# Buffy Conquers the Academy

# Buffy Conquers the Academy: Conference Papers from the 2009/2010 Popular Culture/American Culture Associations

Edited by

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CAMBRIDGE SCHOLARS

PUBLISHING

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This book first published 2013

Cambridge Scholars Publishing

12 Back Chapman Street, Newcastle upon Tyne, NE6 2XX, UK

British Library Cataloguing in Publication Data
A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library



ISBN (10): 1-4438-4831-X, ISBN (13): 978-1-4438-4831-2

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# ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This volume would not have been possible without the close reading by Brian M. Peters of Champlain College and Rhonda Nicol of Illinois State University. Their knowledge and expertise in the field of Buffy Studies ensure that all the papers in this volume represented excellent examples in the discipline.

We would also like to thank all of the contributors to this volume for their hard work, endless patience, and vital contributions to this ever expanding discipline.

Melissa would personally like to thank Patricia Leavy and Rebecca Allen Paynich for sharing their love of the show. It was their enthusiasm and support, including Rebecca's Buffy party and gift of a life-size Spike, which kept the project alive even when it seemed insurmountable. I'd also like to thank my family. Firstly, my amazing mother Mrs. Agatha Anyiwo whose unconditional love expressed through the phrase "of course you can" has fueled me since the moment I was born. Perhaps with this book she can finally be assured that my love of vampires will not make me unemployable. Finally, to my brother Steve and his three perfect little girls, Maeve, Freya, and Mya, a new generation of Buffy fans, whether he wants them to be or not.

Karoline greatly appreciates Melissa's asking her to co-edit this volume with her. "I'faith!" a person from sixteenth-century England would say. Never would I have thought I'd be working on a scholarly edition about *Buffy, The Vampire Slayer*, an endeavor quite out of the realm of my expertise. But, the experience has been quite enjoyable, and I may even be a convert! My first thanks goes to Dr. Anyiwo. My husband, Matt Tudor – who may very well be a descendent from the Tudor clan – has been very supportive by allowing me the time to spend on this collection, as well as my mother Pearl, whose undaunted spirit and encouragement throughout my career have provided me with strength and courage.

# FOREWORD

# WHY DOES BUFFY MATTER?

AMANDA HOBSON

On Monday, March 10, 1997, I sat riveted in front of my television. From the opening cue to the first breathless moment, I was mesmerized, watching a channel I barely knew existed. I had heard that Joss Whedon was going to make his own version of his story, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer.* Never would I have guessed that not only would this endeavor be good, but that it would create a cult that would impact television for a generation. I had been reading and watching everything that I could about vampires for as long as I could remember, beginning with the tried and true *Interview with the Vampire*. I have been fascinated with vampires for their ability to mirror our fears and desires and embody that which we are most terrified and drawn to in ourselves. Having seen *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* in the movie theatre when it debuted in 1992, I was trepidatious sitting down to watch the television premiere. I had found the film campy and amusing but just wasn't sure that it was sustainable as a television show, and to be frank, it seemed that any show I actually liked was doomed to an early demise—a sad trend that has continued. Much to my delight "Welcome to the Hellmouth" and "The Harvest" were intriguing and witty, and I was hooked. I was able to enjoy seven seasons on television, a spin-off, and various graphic novel incarnations of the Slayers. Its longevity is a testament to keen dialogue, character-driven plots, and a commitment to pushing the envelope. For me, *Buffy* reinvigorated my love of vampire and paranormal fiction, folklore, and films.

A key to Buffy's success stems from the writers' keen weaving of popular culture references, witty dialogue, character driven-plots, and emotional depth. From "Does anyone else feel like they've been Kaiser Söze-ed"[1] to

[1] Dean Batali and Rob Des Hotel, "The Puppet Show," *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Season 1, May 5, 1997.

"The girl [Faith] makes Godot look punctual,"[2] Buffy's dialogue and cultural references run the gamut from timely pop cultural references, such as the 1995 film *Usual Suspects*, to obscure literary references, such as the allusion to Samuel Becket's wonderful 1953 play *Waiting for Godot*. These references and the myriad other cultural evocations allowed the writers to infuse *Buffy* with the characteristics of multiple genres. The writers successfully blended heart-wrenching (melo)drama with rollicking humor. The cultural critique and relevance that *Buffy* offered every week made it important not only during its run on television but also has allowed it to stay pertinent as a text for scholars of popular culture. By addressing a wide-variety of poignant and germane topics, *Buffy* demonstrated an ability to offer an examination of socially constructed norms, such as race, gender, and sexuality.

*Buffy* stayed relevant throughout the course of its television run in a way that many shows simply cannot do. The writers understood the pulse of the nation and of the American teenager. In 1999, *Buffy* demonstrated just how eerily in-tune it was. On April 20, 1999, two young men walked into their high school and open fired, killing classmates and faculty. Strangely enough, *Buffy* was set to air its season three episode "Earshot," in which a student—Jonathan—brings a gun to school in order to kill himself on April 27. "Earshot" and that season's finale, "Graduation Day, Part 2," in which the school is destroyed and many students and faculty killed, were postponed. It was this inherent understanding of the material, cultural issues, and their characters that allowed the writers to tap into the fears and desires of not only teenagers but all of their audience. What better public service announcement is there that exists than the central message of *Buffy* that "life doesn't always work out the way we want it to"?

It is the emotional, character-driven, and witty underpinnings that simultaneously uphold and deconstruct cultural norms that allow for academics to be drawn like moths to the flame that is *Buffy*. Margaret Weigel argued, "It's official: It is now safe for smart people to watch TV. For years, academics eschewed the 'boob tube' and its lowbrow programming both personally and professionally."[3] This statement is evident in the multiplicity of magazine articles, books, and conference sessions afforded to Buffy Studies, including a dedicated online journal, *Slayage*, and its own collection of fanzines such as *Plans* by Meredith Martini. James South wrote in his introduction to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

[2] Douglas Petrie, "Enemies," *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, Season 3, March 16, 1999.
[3] Margaret Weigel, "The Expanding Buffyverse," *The Women's Review of Books*, (Vol. XXI, No. 1, October 2003), 18.

*and Philosophy* that Buffy was "something worth my thinking about," which demonstrated further the manner in which Buffy gave academics a rich text to analyze in conjunction with studies of popular culture simply because of its cultural relevance.[4] While some people scoffed at the show's academic or critical worth, it has held our imaginations since its debut in 1997. It has had a lasting place in television, including being number 10 in a list entitled, "The New Classics: TV 1983-2008" by *Entertainment Weekly*,[5] and in 2010, Ken Tucker named *Buffy* one of the five shows that changed television.[6]

Buffy is so deeply embedded within our cultural landscape at this point that it has found itself at the heart of many cultural allusions, including spoofs on *MadTV* and *Saturday Night Live* and making appearances in some way in television shows, such as *The Simpsons*, *Friends*, *Charmed*, and movies, such as *Nightwatch*. For example, Nora Roberts, queen of the romance genre, mentions Buffy in her Circle Trilogy, featuring murderous vampires. When introducing a new character, Blair, a vampire hunter, a character asks, "What, like Buffy?" to which Blair responds, "No. First, I'm not the only, just the best."[7] Any reader would know immediately who the character is referring to. *Buffy*, a central part of our cultural language, has become shorthand for a vampire slayer.

Moreover, this cultural fascination with *Buffy* persists, and the impact remains prominent. Recently, Alyx Dellamonica began a blog in celebration of the upcoming fifteenth anniversary of the Buffy premiere for Publishing House Tor's website.[8] As well, there have been many innovations on television since *Buffy* aired; for instance, the Emmy awarding winning episode "Once More with Feeling" (*BtVS* 6.7) appeared to have inspired other shows, such as the *Grey's Anatomy* musical episode "Song Beneath The Song" (7.18). The audacity of "Once More with Feeling" (*BtVS* 6.7) also arguably inspired the birth of the all-musical all the time fan favorite *Glee*.[9]

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[4] James South, "And was there a lesson in all this?" *Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Philosophy: Fear and Trembling in Sunnydale*, (Chicago: Open Court, 2003), 2.

[5] "The New Classics: TV 1983-2008." *Entertainment Weekly*, Issue #999-1000, June 27, 2008.

[6] Ken Tucker, "5 Shows That Changed TV," *Entertainment Weekly*, Issue #1120-1121, September 17, 2010.

[7] Nora Roberts, *Morrigan's Cross*, (New York: Jove Books, 2006), 278.

[8] Alyx Dellamonica, "In Every Generation, There is a Chosen One," *Tor.com*, January 23, 2012, retrieved from http://www.tor.com/blogs/2012/01/in-every-generation-there-is-a-chosen-one?WT.mc_id=undefined.

[9] *Glee* premiered on Fox on 19 May 2009.

For my own scholarship, the most lasting impression *Buffy* may have made is on the image of the vampire. Could there be an Edward Cullen had there not been an Angel? While there had been many vampires up to Angel who questioned his humanity and his soul, Angel is one of our most tortured souls, who helped shift the vampire into the romantic lead that the vampire has become in recent years. In many ways before *Buffy*, the vampire genre had been marketed successfully to young men, as a great deal of the vampire fiction and film representations were heavily entrenched in the horror and science-fiction/fantasy genres. While there is a large female audience for horror and science-fiction/fantasy, *Buffy* pushed the vampire to transgress genres and, therefore, widened the audience. Who was watching the WB and *Buffy* aside from academics and critics? The answer to that question is that the audience was largely female and generally under 25. The WB was targeted at the high-school and college aged crowd, who grew up with *Buffy* and the Scoobies. This target audience began to seek out vampires, paranormal tales, and modern fairy tales, finding it in various romance novels, films, and television, such as *Underworld* and *Charmed*. So could there have been Edward Cullen without Angel? They are in some ways a generation removed from each other, but it is the use of the tragic love story of Buffy and Angel that allowed for the sort-of-happily-ever-after tale that is *Twilight*. Buffy and Angel truly perfected the "my-ancient-boyfriend-may-kill-me" angst that would become the story of Bella and Edward. Vampires have become mainstream in the days since *Buffy* with so many novels, video games, graphic novels, films, and television shows. This trend owes itself to *Buffy* at least in small part because *Buffy* allowed the vampire and the slayer as ideas to grow, shift, and evolve in a way that had not occurred since the Victorian era of Polidori and Stoker.

# INTRODUCTION

The Associations of Popular Culture and American Culture (PCA/ACA) have a tradition of encouraging growth in intellectual inquiry, and the acceptance of Buffy Studies as a subgenre of the Vampire area in 2008 reflected the belief that this globally recognized discipline belonged at the PCA/ACA. This volume celebrates the continuing existence of Buffy Studies as an endlessly fruitful academic discipline that is truly global and interdisciplinary. The fact that the Buffy Area exists at all is a testament to the astonishing growth and acceptance of popular culture over the last 30 years. Unlike so many artful and clever shows that garnered moments of scholarship, such as the X-Files or the reboot of Battlestar Galactica, Buffy continues to offer unending depths for fan-scholars, teachers, and anyone interested in exploring a show that offers multiple avenues of expression from gender and sexuality, to science fiction and fantasy, to the psychology of violence, and witchcraft. Indeed, as this short selection of essays shows, the areas of exploration are endless.

This volume celebrates the best of scholarship from the 2009/10 Popular Culture/American Culture conference, which set a high bar for the types of scholarship still appearing from fan scholars around the world. These are first and foremost conference papers, which enable the reader to really experience the multiple modalities of this unending area of scholarship. Conference papers often rise or fall based on the style of the presentation, and each of these papers was chosen because their authors were so dynamic and convincing in person. While it is the case that conference papers do not always translate well to the written format, these pieces illustrate that a robust argument and a strong voice can allow a creative piece to transform into something more traditional. In short, there is something for everyone here, whatever their interest or academic discipline. The richness of *BtVS* offers a fathomless sea of intellectual inquiry and debate; and multiple venues engage fellow fan scholars, including those who attend the annual International Buffy Slayage conference and who contribute to the Slayage Journal. Few other television shows still generate such depth of inquiry or offer such rich detail for teaching and learning. Popular Culture Associations across the world feature either Buffy Sections or Whedonverse Areas, both of which are gaining new and emerging scholars with each passing year.

Now living in that Nirvana known as syndication, *Buffy* continues to bring in new fans just as enchanted by Whedon's world as those who experienced the show its first time around. Running continuously on the Oxygen and Teen Nick networks in the United States, on Sky 1 in the United Kingdom, and a range of channels throughout the world, the continued relevance of *BtVS* is spearheaded by its overarching themes and brilliant writing, providing connections for those not even born when the show first aired. It's wonderful to meet new fans, which, as a professor happens to me all the time. Recently in my US History class, of all things, a student approached me to relate her newfound passion for Buffy. Her entrance to the show had been the failed Sarah Michelle Gellar project *The Ringer* (2011). But she was no less engaged in the show's themes and as passionate about wanting to convert all of her friends as anyone from the 1990s. I am constantly hearing anecdotes about the conversion experience that cross the boundaries of class, race, age, and gender. A good friend and fellow professor, Patricia Leavy, converted her now 12-year-old daughter through long mother and daughter bonding evenings, helping mold her character through the values and struggles of the Scoobies. Lately, she has also converted her husband in those hours between dinner and settling down for the night. Another friend, Rebecca Paynich, Chair of Criminal Justice at Curry College, introduced her son while she was still pregnant with him, so that Buffy is truly a part of his DNA. Buffy is like football to him, perfectly ordinary and perfectly a part of his cultural position. Even the coeditor of this volume, Karoline Szatek-Tudor, a Shakespeare professor, now appreciates the intellectual depths of the series. We all have stories like this, of introducing someone else to the show, wondering where to start based on what you know of their interests, values, or personality. Michael Perry reminds us in this volume of what it was like to first fall in love with *Buffy* and its characters, likening the experience to a religious conversion. In "My First Time: Theological Diversity, the Rhetoric of Conversion, and *Buffy, The Vampire Slayer*," Perry examines the multiple, yet similar, experiences of fans "brought" to Buffy, forever changed and forever split between private worship and the desire to proselytize.

Feminist ideas permeate the Buffyverse, and these are reflected in the three chapters that debate Whedon's problematized uses of gender. Mona Rocha, a bright new voice in the Buffyverse, argues in "A Layered Message of Resistance: Buffy, Violence, and the Double Bind," that Whedon successfully inverts gender norms through his positioning of Buffy as a primary actor in her world. Yet Nadine Farghaly in "Patriarchy Strikes Back: Power And Perception In Buffy, The Vampire Slayer,"

argues quite the opposite, claiming that Whedon reinforces patriarchy while seeming to dismantle it. From a completely different perspective, Ruth Caillouet in “I Date Dead People: Buffy, Bella, Sookie, and the Lure of the Dead Boyfriend,” thoughtfully compares Buffy with Bella Swan and other women from literature tempted by the love of an (un)dead boyfriend. One wonders whether the commonalities these women share offer any lessons about the place of womanhood in the modern world.

The International allure of the show is reflected by the inclusion of non-American authors. From Germany, Birte Horn provides a keen analysis of the myths that pervade the show in "We're Your Arch-Nemesises … Ses" –Buffy and "The Trio": The Americanization of a Mythological Motif.” Her discussion illustrates Whedon’s core use of classical myth to create new and particularly American archetypes, specifically in the guise of the "The Trio" – who declare they are the "arch-nemesises" of the Slayer. In addition, American Dev Kumar Bose and German Esther Liberman-Cuenca joined together across the ocean to debate interpretations of the soul and its meanings in the Buffyverse in “Buffy, Angel, and the Complications of the Soul: A Collaborative Perspective on the Origin Episodes.”

The inversion of myths through the imagination of Whedon offers rich material for scholars. In her essay Lisa Vetere explores the use of witchcraft as a core element of *BtVS* in “The Rage of Willow: Malefic Witchcraft Fantasy in Buffy, The Vampire Slayer.” She debates whether Whedon reinforces or re-claims the stereotypes of the good/bad witch for new generations, and Bonnie Jet Adams explores the inversion of religious stereotypes through an examination of the misogynist religious zealot Caleb in Season 7 in her chapter, “Caleb, the First Evil, and “That Most Precious Invention of all Mankind: the Notion of Goodness.” In “Brain vs. Brawn: An Examination of the Use of Intelligence and Violence by the Villains in *Buffy, Tthe Vampire Slayer*,” Heather Porter attempts a thoroughly innovative psychological analysis of the use of violence and intelligence by the Big Bads of the Buffyverse; she demonstrates new myths about the connections between brawn and intelligence. Finally, in “What’s at Stake? The Use of Simulacra to (Re)Construct Identity in Buffy the Vampire Slayer,” Cassie Hemstrom explores Whedon’s visionary concept of what it means to be real when reality is constructed.

Closing this volume, is U. Melissa Anyiwo who breaks with the rest of the pack with “More Than Just A Spin-Off: The Enduring Allure Of Angel” to make the astonishingly convincing argument that *Angel* is as good as, if not better than, its mother show, and Anyiwo highlights the

spirited roundtable discussion that illustrated its participants are not alone in their, arguably, superior taste.

We would like to thank everyone who participated in this project; their contributions illustrate the boundless joys and intellectual depths of Buffy's world where there remain layers upon layers of meaning to uncover.

# PART I:

## *"THE PART THAT GETS ME, THOUGH, IS WHERE BUFFY IS THE VAMPIRE SLAYER. SHE'S SO LITTLE."*

## THE POWER OF PERCEPTION

*Dev Kumar Bose and Esther Liberman-Cuenca come from different cultures and different rhetorical traditions, yet found common ground in their analysis of* Buffy. *Examining various presentations of the soul in the Buffyverse, including the spin-off show* Angel, *Bose and Liberman-Cuenca posit that the soul offers the core presentations of marginalization and redemption to provide a touchstone around which all characters in this universe revolve. The soul, and its complications, becomes the lens through which Whedon offers a variety of arguments regarding humanity, morality, and choice in an ever more complicated world.*

# CHAPTER ONE

# BUFFY, ANGEL, AND THE COMPLICATIONS OF THE SOUL: A COLLABORATIVE PERSPECTIVE ON THE ORIGIN EPISODES

DEV KUMAR BOSE
AND ESTHER LIBERMAN-CUENCA

While brainstorming ideas for our presentation for the 2009 PCA/ACA conference, it was inevitable that each of us would draw from our respective academic fields, rhetoric and history. The result of this brainstorming was a joint interpretation of the soul and its meanings in the Buffyverse—that is, the universe inhabited by the characters of the television programs *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) and its spin-off *Angel* (1999-2004), both of which were created by Joss Whedon. In this paper, we draw specific examples from origin episodes to argue that the soul carries significant implications on how key characters developed and were represented in the Buffyverse. The first part of this essay demonstrates that the soul in the Buffyverse is a crucial, literary component of the themes prevalent throughout the series: marginalization and redemption. The second part of this essay extends this argument by demonstrating how the soul, as a literary device, carries with it specific

gendered implications that touch on the Buffyverse's continual commentary on individual agency.

Origin episodes are crucial to both shows' mythos. By origin episodes, we refer to episodes that contain flashbacks to specific moments in a character's history, usually taking place well before the beginning of the series. Origin episodes, however, are not stand-alone episodes; they often neatly tie into the main theme of an episode's primary storyline. They appeared more frequently as both series progressed and became more popular with audiences and critics.

Origin episodes are also significant because they reveal popular understandings of history. It is through these origin episodes that the audience is able to place Angel, Darla, Spike, and Drusilla within their specific historical contexts in order to get a better sense of their personal development. Looking at these episodes from an academic perspective, we have realized that history in the Buffyverse lends depth, and even realism, to the broader, philosophical issues with which the series grapples, particularly those having to do with the nature of evil and the imbalances of power inherent to various types of social relationships.

## 1. The Soul and Identity

The soul is a redemptive mystical tool, but one used as a weapon against vampires. Whedon (1998) suggests this interpretation in his two-part episode, "Becoming," in which the evil Angelus transforms into his redemptive alter ego, Angel, after murdering a gypsy. In the midst of grief-ridden revenge, the gypsy's family curses the vampire with a soul in order to inflict eternal guilt for murdering humans. Thus, the soul is utilized to torture vampires.

But the soul goes beyond being simply a tool for revenge. Vampires who have been "ensouled" differ from their soulless counterparts in key ways. Angel Investigations – the crime-fighting detective agency in Los Angeles that Angel establishes after leaving Sunnydale – is a business steeped in vigilante exploits blended with a (seemingly paradoxical) capitalistic agenda. The purpose of Angel Investigations may be to fight supernatural crime, but it still operates as legitimate business in the human world. Its very existence asserts a rift between the natural and the supernatural: That is to say, human society considers the agency an extralegal entity, while non-human society treats it as an obstacle to evil. Therefore, Angel Investigations always seems to be under some form of attack. The agency's tagline, "We help the helpless," epitomizes the complexity of the soul: Just as Buffy struggles in her love affairs with

individuals who transcend any traditional definition of "boyfriend," so the presence of the vampire's soul complicates perceptions of good and evil.

A number of events tie into the theme of the soul complicating the relationship between vampires and humans. From the beginning of the series, Buffy's character is driven by a purpose instilled in other slayers long before she was born: To destroy evil for the "greater good." This mission is complicated by the presence of Angel's soul: Can they carry on a relationship because his soul has possibly purified him? Their attempt to develop a relationship takes a tragic turn for the worse. After a passionate night of lovemaking, the vampire turns evil once again. In "Becoming Part 2" (1998), Buffy is forced to stab her lover in order to close a portal and save the world. The decision to stab Angel is difficult for Buffy, since Angel is not technically at fault for being evil – his current soulless state is. In later episodes, the series returns to the question of whether having a soul truly makes its carrier a good person. After all, villains can have souls but are still capable of committing horrible acts (such as the human Warren, the nerdish creator of the Buffybot in Season Five, who murders Tara, Willow's lover, in cold blood in Season Six). Most importantly, audiences are not provided with the significance of Angel being ensouled because we do not know what his personal history was with the Romani, the gypsies responsible for ensouling him, until "Becoming" (1998). This very crucial part of the series' mythology – Angel's ensoulment – is based on an event that happened long before Buffy and the timeline of the series itself.

While the "greater good" is the driving force behind Buffy's own pain in having to kill her vampire lover, character backgrounds are crucial in understanding how the soul defines humanity, alienates vampires, and complicates the classic struggle between good and evil. Indeed, a central tenet in the Buffyverse was that vampires are (or should be) alienated from human society. Humans and vampires, were they to attempt long-lasting relationships with one another, may be doomed to failure because of their fundamentally different natures. *Angel* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* are series that explain the nature of alienation through romantic, friendly, and antagonistic relationships. Vampires with souls are even more alienated in their relationships because they suffer from identity crises. Identity, in this case, refers to the way the characters' *perceive* their natures to be. And just as a character develops, so does his or her identity within the Buffyverse.

What is the nature of a vampire? A blood-sucking immortal, attractive lover, and a lone hunter, all wrapped up in one guilt-free existence. What is the nature of the vampire with a soul? Essentially, all of the above, but without the guilt-free existence. Vampires with souls live with the guilt of

their past histories, specifically with all the people they murdered when they did not have a soul. Ensouled vampires are still thirsty for blood, but the soul keeps this thirst in check.

Simone de Beauvoir's *The Second Sex* (1949) is a useful text to understand the complexities of the soul and how the soul creates a sense of guilt for the vampire in the Buffyverse. Beauvoir argued that oppression of women was the result of patriarchal structures. She demonstrated how women struggled to share the transcendental aim of equality, but have been placed in a position of immanence in which they struggle within male-dominated confines. In this regard, Angel's identity crisis centers on his thirst for human blood and desire to remain pure, thereby demonstrating the immanence of his existence. Were Angel to satiate his thirst by feeding on humans, he might reach transcendence, yet consider himself tainted for doing so.

In contrast to Angel's "immanent do-goodedness," Spike's identity requires a different theoretical explanation – cyborg theory. That is to say, an analysis of Spike's ensoulment reveals that his character is a cyborg. How did we reach this conclusion? Emerging from a technological perspective, Donna Haraway argued that all individuals (in any given society) are cyborgs. We are political and social hybrids, or constructs, embedded within a web of communicative networks. In *The Cyborg Manifesto* (1990), Haraway, a third-wave feminist, argued that second-wave feminism encouraged dualistic thinking. She countered de Beauvoir's transcendentalism/immanence binary model by arguing that such thinking encouraged dualisms. We see evidence of cyborg theory in Season Four of *Buffy*, in which the "Big Bad," or the season's chief villain, is a cyborg named Adam. Adam's makers – a covert military operation known as The Initiative – capture Spike and install a computer chip in his head. As an electric leash meant to control Spike's actions, the chip also happens to possess the qualities of an "artificial" soul: Spike is forced to endure excruciating amounts of pain whenever he attempts to satiate his thirst for human blood. The chip prevents the vampire from hurting or feeding off beings with souls (the chip does not prevent him from hurting unsouled beings, which makes him, later on in the series, Buffy's invaluable ally). Adam and Spike serve as unlikely foils to one another: Adam is a man-made creation whose purpose is to destroy unnatural beings (vampires), while Spike is a vampire who is enslaved by humans because he is considered to be unnatural. Furthermore, Adam controls vampire populations, while Spike is held prisoner as a lab rat. Haraway's cyborg theory supports the interpretation that, while Adam may be a

cyborg in the very literal sense of the term, Spike is a true cyborg. A piece of technology artificially transforms Spike's identity.

Human and vampire relationships reflect and extend past the structures of these theories. On the one hand, the existence of vampires is transcendental – vampire life is immortal, the vampire diet is simple, and the vampire lifestyle requires no physical need to live within human society other than to feed. These rules would seemingly make the vampire's existence perfect. The identity of Angel's alter ego, Angelus, hinges upon his physicality, hunger for power, and thirst for human blood. But the soul transcends the image of supernatural perfection. It serves as a painful reminder that the ensouled vampire is in a limbo between two unattainable states of being: humanity and "vampirity." The soul, in the Buffyverse, forces vampires to the margins of both human and vampire societies, and relegates the ensouled vampire to live uncomfortably between both realms. Until Angel is given a mission to watch Buffy he lives like a nomad for about a century, as revealed in his first origin episode in Season Two. In both worlds, Angel is considered an outsider torn between his need for blood and human community.

For Angel, the presence of a soul doubly hybridizes his vampire existence. Later in the episode "Becoming Part 1" (*BtVS* 2:21), the year 1996 shows a very different Angel from the Angelus of the previous century. The pain and remorse of killing humans for sadistic delight follow Angel as he staggers along, rather than stalks, the streets of Manhattan. Living under a life of homeless drudgery, Angel has been reduced to the scum of the earth. This is not the same Angel who will head a private detective agency fighting for the power of good in the years to come. Nevertheless, a moment of epiphany emerges when Whistler, a demon, takes the vampire to Los Angeles where Angel sees Buffy, the Chosen One, for the first time. Angel's origin episode "Becoming Part 1" (*BtVS* 2:21) also exemplifies how having a soul gives vampires the pain of human existence. This episode is important because it showcases the transition from the evil Angelus to the good Angel. In London of 1860, the mortal Drusilla feels guilty because she has visions, which she attributes to a demonic source. Confessing her sins to Angelus (sitting in the confessional in the guise of the priest) he tells her that good and evil are social constructs.

Vampire souls contribute to the character development that we see in the series, but as supernatural gifts how do souls compare to visions? Visions play an important role for the women who have supernatural powers in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel*. While Drusilla is scared of her visions, she is also marginalized because of them. Cordelia, a character

from *Buffy,* who later appears in *Angel* as an employee of Angel Investigations, also has them. But Cordelia is able to survive her visions, which are excruciatingly painful because she has the necessary support system within Angel Investigations to foster her visions, which are powers important to Angel's business (and his bottom line). Cordelia's visions can be said to demonstrate the transcendental nature of her character (de Beauvoir, 1989). The fact that her character later evolves into a goddess adds to this argument. Drusilla, however, seems to have none of the support that Cordelia has. As a mortal in nineteenth-century London, the visions haunting Drusilla marginalize her as strange, undesirable, and mentally unstable. As an immortal, Drusilla is further alienated from society. Identity is important in both Cordelia and Drusilla's stories because identity in the Buffyverse could depend on how one *uses* their supernatural gifts, regardless of their nature.

Angel may be in love with the slayer in *Buffy,* but in *Angel* he is his own man. Ensouled and alienated, Angel strives for independence in his newfound, post-Sunnydale existence. The path to Angel's redemption is through the Shanshu (the promise of one day obtaining human-hood). Spike's redemption, however, is more complex. Unlike his L.A. counterpart, Spike's path to redemption is to fight alongside the Scoobies. We are made aware of Spike's inner suffering during the penultimate season of *Buffy,* in which Spike demonstrates his loyalty and love for Buffy by traveling to the margins — the African wilderness — and making the ultimate sacrifice a vampire could make for a slayer: Voluntary ensoulment. The significance of his descent into a dark cave indicates that the vampire is going to be, in a sense, reborn. Aside from rebirth through ensoulment, Spike's identity changes through his relationships with other characters. In an episode from the last season of *Buffy*, "Lies My Parents Told Me" (*BtVS* 7:17), we are taken back to Victorian London and Spike's mortal self, William, and the (literal) undying devotion he carries for his mother. It is in this episode that Spike comes to terms with staking his mother, whom he had sired in an attempt to have an immortal companion. His mother's eventual betrayal leads to matricide. Visions of Spike's human past provide the backdrop for Principal Robin Wood's coming to terms with the murder of his own mother, Nikki, a New York City slayer whom Spike had killed in 1977. Principal Wood vows to avenge her death. "Lies My Parents Told Me" is a crucial episode for Spike's redemptive post-soul arc because Spike's recollection of his mother's death triggers guilt and the possibility of empathy towards Robin Wood.

The connection between Spike and Robin Wood is also complicated by their competition over Buffy. Robin Wood, at least in the beginning, held

the advantage over Spike because Buffy had some difficulty coming to terms with a newly ensouled Spike, whose struggle with his own self is dramatized through flashbacks (to both human and unsouled Spike) and flash-forwards (to ensouled, remorseful Spike). Spike's mother serves as the basis for most of the revelations about Spike's character. His mother's tormenting sneer of "You'll always be a limp, sentimental fool," is intercut with scenes of Robin Wood saying, "I don't want to kill you, Spike; I want to kill the monster that took my mother away from me." Not only do these overlapping scenes show the parallel dialogue between past and present, they also encapsulate the complications and contradictions of an ensouled vampire's social integration. Wood's attitude towards Spike is crystal clear at this moment: Despite working together as a team, there will always be a rift between humans and vampires, despite the existence of a vampire soul.

While vampires are alienated by their existence as peripheral beings, vampires with souls are even more alienated because of their awareness of human suffering and the extent to which their soul entitles them to these human feelings. Darla understands this sense of alienation quite well in her eponymous origin episode "Darla" (*Angel* 2:7), in which Angel's sire and on-again/off-again lover is raised from the dead into the world of the living. Following a noble kidnapping from her captors at Wolfram and Hart, Darla implores her "dear boy" Angel to turn her into a vampire to "return the favor." When Angel refuses, countering that humanity is not a curse, Darla flees the scene. Clearly, the two erstwhile lovers now have different perspectives on immortality: While Darla craves the power of eternal life, Angel interprets immortality as infinite unhappiness.

"Darla" is an important origin episode that further clarifies the idea of "souled morality" in the Buffyverse because Angel's soul interferes with his desire to simulate the same murderous life he had once led with Spike, Drusilla, and Darla. Angel even goes so far as to protect a missionary family from being killed by the evil (unsoiled) trio during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. Darla sees through Angel's motives in this flashback. The soul plays a crucial part in remorse and redemption, as it is only until Darla becomes human that she feels remorse for her murderous past, while Angel feels remorse and seeks redemption as a mortal and an immortal. Darla's redemptive arc is also complicated by motherhood. When she becomes pregnant with Angel's son Connor, it is her unborn son's soul that imbues her body with remorse before she commits suicide by stake in order to save his life.

The male leads in *Buffy* and *Angel* demonstrate how the ensoulment process has the tendency to alienate vampires from humans but also, paradoxically, recover the bonds with them as well. By showcasing the

soul as a plot device for the development of these vampire characters, the definitions of good and evil become more complicated as the relationship between humans and vampires mature.

## 2. The Soul in History

The Buffyverse is initially introduced as one possessing archetypal and binary qualities of good and evil, human and monster, slayer and vampire, and souled and unsouled. Halfway through the Season One episode "Angel" (*BtVS* 1:7), Whedon challenges this binary system by revealing to the audience (and Buffy herself) the paradox of the souled vampire. We find out that Angel is a vampire with a soul. The first season establishes an important rule in the Buffyverse: Vampires, by their very natures, cannot possess souls *and* also commit acts of evil. But Whedon is never entirely clear on the concept of a vampire soul, and whether it differed in any respect from a human soul. In the Buffyverse, the vampire soul was tantamount to a good conscience. Used in the beginning of the series as a plot device to develop the relationship between Buffy and the brooding, redemption-seeking Angel, the soul allowed the love story to progress without having to immediately explain in any significant detail why Angel differed from his own kind and thus worthy of the slayer's love. But as both series matured, so did their characters. At the same time the *Buffy* characters transitioned from high school to college and to the drudgery and complexities of adult life, Whedon began to explore his vampire characters further and add depth to his (rather flimsy) concept of the vampire soul in the origin episodes. Indeed, it is in the series' first origin episode – a two-part finale that closed out the show's second season – that audiences first learned how soulless Angelus became the souled and redemption-seeking Angel ("Becoming" Parts I & II *BtVS* 2:21, 2:22).

It is in the *Buffy* origin episodes that we see the beginnings of the Fanged Four (Darla, Angelus, Drusilla and Spike *né* William) and their various adventures and misadventures in periods long predating the birth of the eponymous vampire slayer. These origin episodes reveal, in particular, the malleability of colonial and gender identities in pre-Buffy history. Whedon uses specific historical contexts to develop the vampire characters' personal histories and show (rather than tell) their journeys to their present state of mind. He also reveals how their origins inform and complicate power dynamics and individual agency. In fact, the origin episodes themselves – as vehicles of historical characterization within the show – are curious additions to a television series that primarily centers on a group of contemporary California teenagers and their lives at the turn of

the twenty-first century. It is through Whedon's vision of pre-Buffy history that we can appreciate how he problematizes the earlier episodes of the series, especially in the way they dealt with souled morality and unsouled depravity, with later episodes—origin episodes— that questioned these very paradigms. The various historical representations of both masculine performance and peripheral societies (as depicted in the origin episodes) color, and inevitably influence, how the audience should react to vampire behavior and morality. In the context of the origin episodes, the soul is multivalent, symbolizing at various points, for Angel and Spike, marginal/mainstream and emasculation/virility.

The colonial context is fertile ground for the representation of two polarities in the Buffyverse: The marginal and mainstream (or, the center and periphery). Marginalization and belongingness are prevalent, mutually constitutive themes that quite flexibly apply to storylines involving teenage alienation, vigilante justice, and subversive behavior. The marginal-mainstream dichotomy is thrown into sharp relief in Whedon's conceptualization of the human-vampire relationship because the vampire inhabits an (usually seedy) underground world of graveyards, darkness, and death. The vampire represents the marginalized "Other," a fearsome counterpoint to those aboveground and living in the light. Their predatory natures and their physical inability to occupy human spaces permanently relegate the vampire to the margins. Thus, there is both a social and physical dimension to the marginal and mainstream worlds of Buffy's fictional town of Sunnydale, California. These social and physical divisions are vividly illustrated in the show's vampire "history," especially in the episodes dealing with Darla and Angel's origins.

In the early seasons of *Buffy*, when vampires were primarily the main villains with whom Buffy and the Scooby Gang had to contend, we learn that there are distinct vampire "families," led by a sort of fearsome *paterfamilias*, a master vampire, who had turned all or the most important vampires in a clan. Early in the third season, Buffy and another slayer, Faith, slay a vampire master himself, Kakistos, whose protégé, Mr. Trick, begins serving The Mayor (the "Big Bad"), after Kakistos' demise. The most prominent vampire family in the series, however, is that of The Master, who had bitten and (briefly) killed Buffy at the end of the first season, and who was the leader of the Order of Aurelius, a semi-religious cult of vampires founded in the twelfth century, according to the show's mythology. In the *Angel* origin episode "Darla" (*Angel* 2:7), The Master turns up in Virginia Colony in 1609 dressed in priestly garb, ready to give the dying Darla, a self-professed "whore," her last rites. We are to assume that from the moment The Master turns Darla into a vampire the two are

an inseparable duo within the Order of Aurelius, until Darla subverts The Master's authority and unceremoniously dumps him in order to be with Angelus, her progeny, taking the chance to become matriarch in her own family of vampires. In Angel's human life he had been known as Liam, a seemingly immoral and dissolute drunk whom Darla had stalked and then turned into a vampire in an alleyway in Galway, Ireland, in the mid-eighteenth century. Both Darla and Liam were originally from British colonies, and both were marginalized in their societies in different respects. Darla was an independent woman of property; her human death occurred in a bedroom of a rather sprawling estate filled with household servants. That she was a propertied woman casts some doubt on whether she was really a common prostitute, as she confessed. She was most likely a woman of "easy virtue" who died of venereal disease from having many lovers rather than paying customers. Liam was an Irish-Catholic lout in a country whose laws and politics favored Anglo-Protestants, and whose morality, like Darla's, made him a marginal figure in polite society. It is only when they became vampires that they seemingly acquired all of the wealth, mobility, and freedom to break out of from the colonial peripheries and travel the world.

When Darla and Angel decide to extricate themselves from the *paterfamilias*, it is their desire specifically to leave the darkness and obscurity of an underground world, in which The Master and his minions plotted and schemed to destroy the earth, and to ascend aboveground, where the promise of the human world was much more, as Angel describes it, "fun." And fun was had for several decades, until the Romani, or Gypsies, cursed Angel with a soul. Thus began the process of disassembling the Fanged Four as a vampire family. The implications of a marginalized group such as the Romani Gypsies being responsible for Angel's soul perhaps points to Whedon's fascination with blending magic and sorcery with the exotic, and with attributing magic-like powers to those living on the periphery and beyond mainstream society, as the Gypsies had done for centuries. Indeed, slayer superpowers, witchcraft, and curses all seem to exist in a hidden world of which most ordinary humans in the series (i.e., all of Sunnydale) are ignorant.

The result of having a soul ultimately condemns Angel to the peripheries of human and vampire society for almost a hundred years until he meets Whistler in New York City and is given a redemptive purpose. The soul "defangs" Angel and gives him a type of impotency that prevents him from exercising his powers as a vampire (to feed on blood) and as a man (to have sex with Buffy). The soul, in this sense, strips Angel of his own agency and always makes him subject to the needs of his soul. First,

he is in Buffy's service, then he is in constant search of Shanshu prophecy, which will turn him human once again. His vampire urges are continually suppressed by the weight of his soul and, perhaps, a dose of good old-fashioned Catholic guilt.

Angel's redemptive journey is punctuated by a few episodes in which he is uncursed, thus losing his soul and regaining his vampiric potency in the form of his evil alter ego, Angelus. However, Angel's desire to rejoin Darla two years after he was cursed with a soul should not go unnoticed, as it illustrates the way in which colonial themes intersect with broader issues involving gender roles in both of the series. Darla, suspicious of Angel's inability to act as a proper vampire after begging her to take him back, demanded that he drink from the infant of a white missionary family in China during the Boxer Rebellion in 1900. Angel cannot bring himself to do it, thus failing a test that would have proved his sincerity and vampiric virility. He flees, and the soul remains a constant reminder of his moral failings, his conscience, and his permanent exile from both his vampire family and human society.

How shall we interpret the use of the Boxer Rebellion as the backdrop of climactic scenes involving struggles for power among the Fanged Four? The Boxer Rebellion was a violent uprising against western missionaries, capitalist expansion, and imperial influences. As a metaphor for encroaching western imperialism and its subsequent suppression of native cultures and religions, the scene in which Spike defeats the Chinese slayer is notable for taking place in a Buddhist temple, the very type of institution the Chinese were fighting to preserve against Christian missions. Spike's reply to the Chinese slayer's final request— to tell her mother that she loved her— says it all: "[I don't] speak Chinese." This response effectively silences her, the subaltern, and sacrifices her identity to serve his personal narrative, filled with stories of slayer slayings and assorted mayhem (as we see in the crossover episode "Fool for Love" [*BtVS* 5:7]). At the end of the fight, Spike and Drusilla feast on the blood of the fallen slayer and consummate their relationship among the ruins of the temple. Where Angel had failed Darla as a companion by showing mercy, Spike proved his vampiric worth tenfold with the ultimate kill.

In the next scene, Angel declares that Spike "is one of us now"; that is, worthy of being part of the Fanged Four. To Darla's chagrin, she later compares Angel's simpering soul-searching unfavorably to Spike's newfound vampiric powers. The contrast between the two vampires is thrown into sharp relief by two very different scenes: The first depicting Spike's victory over the Chinese slayer (as well as his sexual victory) and the second depicting Angel's deliverance of the white missionary family

from his bloodthirsty vampire cohorts. The subaltern is suppressed in the former, while the white status quo is preserved in the latter. Interestingly enough, consummating his relationship with his sire, Drusilla, in the place where the Chinese slayer met her end, reaffirmed Spike's newly acquired Big Bad status and masculine potency. Later his notoriety grows when he kills his second slayer, Nikki Wood, in a New York City subway train in 1977—a scene that is intercut by Spike's monologue that imagines a future in which he would conquer Buffy in much the same way. The scene plays with the idea that Buffy giving herself over in death or over to sex are essentially one and the same.

Spike's reign of terror effectively ends when The Initiative places the chip in his head (*BtVS* 4:7). This action renders him useless as a vampire and as a lover to Drusilla, who had left him earlier in South America (in a rather comical scene) for the affections of a monster with dripping, phallic-like antlers. Drusilla's abandonment of Spike results from his obsession with Buffy, and as such, his obsessions have rendered him weak and useless as a lover.

It is Spike's shocking attempted rape of Buffy that spurs his journey to Africa to seek redemption and a soul (*BtVS* 6:19). His killing of the two previous slayers had obvious sexual undertones, as their deaths were like an "aphrodisiac" to him, but Buffy's attempted rape was a desperate act fueled by Spike's frustration with Buffy's rejection and his powerlessness around her. Since the chip had made him powerless as a vampire, and his perceived moral degeneracy had made him worthless as a lover to Buffy, Spike concludes that a soul would solve both problems. Fighting to win a soul in an African cave, he is reborn with all of the moral weight it carries. The soul is, in Spike's case, not a curse, but the prize.

The origin episodes reveal themes about both emotional and social marginalization in a colonial context. In doing so, origin episodes effectively deliver glimpses into the characters' personal histories by focusing on their historical journeys. Furthermore, the soul works as a dramatic device, illustrating the fundamental struggle to define identity and power relations within the Buffyverse. The soul defines humanity, alienates vampires from themselves and their societies, and complicates the classic struggle between good and evil. As such, the soul is the driving force behind tragedy, identity, and character development in both series, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel*. The soul can bring the disparate worlds of the natural and supernatural together but can also be the agent that tears these worlds asunder.

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