, state-sanctioned patterns of thought and action, which consistently abject, or cast out from social identity, marginalized groups and individuals, who do not meet their economic or political definitions. Such works are not only the product of men, of course, so that, for example, the tradition may be typified by works such as Janice Raymond's *The Transsexual Empire* [4] and Germaine Greer's *The Whole Woman.* [5] Both of those female writers provide deterministic, dystopian accounts of woman as having an homogenous identity which is inescapably constructed by white, capitalist, male heterosexism. [6]

(5) Judged by standards such as Raymond's and Greer's, Buffy is another degrading sexploitation of the patriarchy, a woman who is objectified as a function –"the Slayer"—and controlled to serve ends which are not her own. She is a constructed woman, a kind of "cyborg," "a creature of social reality as well as science fiction": [7] constructed within the terms of the series, as the means for a male elite, the Council, to get their dangerous work done; constructed by the entertainment industry as soft SM porn, disguised as adventure story to legitimize scenes of violence against women; and constructed within media capitalism to provide image-branding and related merchandising opportunities, whether as tie-in "Buff-Stuff" or generic halter-neck tops for eleven year old girls.

Sunlight

(6) Exposing these ideas to sunlight, though, is the job of a more recent literature. Feminist writing reclaims the agency of marginalized individuals, it valorizes subjectivity, and it resists the fixity of state-sanctioned patterns of thought and behavior. So, Virginia Woolf's declaration in 1938 provides a reference point for Rosa Braidotti's idea of a feminist "nomadic consciousness," sixty years later. For Braidotti, nomadism is "the subversion of set conventions . . . not the literal act of traveling." [8] One expression of nomadism, therefore, is Luce Irigaray's devastating critique of Western thought, from Freud back to Plato, which argues that it is consistently structured to exclude women, by denying them subjectivity, that is, an existence of their own, in language, thought and imagination. [9] Similarly, Monique Wittig points to the abjection, the casting-out from social identity, of lesbians: "Lesbian is the only concept I know of which is beyond the categories of sex (woman and man), because the designated subject (lesbian) is not a woman,

either economically, or politically, or ideologically." [10]

(7) Trans theory—the use of the lived experience of intersexed and transgendered people to critique contemporary notions of gender and sexuality—provides a further means of exploring liminality, that is, the "in-between" areas that constitute the physical and intellectual boundaries of society. [11] Works such as Leslie Feinberg's *Transgender Warriors* demonstrate how women's oppression and trans oppression intersect, [12] while *Boys Like Her* [13] by Taste This, compounds the literal process of border-crossing with that of transgressive gender performativity. These ideas, and feminist thought in general, are accessible to everyone, not just women: male writers such as Deleuze and Foucault [14] contribute to feminist thought, which is concerned with the circumstances of all people, just as Giles and Xander are part of the Scoobies, who protect all Sunnydale.

(8) The stakes are, these ideas against the body of knowledge that represents the patriarchy. This essay invites you to become involved in an argument that *Buffy* offers not degrading readings of woman in society, but emancipatory ones, and that the series is suggestive of a series of feminisms: feminist theory, feminist mythology, and lesbian feminist politics. The aim is not to track down every allusion in the series, but to provide a framework against which you can test your own views and understandings of *Buffy*. Finally, apart from an occasional excursion to Los Angeles, the territory ends at the boundaries of Sunnydale since, to work within the restrictions of length, the focus of this essay will be on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, with only tangential reference being made to *Angel*.

In Giles's Library: Philosophy

Education and training

(9) My starting point is, that Slayers are both born and made. As Giles tries to tell Buffy in the first episode of the series, "Welcome to the Hellmouth" (1001):

> *Giles* Into each generation, a Slayer is born. One girl, in all the world, a Chosen One. One born with the . . .
>
> *Buffy* . . . the strength and skill to hunt the vampires, to stop the spread of evil, blah, blah. I've heard it, okay?

Not only is Buffy born as the Chosen One, however, but also part of Giles's role as her Watcher is to teach her how to slay vampires, as a scene in "Angel" (1007) makes clear:

> *Buffy (looking at some crossbow bolts)*: Huh, check out these babies; goodbye, stakes, hello, flying fatality. What can I shoot?
>
> *Giles* Nothing. The crossbow comes later. You must become proficient with the basic tools of combat. And let's begin with the quarterstaff. Which, incidentally, requires countless hours of rigorous training. I speak from experience.

Buffy Giles, twentieth century. I'm not gonna be fighting Friar Tuck.

Giles You never know with whom—or what—you may be fighting. And these traditions have been handed down through the ages. Now, show me good, steady progress with the quarterstaff and in due time we'll discuss the crossbow.

(Buffy demolishes him with the quarterstaff)

Giles *(on the floor, breathing hard)*: Good. Let's move on to the crossbow.

(10) The undercutting of Giles's role in controlling Buffy's learning, provides part of the humor of the series and indicates that the means by which Buffy learns to *become* a Slayer, as well as being *born* the Slayer, is a particular one, negotiated between them. The introduction of another Slayer, Kendra, in "What's My Line?" Part 2 (2010) makes this point. Kendra has been trained in what is to be understood as the traditional way:

Kendra My parents—they sent me to my Watcher when I was very young.

Buffy How young?

Kendra I don't remember them actually . . . I've seen pictures. But that's how seriously the calling is taken by my people. My mother and father gave me to my Watcher because they believed they were doing the right thing for me—and for the world.

By contrast, Buffy's single-parent mother is unaware that she is the Slayer, while Giles has made specific decisions not to intervene in Buffy's learning in the usual way. So, in "What's My Line? Part 2," he has not objected to her having friends who know that she is the Slayer:

Giles Kendra. There are a few people—civilians if you like—who know Buffy's identity. Willow is one of them. And they also spend time together. Socially.

Kendra And you allow this, sir?

Giles Well . . .

Kendra But the Slayer must work in secret. For security . . .

Giles Of course. With Buffy, however, it's . . . some flexibility is required.

and he has not even bothered to introduce her to the Slayer handbook:

Kendra I study because it is required. The Slayer handbook insists on it.

Willow There's a Slayer handbook?

Buffy Handbook? What handbook? How come I don't have a handbook?

Giles After meeting you, Buffy, I was quite sure the handbook would be of no use in your case.

(11) The need for Giles to support Buffy's learning in a particular way is a continual theme, so that when, in the fifth series, Giles decides to leave for England, since he believes he is no longer needed by Buffy, she makes it clear that she still needs his support ("Buffy vs. Dracula" (5001)):

Buffy You haven't been my Watcher for a while. I haven't been training and I haven't really needed to come to you for help.

Giles I agree.

Buffy And then this whole thing with Dracula. It made me face up to some stuff. Ever since we did that spell where we called on the first Slayer, I've been going out a lot. Every night.

Giles Patrolling.

Buffy Hunting. That's what Dracula called it, and he was right. He understood my power better than I do. He saw darkness in it. I need to know more, about where I come from, about the other Slayers. Maybe, maybe if I learn to control this thing, I could be stronger and I could be better. But I'm scared. I know it's going to be hard and I can't do it without you. I need your help. I need you to be my Watcher again.

(12) This negotiated learning relationship between Buffy and Giles may be typified as education rather than training. As Peters points out, training is concerned with "some specifiable type of performance that has to

be mastered," in which "practice is required for the mastery of it," and "little emphasis is placed on the underlying *rationale*." [15] Its focus is on transmission of skills, from an authority to a passive recipient, where the authority knows why the work has to be performed and the recipient simply does it. Education, though, takes place through "conversation" rather than "courses," in which "lecturing to others is bad form; so is using the remarks of others as springboards for self-display. The point is to create a common world to which all bring their distinctive contributions." [16] The goal of education is "transformation," since "education implies that a man's outlook is transformed by what he knows," rather than "transmission" of a set of behaviors. It is clear from what has been said so far, that the relationship between Buffy and Giles is one of education: she doesn't need training in the quarterstaff, but she does need his distinctive contribution of esoteric knowledge and she needs the relationality of friendships to achieve personal growth and transformation.

For Buffy, her role as Slayer is fundamental to her being, as Kendra recognizes ("What's My Line?" Part 2):

Kendra: You talk about slaying like it's a job. It's not. It's who you are.

Buffy: Did you get that from your handbook?

Kendra: From you.

Knowing and Being

(13) The philosophical concept lying behind the distinctions between education and training, is a division between "knowing" and "being," epistemology and ontology, which has been fundamental to Western civilization since Plato. Feminist thinking has taken these two philosophical categories into new areas. Now, a distinction may be made between "praxis," feminist epistemology which focuses on socially situated knowledge, to develop theory from the lived experience of marginalized groups, and "the Academy," knowledge hallowed by the patriarchy, which foregrounds objectivity and the unquestionable truths of scientism. [17] Similarly, ontology, or being, is typified by patriarchical thought as comprising hierarchical organizational systems and entities—the Ideological State Apparatus of Louis Althusser [18] - in a Copernican, regulated universe. Feminist terms, though, foreground the importance of relationality and community in matters of being, with organizational form typified by Virginia Woolf's Outsiders' Society.

(14) To contextualise this, most super-heroes are *either* born *or* made. Into the first category falls figures such as Superman, whose powers result from the accident that has placed him on earth, and those, such as Spiderman and the Flash, whose powers come about as a result of a physical accident. Their superiority is ontological, it arises from their simple physical being. Into the second category fall figures such as Batman, who teaches himself physical skills and scientific knowledge, and Xena Warrior Princess, who has learned special skills in combat, healing, and esoteric knowledge. Their superiority is epistemological, their strength comes through knowledge. Where it might appear that ontology is supported by epistemology in the creation of masculinist super-heroes, it is clear that the knowledge that is being invoked is of a particular kind, one that claims its being outside and beyond the subjectivity of feminist epistemologies. So, the knowledge which sets up the 'scientific experiment gone wrong," by which Flash, the Atom, and Elastic Lad are created, is some mysterious, unrepeatable, unknowable science, as dark, fathomless and forbidding as patriarchy's Academy. Further, where the learning is human-scale and benign, as in the origin of Aquaman, it is firmly transmitted through the male line, as part of the fraternal social contract [19] through which the

patriarchy replicates its power. Similarly, in the cases of Batman and Xena, the ontological events which accompany their epistemological origins, the murder of Batman's parents and Xena's overpowering by Hercules, fall outside the realms of feminist ontologies and into that of male violence.

(15) For Slayers, though, there is no division between being and knowing: they are born Slayers and simultaneously they learn to slay, they have inherent physical gifts of strength, stamina and recovery from injury, and they have to learn to fight effectively so as not to be killed. Their actions reflect both their being in the world and their approach to learning about the world: Kendra is trained: Kendra is killed. Buffy is educated: Buffy survives. By reconciling epistemology and ontology, knowing and being, Buffy falls outside the mainstream of super-heroes, therefore, a position which is underlined in the series by a constant stream of references to popular culture, with the implication that those icons are less real than the [fictional] characters who are referring to them: Power Girl ("Killed by Death," 2018); Clark Kent ("Never Kill a Boy on a First Date," 1005); Human Torch ("The Witch," 1003); Xena Warrior Princess ("Halloween," 2006); Pink Ranger ("What's My Line?" Part 2); and, of course, "the Scoobies" ("What's My Line?" Part 1, 2009).

Plato's world

(16) The distinction between knowing and being, reconciled by Buffy, is fundamental to reading the series' religious symbolism and political significance. It finds its origins in Greek thought. In Plato's world view, that which is best in human life is just a shadow of "Ideal Forms" which exist out of this world, and are only accessible to those with spiritual intuition. [20] Thus, the numinous is transcendent, or, in other words, that which is awe-inspiring, that which appeals to the sense of mystery in human beings, is located in some sort of heaven, beyond the reach of ordinary people. So, with one stroke, knowing is separated from being. Now, it is possible for people to live, to be, but not to know that which they hold most important, since it has been made transcendent and placed beyond their grasp.

(17) The consequence of this separation between being and knowing is that it is not sufficient for people simply to be, in order to know. Knowledge has been annexed and access to it is now restricted to certain kinds of people, who use it as a means of gaining power. Plato makes it clear, in *The Republic*, that these were his purposes, since its rulers will be given different knowledge to everyone else. "Those who are now called kings and potentates must learn to seek wisdom like true and genuine philosophers, and so political power and intellectual wisdom will be joined in one [. . .] it is the proper nature of these to keep hold of true wisdom and to lead in the city," he says, whereas the others must "leave philosophy alone and follow their leader." [21] Philosopher-Kings will be given "the most complete education or honor or rule" (*The Republic* 302). They will force everyone else to take a subordinate role, by limiting their knowledge, so that they learn only their specified trade, by telling "one genuine lie":

> "so you are all brothers in the city," we shall tell them in our fable, "but while God molded you, he mingled gold in the generation of some, and those are the ones fit to rule, who are therefore the most precious; he mingled silver in the assistants; and iron and brass in farmers and the other craftsmen." (*The Republic* 214)

Knowledge and Power

(18) For Plato, knowledge is power, "most mighty of all powers" (*The Republic* 278) and he reserves power by restricting knowledge. Herein lies the political distinction between "training" and "education": training is an act of subjugation, education an act of empowerment. When Buffy refuses to acknowledge the power of the Council—"the council is not welcome here. I have no time for orders" (*Graduation, Part 2*) she is

challenging a political philosophy which is more than two thousand years old, and championing a feminism which has existed for less than a century. It is the same challenge provided by Virginia Woolf's requirement for education *and* entry into the professions—equal knowledge *and* equal being.

(19) This challenge is particularly important because the idea of democracy, in Western civilization, consistently refers itself to the processes enacted in ancient Greek society, particularly that of Athens, and the principles propounded by philosophers of that period, especially those of Plato. [22] The challenge to it which Buffy provides is significant, therefore, both because she combines knowing and being and because she is a woman. In Athenian society, the model for modern Western democracy, women had no status as citizens: the "brothers in the city," whether Philosopher-Kings or farmers or shoemakers, were all brothers: spiritual power and political authority were purely patriarchal, with women, at best, having a handmaiden role in religion as a servant of a god—such as the Pythoness who spoke for Apollo at Delphi—in a pantheon which was understood as a patriarchal structure with Zeus as its head. Other superheroes consult and take guidance from the male head of society who knows best how to use their special powers of being—Superman talks to the President and Batman to Commissioner Gordon, for instance. Buffy herself knows best how to use her being, and also knows what assistance she needs to learn more, to live and be more effectively. This is demonstrated conclusively in the *Checkpoint* episode, where Buffy tells the Council that their claims to have power over her are false, and where she reverses the balance of power by giving them orders, which they must take, including the re-employment of Giles. Unlike other pop-culture heroes, therefore, the character of Buffy the Vampire Slayer is highly suggestive of alternative spiritual values and political relationships. It is to these two areas that I now wish to turn.

On Patrol, First Shift: Religious Symbolism

Beastly women

(20) In the Occidental mythic tradition, as Campbell points out, the division between knowing and being is represented by the Judaeo-Christian Creation myth, of a paradise, the Garden of Eden, containing two trees. [23] One tree is the tree of life (and thus has ontological status) and the other tree bears the fruit of knowledge of good and evil (and thus has epistemological status). [24] The Fall, and the expulsion from paradise, arose from eating one fruit and not the other, an action which was used by the orthodox Christian church to create the doctrine of Original Sin, and to erect a power system to provide salvation, through the divine agency of Christ. Such salvation was available to all those with souls, which, to the medieval Church, did not necessarily include women: Eve had been created out of Adam's spare rib, in the creation story they preferred, and while she shared his body, did not necessarily share his soul. Rather, like the vampires slayed by Buffy, women had more in common with animals: *habet mulier animum?*—has woman a soul?—was the perplexing debate of the European Middle Ages.

The numinous female

(21) The *Buffy* series, however, reaches through this traditional Christian interpretation, to alternative viewpoints. Buffy herself dies and is resurrected, and thus becomes a kind of woman-Christ, an idea of the divine feminine which follows the mystical Christian tradition exemplified by Juliana of Norwich, who follows St Anselm and St Bernard in referring to "our heavenly Mother Jesus." [25] So, she exemplifies the redemptive potential which is an important theme of the series, and which, arguably, operates for all of its central characters, on different levels. It is a particular idea of redemption, however, and one which, as Buffy's status as "woman-Christ" hints, belongs to earlier theologies than that of contemporary state-endorsed Christianities. As Elaine Pagels points out, the doctrine of the bodily resurrection of Christ is a political one, which "legitimizes the authority of certain men who claim to exercise exclusive leadership over the churches as the successors of the apostle Peter." [26] A letter written by Clement, Bishop of Rome, circa 90-100, makes this clear:

> God, he says, delegates his "authority of reign" to "rulers and leaders on earth." Who are these designated rulers? Clement answers that they are bishops, priests, and deacons. Whoever refuses to "bow the neck" and obey the church leaders is guilty of insubordination against the divine master himself . . . whoever disobeys the divinely ordained authorities "receives the death penalty!" (Pagels 60)

(22) Plato's Philosopher-King, with special spiritual intuition, is translated into a Bishop of Rome, divinely ordained by God and legitimized by the apostolic succession instituted by a resurrected Christ. This position reflects a struggle for power in the early Christian church, led by Irenaeus on behalf of the "orthodox"—literally, 'straight thinking"—Christians, which was won by that group when they gained the military support from the converted Emperor Constantine in the fourth century. It eradicated a different theological and intellectual tradition, that of the Gnostics, who believed that divinity was not transcendent but was immanent, that God was not in heaven but was present in everyone on earth. So, as Pagels explains, in the Gnostic tradition, 'self-knowledge is knowledge of God; the self and the divine are identical"; "when the disciple attains enlightenment, Jesus no longer serves as his spiritual master: the two have become equal—even identical"; and, rather than remaining distinct from the rest of humanity whom he came to save, both Jesus and his followers "have received their being from the same source" (Pagels 19). Gnosis, literally "knowledge," is a particular kind of knowledge: not the 'straight thinking" of mathematics or logic, but self-knowledge and intuitive understanding of others, a discipline of reflection and compassion.

(23) It is this sensibility which informs the spiritual dimension of *Buffy* and of *Angel*. Redemption—not a salvation from a transcendent god, but a here-and-now personal wholeness - is always possible and available, here on earth. This is exemplified by Buffy herself, who, as the Slayer, must face and deal with vampires and demons—powerful symbols for the darkness encountered on any private inward journey. It is true, too, for those that she saves physically, for they are her friends and neighbors, rather than people from whom she is emotionally distant. These people, though, are not reliant on Buffy for anything other than their physical safety: their spiritual journey is their own work, and a personal redemptive experience equal to that of Buffy's is accessible to them, as the principal characters demonstrate, through their own particular sensibilities. So, Angel explicitly, continually seeks atonement and redemption; Giles leaves the orthodoxy of the Council; Oz seeks control of his were-wolf side through yogic meditation; Willow develops spiritually through Wicca; Buffy's mother learns financial and emotional independence; Cordelia develops responsible autonomy; Xander finds self-respect through craftsmanship; Tara realizes her complete humanity; Spike's evil becomes ambiguous and then turns to compassion for Buffy ("Fool For Love," 5007); and Faith embarks on a journey of self-discovery and ethical reconstruction. To underline the point that Buffy's death and resurrection are not reserved for her alone, Angel, too, dies and is resurrected, becoming a further "Christ-analogue," an identity emphasized by the scene in "City of Angels," evocative of Christ's temptation, when, in the high place represented by the top floor of corporate offices, he refuses worldly authority with his question to Russell Winters, "can you fly?"

(24) The Gnostic writings that remain, known as the Nag Hammadi Library, point to earlier traditions, in which Eve gave life to Adam, at the bidding of a female godhead. The tractate *On the Origin of the World* tells that:

> After the day of rest, Sophia sent Zoë, her daughter, being called Eve, as an instructor in order that she might make Adam, who had no soul, arise . . . she said, "Adam, become alive! Arise up upon the earth!" Immediately her word became accomplished fact. [27]

Female subjectivity is writ large here, in a Christian account of the creation myth which transsexualizes the orthodox tradition, and challenges patriarchal political authority, just as other secret texts—the *Gospel of Philip*, the *Dialogue of the Savior*, the *Gospel of Mary* [28] - replace the apostle Peter's delegated authority with a primary relationship between Christ and Mary Magdalene. So, the *Buffy* series provides an interplay

between the redemptive and the creationary aspects of the sacred female. The re-creation of Angel, naked like Adam, is brought about by Buffy-Zoë's silent invocation of him, symbolized by the placing of her Claddagh ring at the place where she killed him ("Faith, Hope and Trick," 3003). Angel-Adam, returned from hell, is also Angel-Christ, [29] on an equal footing to Buffy-Christ, whose death and return to life is emphasized in the same episode by her mother being told of it. As in the Gnostic sensibility, therefore, the relationship between Buffy and Angel is not only primary, but also equal, so that Angel's redemption is of his own willing as well as of Buffy's action—as Giles points out, "there are two kinds of monster. The first can be redeemed, or more importantly, wants to be redeemed"("Beauty and the Beasts," 3004).

The Moon

(25) Baring and Cashford point out that the Gnostic tradition draws on earlier theologies which valorize the numinous female, [30] the earliest written account of which, in Western civilization, is the collection of myths, verse and hymns from Sumeria in 2,000 BC, concerning Inanna. The relationship between Faith, Buffy and Angel seems to find resonances with the longest of those hymns, *The Descent of Inanna.* In the Sumerian account, the goddess Inanna turns her attention to her "dark side," to her sister-goddess, Ereshkigal:

> From the Great Above she opened her ear to the Great Below.
>
> From the Great Above the goddess opened her ear to the Great Below.
>
> From the Great Above Inanna opened her ear to the Great Below.
>
> My Lady abandoned heaven and earth to descend to the underworld. [31]

Her entry into the underworld is a process of progressive stripping of authority and power, and Ereshkigal fiercely kills Inanna, and hangs her corpse on a hook, to rot:

> Then Ereshkigal fastened on Inanna the eye of death.
>
> She spoke against her the word of wrath.
>
> She uttered against her the cry of guilt.
>
> She struck her.
>
> Inanna was turned into a corpse,
>
> A piece of rotting meat,
>
> And was hung from a hook on the wall. ("The Descent of Inanna" 60)

(26) At the pleading of her faithful woman-servant, Ninshubur, the gods allow Inanna to be rescued by tiny, cross-gendered creatures, the *kurgarra* and *galator*, who bring Inanna back to the world above. But

Ereshkigal must have a sacrifice of some sort, and Inanna is pursued by the *galla*, demons of the underworld. In her place, therefore, Inanna first gives Ereshkigal her husband, Dumuzi, and then, on the lamentations of his sister, Geshtinanna, agrees that for half the year, Dumuzi will dwell in the underworld, and that for the other half of the year, Geshtinanna will take his place.

(27) The secular explanation for the myth is that it reflects the universal concern with the cycle of the moon—which goes into darkness each month for three days, as Inanna lies dead in the underworld—and the cycle of the seasons, with the earth lying fallow during Autumn and Winter. Its analogues with orthodox Christian belief are obvious—the three days spent in hell by Christ, the theme of resurrection—and indeed, the same preoccupations with new life, death and resurrection form a central motif in Western theologies from Inanna onwards, with some of the same language: Inanna, like the Virgin Mary, was Queen of Heaven and Star of the Morning, and Dumuzi, like Christ, was the shepherd. The *Buffy* series, too, echoes the same themes. Buffy must visit her "dark sister," not once but time and again. Ereshkigal is represented most obviously by Faith, the Slayer-gone-bad, who figuratively kills Buffy by taking her body from her ("This Year's Girl," 4015), but that darkness is also represented by the First Slayer ("Restless," 4022) who haunts Buffy's dreams; by her negative reaction to Willow coming out as a lesbian, so that her 'sister" becomes sexually threatening ("New Moon Rising," 4019); and by Glory, whose giant snake Sobek stands in place of the galla, pursuing Buffy's sister, Dawn ("Shadow," 5008); and most explicitly by the "death-wish" which, Spike tells Buffy, led to the death of previous Slayers ("Fool For Love," 5007). A similar journey towards understanding the hidden aspects of the self, as part of a necessary movement towards spiritual growth and wholeness, affects other key characters in the series: Willow first becomes aware of her lesbian identity when her "dark-side" enters the world as Vampire Willow ("Doppelgangland," 3016), while in his past, Giles was known as "Ripper" and was a member of the dark cult of Eyghon ("The Dark Age," 2008). Angel perpetually holds in balance his dual identity as vampire and human, literally lives in hell for an unspecified period of time, and on his return, finds it necessary to leave Sunnydale for Los Angeles, where he is joined by Buffy's sister-slayer, Faith, for whom he provides a release from her darkness, as Dumuzi does for Geshtinanna.

(28) To move to a more generally familiar mythology, Buffy is like that Greek aspect of the moon-goddess which was personified as Artemis. Like Artemis, Buffy is a hunter, with the "scoobies"—named for the cartoon Great Dane—acting as the dogs which traditionally accompany Artemis. Like Artemis, too, she is (for much of the series) chaste—her primary relationship, with Angel, precludes sexual intercourse. As Artemis's slaying of animals represents the natural apotheosis of life, so Buffy's slaying of vampires restores them to the natural order of life and death. Artemis has other aspects, as goddess of childbirth and as Hecate, death-hag of the crossroads, because she is a moon-goddess, representing, like Inanna, the transformation of the moon from new, to full, to waning, darkness and re-birth. It is this transformative potential, this cycling through dark and light—enacted literally by Buffy's daytime school and college, and her night-time slaying—that is the theologically and philosophically important aspect of Buffy. Spiritually, it is what keeps her alive, where other Slayers die, since she is "tied in" to the world of loving relationality, as Spike tells her: "The only reason you've lasted as long as you have is you've got ties to the world... your mum, your brat kid sister, the Scoobies. They all tie you here but you're just putting off the inevitable" ("Fool for Love"). Philosophically, it keeps her alive since it represents education, rather than training, the potential for transformation by shared inquiry and personal reflection, rather than instruction in skills to be performed under direction. Kendra has neither relationality nor education: she was taken from her parents and trained according to the handbook. Where Buffy has subjectivity and is encouraged to develop autonomy by Giles, Kendra is only an object, a token in the "exchange of women" [32] which forms the patriarchy of the Council and her Watcher, and her willing acceptance of this abjection means that, in every political sense, she is dead already.

Archetypes

(29) It is not that there are exact correspondences between the spiritual universe of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and either Gnostic Christianity or goddess theologies. Rather, it is that the sensibilities of *Buffy*

resonate far more convincingly with those earlier spiritual traditions than they do with orthodox Christianity. Indeed, it might be argued that the artifacts of orthodox Christianity—the Cross, Holy Water—belong more forcefully to the world of the vampires and demons, since they have an obvious effect on them, which is not extended to the Scoobies: Buffy and her team use these icons but they do not worship them, or attend a place where they are worshipped, any more than they worship the other esoteric artifacts which appear in the series, such as the Glove of Myhnegon, or the Orb of Thesulah. Rather, recognition of the virtuous nature of Christian artifacts and use of them means that they take on an archetypal nature, and are given universal significance. The orthodox Christian cross and crucifix become translucent to the universal Tree of Life, the erica-tree of Osiris, the pine-tree of Attis, Odin's world-ash, the Shaman's journey, the Maypole of country ritual. [33] Similarly, Holy Water becomes translucent to the tears of Christ, the Flood from which the world was reborn, the blood of the Grail, the Water of Life which has represented the generative power of the natural world from the European Upper Palaeolithic period onwards. [34]

(30) Equally, the spiritual vision of *Buffy* is an immanent one, one which exists on earth, not a transcendent one in an unattainable heaven. The demons and monsters exist in the present, on earth, and although other dimensions are acknowledged, their existence is parallel with, not separate from, the lived, daily one of Sunnydale. Sunnydale is, literally, the site of the hell-mouth, the point at which earth and other dimensions meet, and the regular fighting of monsters takes place on its streets. Spiritual pain and spiritual loss are perpetually present, just as spiritual grace is perpetually accessible, in the here and now. Transformation is achieved at an individual level, by the use of personal agency, and by the extension of that agency to others, through compassion.

(31) A universal dimension of this is the resonance which the series sets up with earlier theologies than that of orthodox Christianity. Gnosticism was only one of the religious beliefs that the orthodox Church outlawed: its monotheism and its vigorous creation of a politically dominant, patriarchal structure, meant that all other beliefs were equally outlawed and ruthlessly suppressed. So, for example, another set of beliefs, at one time a dominant theology of the Western world, were the Eleusinian Mysteries, sacred to Demeter and Persephone, enacting, like the *Descent of Inanna*, the lawfulness of the natural world and its cycles, and supporting adherents in the human necessity of making friends with death. [35] The little we know about them comes, in the main, from the attacks made on them by early Christian writers, before their final destruction. Similarly, Mithraism, which challenged Christianity as the mass-religion of the Roman empire, and which celebrated the birth of the divine male, (with Mithras standing in place, in Persian culture, of Sumerian Dumuzi, Egyptian Osiris, Greek Attis, and other transliterations of the new life brought forth by the earth) was suppressed and destroyed, with insuppressible remnants being absorbed into Christian myth. So, Mithras's title, *Sol Invictus* - "Unvanquished Sun," light eternal - was adopted for Christ, and the celebration of his birth, at the winter solstice, was fixed as 25 December, just as, replacing another tradition, the summer solstice became St John's Day. [36] These mysteries were, therefore, part of the enduring consciousness of western civilization, reappearing in many different forms, but always with the same principle of the numinous female at their centre, as Apuleius points out in the wonderful Eleusinian invocation he gives in *The Golden Ass*:

> I am Nature, the universal Mother, mistress of all the elements, primordial child of time, sovereign of all things spiritual, Queen of the Dead, first also among the immortals, the single manifestation of all gods and goddesses that are. My nod governs the shining heights of Heaven, the wholesome sea-breezes, the lamentable silences of the world below. Though I am worshipped in many aspects, known by countless names and propitiated with all manner of different rites, yet the whole earth venerates me. The primeval Phrygians call me the Goddess of Pessinus, Mother of the Gods: the Athenians, sprung from their own soil, call the Minerva of Cecrops' citadel; for the islanders of Cyprus I am Paphian Venus; for the archers of Crete I am Diana Dictynna; for the trilingual Sicilians, Stygian Prosperine; and for the Eleusinians, their ancient Goddess Ceres. Some know me as Juno, some as Bellona, others as Hecate, others again as the Goddess of Rhamnus, but [. . .] the Egyptians, who excel in ancient learning and worship me with their appropriate ceremonies, call me

by my true name, Queen Isis. [37]

(32) The point is, that Buffy represents a feminist spirituality which locates the sacred in the personal, and which accepts personal responsibility, within a subjective, relational framework, for individual actions—for the sense of "goodness" she has. By contrast, at the point at which Angel leaves Buffy, and moves to Los Angeles, he leaves his point of access to the immanent. His reason for leaving signals this: he does it because he is persuaded that it is for Buffy's own good, that is, he removes from her the reasonable right to speak to for herself, to identify her own desires, and instead invokes some transcendent ideal of right behavior—a paternalistic, "daddy knows best" ideal of women as obedient to men—by which to guide his actions. *Angel*, sadly beyond the scope of this essay, demonstrates the limitations of the orthodox Christian ideas by which he then measures his conduct. He actively seeks atonement of what he now understands to have been his sins, hovering on despair, and constantly thwarted in his attempts to "earn" some mechanistic redemption, by one good act or another. Instead of the dark, inward journey Buffy takes, to meet her inner guide in the form of the first Slayer, her most fundamental self, when she believes herself unable to love ("Intervention," 5018), Angel is deluded into objectifying his inner dilemma as 'sin" and projecting it onto externalized others, whom he tries to save in the same way that he tried to 'save" Buffy - by his agency, not theirs. If the series runs true to the myth, [38] then it will be only when Angel returns to the simple, human scale of values, that he will be redeemed. [39]

(33) The religious symbolism used in *Buffy* draws on a tradition of a numinous female, therefore, who exists in a nurturing and powerful relationship with natural order, and this valorization of woman thus provides a political standpoint as well as a theological one. I now wish to turn to that political significance.

On Patrol, Second shift: Political Significance

Citizenship

(34) Politics may be understood, on the one hand, as the politics of public life, the state, and political parties, with Sunnydale as a microcosm of Western democracy. On the other hand, though, politics may be understood as relationship, located less narrowly in the public sphere, and, in feminist interpretations, focusing on gendered systems, the distribution of resources, and the location of power. These two ideas are conjoined in the notion of citizenship, which represents the relationship between public and private life. The issues of frontiers and boundaries, raised at the start of this essay, are important in all three ideas, both in physical terms of crossing borders, and in moral terms. At the heart of the relationship between politics and citizenship, too, lies the question as to "whether the citizen is conceptualized as merely a subject of an absolute authority or as an active political agent." [40] The thrust of Platonic democracy, I have argued, is towards citizens as political subject, while the thrust of the Scoobies—especially Buffy and Willow - I shall argue, is towards citizen as active political agent. This agency, I wish to show, is demonstrated by their transgression of boundaries, their rejection of authoritarian systems of control, their exclusion from socially accepted norms, and their creation of alternative ways of living.

Participation

(35) Buffy herself is implicitly transgressive, because of her unique, embodied reconciliation of epistemology and ontology, and thus she provides an immediate political challenge to the order of life in Sunnydale. This political challenge is extended by the community formed by herself and her friends, which, like Gnostic communities, is based on a participative model rather than a hierarchical one. Leadership shifts, from Buffy to Giles to Willow to Angel to Oz to Xander to Riley, depending on who is functionally appropriate at any one time. They form an "Outsiders' Society," which, like that envisioned by Virginia Woolf, has no funds, no office, no committee and no secretary. Rather, each person is valued for different qualities, as the collaborative spell used to destroy Adam—the monster created by the Army and thus the personification of a male, hierarchical, authoritarian viewpoint—demonstrates, to which Willow contributes

"spiritus" [spirit], Xander contributes "Animus" [heart], Giles contributes "sophus" [mind] and Buffy contributes "Manus" [hand] ("Restless"). This integrated, equal, participation provides a deliberate contrast to the political order represented by Adam: Buffy says "You could never hope to grasp the source of our power," as she pulls out Adam's mechanical power supply ("Restless").

(36) The Scoobies' contingent, conceptualized, functional, form of participative management is in strong contrast to the enforced, patriarchal, hierarchical structures which typifies the series' evil leaders—The Master, Principal Snyder, The Mayor—and which is embodied in the terms of vampirism: vampires "sire" other vampires, in a linguistic association of rape, insemination, and kingship. The Master kills retainers who under-perform, as the Three did ("Angel"). Principal Snyder rejoices in using his public position to violate the personal rights of individuals—"This is a glorious day for principals everywhere. No pathetic whining about students' rights. Just a long row of lockers and a man with a key" ("Gingerbread," 3011) and the Mayor continues to seek power and control from beyond the grave, leaving a video-tape of instructions for Faith ("This Year's Girl").

Surveillance

(37) As Foucault points out, surveillance is a principal agency by which hierarchies enact power. [41] Such surveillance is contingent on separating the tasks to be performed in the workplace or community, from the knowledge and craft needed to perform them—a deliberate division of ontology from epistemology. From this, as Braverman demonstrates, arises "the degradation of labor," a system of production and social control in which a hierarchical management pre-specifies the tasks to be performed by labor and supervises their work. [42] It is a surveillance arrangement such as this that Buffy explicitly refuses at the start of her relationship with Giles ("Welcome to the Hellmouth"):

Buffy First of all, I'm a Vampire Slayer. And secondly, I'm retired. Hey, I know! Why don't you kill 'em?

Giles I-I'm a Watcher, I-I haven't the skill...

Buffy Oh, come on, stake through the heart, a little sunlight... It's like falling off a log.

Giles A, a Slayer slays, a Watcher..

Buffy Watches?

Giles Yes. No! (sets down the books) He, he trains her, he, he, he prepares her...

Buffy Prepares me for what? For getting kicked out of school? For losing all of my friends? For having to spend all of my time fighting for my life and never getting to tell anyone because I might endanger them? Go ahead! Prepare me.

They just look at each other for a moment. Buffy exhales, turns and leaves the library in disgust.

(38) Even when Buffy does quit, and retires to Los Angeles, her return is sparked off by a demon which enslaves humans into absolutely degraded labour—"You work, and you live. That is all"—in a dark, brutalizing iron works, lit by vats of molten metal and flying sparks (*Anne*), an image of industrialized hell used from Charles Dickens onwards. [43] That it is Buffy's agency which creates a different relationship from the usual surveillance one, rather than a quality implicit in Slayers, is made clear by the way in which Kendra accepts the surveillance and control of her Watcher, just as Faith does with the Mayor. Supporting ontological subordination is, of course, a denied epistemological agency, the control-model of Kendra's training and Faith's relationship with the Mayor, as opposed to the negotiation of Buffy's educational contract with Giles. [44]

(39) Autonomy is available, but action is required to gain it: otherwise, Slayers and other citizens are merely pawns of an absolute authority. While Buffy provides an implicit political challenge, therefore, Willow provides the series' most explicit challenges. Her "nomadism," her crossing of social and moral boundaries, is frequently underlined. She transgresses usual school social expectations by having an unusually able intellect, by being unfashionably dressed ("Welcome to the Hellmouth") and by dating a werewolf. She transgresses her family religious boundaries ("Passion," 2017):

> *Willow* *(nailing crosses around her French doors)* I'm going to have a hard time explaining this to my dad.
>
> *Buffy* You really think this'll bother him?
>
> *Willow* Ira Rosenberg's only daughter nailing crucifixes to her bedroom wall? I have to go to Xander's house just to watch "A Charlie Brown Christmas" every year.

and then goes through a deeply personal, inward journey, to find a further transgressive identity as a lesbian Wiccan. In this context, it is clear that Willow's Wiccan identification is a political one, rather than a religious one. As *Buffy the Vampire Slayer: the Monster Book* points out, Wicca "is an established and legitimate religion" into which it would be an anomaly "to keep throwing demons" since "they do not believe in demons or the Christian mythology of devils." [45] Further, representations of Wicca in the influential works of Gerald Gardner [46] and of Vivianne Crowley, [47] are fundamentally heterosexist, rather than lesbian, developing from a notion of a union of male and female principles, rather than one of female and female. Finally, Willow makes it clear that she is concerned with the alternative power-base that the craft offers, and it is that shared interest which attracts her to Tara ("Hush," 4010):

> *Willow* Talk! All talk: blah blah Gaia blah blah moon, menstrual lifeforce power . . . I thought after a few sessions we'd get into something real but . . .
>
> *Buffy* No actual witches in your witch group.
>
> *Willow* Buncha wannablessedbes. It's just a fad. Nowadays every girl with a henna tattoo and a spice rack thinks she's a sister to the dark ones.
>
> *Tara* I thought maybe we could do a spell - make people talk again. I'd seen you in the group, the Wicca group. You were . . . you were different than them. I mean they didn't seem to know . . .
>
> *Willow* What they were talking about.
>
> *Tara* I think if they saw a witch they would run the other way.

She smiles and laughs.

Willow How long have you been practicing?

Tara Always, I mean, since I um, was little... my, my mom used to, she had a lot of power, like you.

The political orientation of that power is demonstrated in "Family" (5006), where Tara's father tries to persuade her that she will become possessed by a demon when she becomes twenty, and that she should therefore give up her independent life in Sunnydale and return to keep house for the men of the family. It becomes clear that this demonization is a lie, aimed at the subjugation of women who have power, one through which Tara's mother was suborned, a literal piece of the patriarchy which Tara breaks.

(40) As Jeffreys points out, there is a long tradition of "lesbian" being used as a term of opprobrium, for independent women, [48] while Purkiss points to the relationship between stories of witch-burning and feminist concerns in which:

> Domestic and sexual violence against women were foregrounded as the representative crimes of patriarchy . . . sexuality was to be identified as the site of women's oppression in the sense that property was for Marx the site of class oppression. Rape, sexual violence, pornography, wife-battering and (eventually) child sexual abuse became the central signifiers of patriarchy [49]

In the context of citizenship, lesbians occupy the position of "immoral others," [50] those excluded from the community and denied the rights of citizenship. Lesbian Wicca, therefore, offers a means of exploring women's physical and spiritual being, outside the patriarchal structure, a theme taken up by contemporary lesbian writer, Sarah Dreher, in her Stoner McTavish novels. Dreher, like the *Buffy* and *Angel* series, offers a synchronic spiritual viewpoint, in which Wicca and shamanism interact, and a location in which seedy derelicts "might really be angels disguised as old coots, [51] just as in *Angel*'s Los Angeles, demons might be benign.

(41) That all of the Scoobies belong to the "Outsiders' Society," by association with Willow, is demonstrated in the "Gingerbread" episode. There, Willow is linked to Buffy, through "the monsters, and the witches, and the Slayers," to Xander via the generic" freaks and losers," to Giles who has his books confiscated and burned, and to the "dozens of others [who] are persecuted by a righteous mob. It's happened all throughout history." Interestingly, though, the patriarchal authority which the mob are exercising in their witch-persecution is delusional, a product of a [literal] demonization which initiates the moral panic. In a political context, the episode seems to be suggesting that the subjugation of women is equally delusional, that the apparently "objective" evidence collected by Principal Snyder by invading the privacy of students" lockers, has no truth in fact. Rather, a radical, feminist view of history, history as affinity, is foregrounded, in a process which "refuses the various positions of detachment which define the historian" and "values highly emotional, involved, "personal" pleasure and engagement." [52] Willow and Buffy are saved from burning by their friends, especially by Cordelia (in contrast to Xander and Oz's clumsiness) who both share and refuse their demonization, and create both a counter-discourse to it, and a counter-action.

(42) Similarly, in *Checkpoint*, the prologue provides a montage of Giles objecting to Buffy's "test" in "Helpless" (3012); of Buffy rejecting the Council in "Graduation Day," Part II (3022); and Buffy, Giles and Joyce protecting Dawn in "Triangle" (5011). These views of education, hierarchy and community are reiterated and extended in the episode, where Buffy advances "a different perspective" of history and is publicly humiliated by her male teacher for doing so; the Council attempts to impose a surveillance model

of management on the Scoobies by inspecting them; and Buffy understands and rejects this as a power-play, and asserts an "alternative government" of relationality, allowing willing Council members to join the group to fight Glory.

Back in the Library: Conclusion

(43) In a world where woman is so abjected that, as Irigaray says, she is virtually non-existent in political and psychological terms, *Buffy* may be read as an attempt to call her into being and knowledge. The struggle which takes place, the killing of vampires, then, is a political struggle, in which the spiritual, as well as the personal, is political. As simple allegory, the girl-Slayer fights against the problematics of growing up in a patriarchy, with her interior conflicts expressed as literal demons and vampires which she must slay. As more complex symbol, she reflects a Western culture in which successive waves of feminism have analyzed these problematics, where woman is now valorized, as having both knowledge and existence which is self-authenticating. The Slayer thus embodies the combination of knowing and being, and the challenge to Western male capitalism which this represents: Buffy's secret night-time slaying, done as well as her public attendance at school, stands for women's unacknowledged labor of reproduction, which provides a central feminist criticism of Marxist analysis.

(44) Buffy herself is an embodiment of what Grosz calls the "wayward philosophies" which refuse a mind/body split and insist on alternative readings of what it is to be human. [53] It is not sufficient to construct an idea of "woman" from that which exists already, since what exists already is abjected woman, as the robot, April, demonstrates: she is literally man-made, made by Warren to love and obey him, so that "I'm only supposed to love him. If I can't do that, what am I for?" and "if you call her and she doesn't answer, it hurts her" ("I Was Made to Love You," 5015). Rather, autonomy within relationality is required: as Buffy realizes in the same episode, "I don't need a guy right now. I need me. I need to get comfortable being alone with Buffy."

(45) To return to Virginia Woolf, like her women's committee, Buffy and the Scoobies are all Outsiders. The idea of country, the boundaries that represents, exemplifies the patriarchal limitations they seek to break. Instead, they shift between boundaries, individually, collectively and in relation to each other. Individually, they all transgress established boundaries: Xander, a failure in the prescribed learning of state education, turns out to be a skilled craftsperson in adult life; Willow is a lesbian and a witch; Angel a "good vampire"; and so on. Collectively, they form the Scoobies, the Outsiders' Society, and move between the interpenetrating worlds of humans and demons, heaven and hell, the sanctioned and unsanctioned social, political, spiritual worlds. In relation to each other, they are almost always in a position of forbidden love, between women, between demon and human, between Slayer and vampire.

(46) The solution of *Buffy* is inclusivity, and the creation of what Francis Stuart calls "Alternative Government," relationality through the imaginative powers which are the starting points both of compassion and artistry. [54] What is required, is for individuals to wish to enter, to want to become part of that community. Dawn, the Key, is as much a created being as is robot-Anna, but she identifies at a fundamental, personal level with the Scoobies: she is Buffy's political sister as well as her literal sister. This alternative government, then, is one in which, in Irigaray's formulation, citizenship comes as right of existing within the community, outside hierarchies of money or birth so that "Law is thus no longer a straightforward obligation emanating from an omnipotent master, who is both legislator and executor. Law guarantees the identity of each man and woman and his or her own mastery of that identity." [55] Thus, Anya is an ex-vengeance demon, but she may also lawfully join the alternative community of the Scoobies, and Tara, rejected by her own father and brother for being a disobedient female, is re-identified as part of Buffy's "family." In terms of feminist theory, this position reflects the destabilization of categories brought about by trans theory. For intersexed people, gender identity can *only* be found through identification, at a personal, essential level. The transitions made between male and female, in response to that personal essentialism, has extended fundamentalist "Fortress feminism" notions of what constitutes woman in terms

of sex, and what constitutes lesbian in terms of sexuality.

(47) In spiritual terms, the transgression of boundaries is exemplified by what Campbell calls "the hero's journey:"

> A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man. [56]

In this journey to the land below the sea, the world inside the mountain, the dark forest, the "decisive victory" is one of will, not necessarily of action. Often, the hero fails to perform the task: she drinks what she should not, he cannot answer the question, or, like Buffy, there is an endless production-line of vampires, more than she could possibly ever kill. But the monomyth tells us that to try is enough, that intention rather than achievement is the measure of human relationality. At the heart of this worldview lies the idea not of a fallen humanity separated from the godhead by inherited sin, but the idea of what radical educationist A. S. Neill called "original good," the view that "a child is innately wise and realistic." [57] Where it is accepted that the automatic impulse of people is towards their own happiness, through the love and friendship of others, then they may be judged by their intentions, the bond of the heart, by an intentionality which holds the actor's ethical position.

(48) Finally, then, it is this essentially ethical standpoint, this continuous working-out of what individuals need to do and be in order to find personal apotheosis, which marks out *Buffy* from other beat-em-ups. Usually, the face-off is between the black hats and the white ones, with a decisive victory for the whites: only rarely are the complexities of personal action and choice explored, in, for example, John Ford's *The Searchers* or Clint Eastwood's *The Outlaw Josey Wales*. *Buffy* subverts the set conventions, and seeks to create a new articulation of what it is to be autonomous woman. This is done in a context of inclusion, not separation from the world of men, on terms which refuse the dominant cultural ideologies of woman as secondary, sinful and subordinate. Of course, these ideas, together with the idea of the perpetual potential for change and redemption for all people, take place within the imagination, on the level of symbol, not fact, and through the ephemeral medium of popular television. But as William Blake points out in his *Vision of the Last Judgment*:

> The Nature of Visionary Fancy, or Imagination, is very little Known, & the Eternal nature & permanence of its Existent Images is consider'd as less permanent than the things of Vegetative & Generative Nature; yet the Oak dies as well as the Lettuce, but Its Eternal Image & Individuality never dies, but renews by its seed; just so the Imaginative Image returns by the seed of Contemplative Thought. [58]

Postscript: The First Slayer

(49) When the First Slayer walked the earth, in the Palaeolithic period, a new sensibility appeared all across the world. Incised stone, engraved bone, carved figures and decorated cave walls testify to a new relationality, explored through art, which, in France's Dordogne, produced a remarkable sculpture and set of cave paintings. [59]

(50) The paintings show the myth of the hunter, the drama of survival: in one notable scene, a speared bison dies, while a rhinoceros shits the manure of new life, and the shaman-hunter dreams their mutual interdependence. [60]

(51) Outside, a sculpture shows a woman, pointing to her pregnant belly with one hand and with the other,

holding aloft a crescent-shaped bison horn, incised with the thirteen days of the waxing moon and the thirteen months of the lunar year. As above, so below, the figure indicates, as the moon waxes, wanes and is born anew, again and again, so is all life.

(52) The painted myth of the hunter is about taking life as a ritual act in order to live; the sculpted myth of the goddess is about transformation, rebirth, and life in all its aspects. To a modern mind, the two instincts seem antithetical, the one about separation and survival, the other about relationship and meaning. How can Buffy both be a hunter, a Slayer, and live within the everyday relationality of her family and friends? Why does the First Slayer tell her, “death is your gift”?

(53) To live only within the myth of the hunter is to live for survival, in time, where death is final and the experience of life, despair. It is Angel’s tragedy that after leaving Buffy, denying their relationality, his sensibility is reduced to that. To return to her is to return to the sacred feminine, the Palaeolithic goddess that links the First Slayer with the last, through a myth which contains that of the hunter and places it in the larger continuum of relationship, an eternal image of recurrence, of the whole.

(54) When one Slayer dies, another is called: when one moon goes into darkness, another becomes. Innanna’s journey to Ereshkigal is re-enacted time and again, the necessary death and concomitant new life, transliterated into the Christian religion as the festival of the new child at winter solstice, darkness turning light, and as death at Easter, the pagan festival of fertility goddess Eostre, at the equinox where winter turns to spring.

(55) The myth of the goddess contains the myth of the hunter, but the myth of the hunter cannot contain the myth of the goddess. Death is Buffy’s gift in time when, as the Slayer, she hunts vampires for survival: but to stay there would be to share Angel’s now tragic existence. Death becomes her gift in eternity, as the deepest part of her—the First Slayer—already knows, when she realizes that, as mother, she must go into the darkness to save Dawn, now her child, as Demeter did Persephone, as eternity must always redeem time. Together, Buffy and Angel rise again, made anew, as the moon does, as we all do, bound into a participative consciousness from the time of the First Slayer, a sense of eternity which vampires, those creatures caught in time, may disturb, but cannot end.

---

[1] V. Woolf, *Three Guineas*, ed. M. Barrett (London: Penguin Classics, 2000; first published The Hogarth Press 1938): 234.

[2] For non-*Buffy* fans, “dusting” is the term given by the series to slaying vampires, since they turn to dust when a wooden stake is pushed into their heart.

[3] L. Irigaray *Speculum de l'autre femme* [*Speculum of the other woman*] (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1974)

[4] J. Raymond, *The Transsexual Empire* (London: The Women’s Press, 1980).

[5] G. Greer, *The Whole Woman* (London: Doubleday, 1999).

[6] British feminism separated from USA feminism in the early 1980s, since the USA in general adopted an homogenizing view of “woman” which elided differences such as class, race, and gender, while Britain embraced an emancipatory welfare feminism which included divers counter-cultural projects. Raymond and

Greer's works fall into the liberal, totalizing tradition of USA feminism, while *Buffy* interestingly appears to fall into a British and European ideology.

[7] D. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association Books, 1991): 149.

[8] Braidotti, *op.cit.*: 5.

[9] L. Irigaray, *Speculum de l'autre femme* [*Speculum of the other woman*] (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1974)

[10] M. Wittig, *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992). These processes, of lesbian abjection and nomadism, are further explored in, for example, Sally Munt (1998) *butch/femme: inside lesbian gender*, London: Cassell which deals with issues within lesbian communities, and Jaye Zimet (1999) *Strange Sisters: the Art of Lesbian Pulp Fiction 1949-1969*, London: Penguin, which critiques the presentation of lesbianism in society at large.

[11] For example, L. Feinberg, *Transgender Warriors: making history from Joan of Arc to RuPaul* (Boston: Beacon Press: 1996) and Taste This, *Boys Like Her: Transfictions* (New York: Press Gang Publishers, 1998). Feinberg's work demonstrates how women's oppression and trans oppression intersect, while *Boys Like Her* compounds the literal process of border-crossing with that of transgressive gender performativity.

[12] L. Feinberg, *Transgender Warriors: making history from Joan of Arc to RuPaul* (Boston: Beacon Press: 1996).

[13] Taste This, *Boys Like Her: Transfictions* (New York: Press Gang Publishers, 1998).

[14] G. Deleuze, "Nomad Thought," [first published 1978] in *The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation*, ed. D. B. Allison (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), for example, provides an important forerunner of Rosa Braidotti's work on nomadism, while a general debt is owed to Michel Foucault for works such, for example, Foucault, M. (1963). Naissance de la clinique [The birth of the clinic]. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France; Foucault, M. (1969). L'archaeologie du savoir [The archaeology of knowledge]. Paris, Gallimard; Foucault, M. (1975). Surveiller et Punir [Discipline and Punish]. Paris, Gallimard.

[15] R. S. Peters, "What is an educational process?," *The Concept of Education*, ed. R. S. Peters (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967): 15.

[16] R. S. Peters, *Ethics and Education* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1966): 30.

[17] For a discussion of these areas, see L. Stanley, *Feminist Praxis* (London: Routledge, 1990) and L. Alcoff & E. Potter, *Feminist Epistemologies* (London: Routledge, 1993).

[18] L. Althusser, "Ideology and ideological state apparatuses (notes towards and investigation)" in S. Zizek, *Mapping Ideology* (London: Verso, 1994 [first published 1970]).

[19] See, for example, C. Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Cambridge: Polity, 1988).

[20] Aristotle replaced spiritual intuition with empiricism and logic but maintained the same division between epistemology and ontology, with the same political consequences and a similar role for "education" as propaganda.

[21] Plato, *The Republic* in "Great Dialogues of Plato," trans. Warmington E. H. and Rouse P. (London, The New English Library, 1956) p. 273, 274.

[22] See, for example, D. Beetham & K. Boyle, *Introducing Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995); D. Held, *Models of Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996); S. Lakoff, *Democracy: History, Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1996).

[23] Joseph Campbell, *Oriental Mythology* (New York: Viking Press, 1962).

[24] Genesis 2:9.

[25] Juliana of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love* [circa 1343-1443], translated by Clifton Wolters (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966): 172. See the novels of Irish writer Francis Stuart, especially *The Flowering Cross* (London: Gollancz, 1950) for contemporary explorations of this theme.

[26] Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982) p. 38.

[27] "On the Origin of the World," *The Nag Hammadi Library*, ed. J. Robinson (New York: Harper Collins, 1977) 170-189: 182, 115:31-116:5.

[28] *The Nag Hammadi Library*, ed. J. Robinson (New York: Harper Collins, 1977).

[29] Editors' note: Christ is called the Second Adam.

[30] A. Baring & J. Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess: evolution of an image* (London: Viking Press, 1991).

[31] "The Descent of Inanna" [circa 2000 BC] *Inanna: Queen of Heaven and Earth*, D Wolkstein & S. N. Kramer (New York: Harper & Row, 1983): 51-89: 52.

[32] See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, translated by Claire Jacobson & Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968) for a discussion of the kinship structures maintained by men exchanging women between them.

[33] See R. Cook, *The Tree of Life: image for the cosmos* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1974) for a discussion of the tree as universal symbol.

[34] See M. Gimbutas *The Language of the Goddess* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1989) for a discussion of the various symbols used to represent water in Old Europe.

[35] See C. Kerenyi, *Eleusis: archetypal image of mother and daughter*, translated by Ruth Manheim (Princeton: Bollingen, 1967) for a detailed discussion of the Eleusian Mysteries.

[36] Baring & Cashford: 561-2.

[37] Lucius Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* [circa 123-180] translated by Robert Graves (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1950): 183.

[38] Editors' Note: As Roz Kaveney notes in *Reading the Vampire Slayer,* Playdon's essay, written months before, here predicts Angel's experiences in the episode "Epiphany" (2016).

[39] Interestingly, in the UK run of the series, at the time of writing, Spike has begun to find personal redemption through identifying real relationality in his obsession with Buffy. Contrasting the "Buffybot" which represents his projected, unreal version of her with his refusal to betray Dawn to Glory, Buffy kisses him simply and says "that was real."

[40] Brian Turner, "Outline of a theory of citizenship," *Sociology*, (1990)24, 2: 189-218: 209.

[41] See, for example, M. Foucault, *Surveiller et Punir [Discipline and Punish]* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).

[42] Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998).

[43] Charles Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop* (London: 1841); a powerful evocation of an American context is provided by the short story by Martin Savela, "The Gaffer," *The New Anvil*, Aug-Sept 1939.

[44] It may be tempting to read Giles as being a "father substitute" for Buffy, as Sam Zambuto is for Kendra and the Mayor is for Faith. Reader, beware! The notion that women constantly seek fathers is only patriarchal fantasy. More particularly, that role is explicitly rejected by the series, through the *Doppelgangland* episode in which it is made clear that any relationship between Joyce and Giles is out of the question, and by the creation of a financial contract between Buffy and Giles—she is the agency of him being re-hired as Watcher, in the *Checkpoint* episode—in which she is clearly the most powerful person.

[45] C. Golden, S. R. Bissette & T. E. Sniegoski, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer: the Monster Book* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000): 165.

[46] Gerald Gardner, *Witchcraft Today* (New York: Magical Childe, 1954).

[47] Vivianne Crowley, *Wicca: the Old Religion in the New Millennium* (London: Harper Collins 1996).

[48] Sheila Jeffreys, *The Spinster and Her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality 1880-1930* (London: The Women's Press, 1985).

[49] Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History* (London: Routledge, 1996): 15.

[50] David Evans, *Sexual Citizenship: The Material Construction of Sexualities* (London: Routledge, 1993).

[51] Sarah Dreher, *Shaman's Moon* (Norwich, VT: New Victoria Publishers, 1998): 11.

[52] Purkiss: 11.

[53] Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994).

[54] Francis Stuart, *Alternative Government* (Dublin: Claddagh Records, 1982).

[55] Luce Irigaray, *I love to you: sketch for a felicity within history* (London: Routledge, 1996).

[56] Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New York: Bollingen Foundation, 1949); Abacus edition 1975: 31.

[57] A. S. Neill, *Summerhill: A radical approach to education* (London: Gollancz, 1962): 4.

[58] William Blake, "A Vision of the Last Judgment" [1810], *Complete Writings*, edited by Geoffrey Keynes (London: Oxford University Press, 1966): 604-617: 605.

[59] P. G. Bahn & J. Vertut (1997) *Journey through the Ice Age*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.

[60] Baring A. & Cashford J. (1991). *The Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image*. London, Viking. pp. 3-45.