The *Restless* Uncanny: Nomadic Affectivity, the Sonic, and Apocalyptic Embodiments

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Observing the twentieth anniversary of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) is an exceptionally opportune moment to revisit sonic strategies of embodiment and embodied resistance that may be traced to the strategic deployment of both sound and silence within the series. The nuanced use of sonic materials in the televisual scoring and production of the series has been of particular note in both academic and critical writing; nonetheless, sound and music in the series remain undertheorized. This is particularly true with regard to the relationship between the sonic (diegetic, non-diegetic, and extradiegetic) and the themes of embodiment so critical to the central narrative. Embodiment and its inverse, spectrality, are central preoccupations in the series at multiple registers; thus it remains a crucial nexus through which to trace the series's culture work. The purpose of the present work is both to extend existing work on how music, sound, and silence are strategically deployed in the series, and to revisit themes of sound, embodiment, and (Feminist) subjectivities in light of more recent scholarship in these disciplines.[1] Of particular interest here is engaging with tropes and themes of the Gothic through which the series self-consciously constructs a postmodern subversion of graphic horror filmic tropes. While such subversive ideals might have inspired the series, the subversion of said tropes

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with regards to the sonic uncanny is far from complete. As van Elferen notes:

> The combination of musical convention and household setting leads to a domestication of ghostliness which defeats the object of the Gothic ghost story. In cliché repetition loses its power; in the exhausted conventions of ghostliness, haunting becomes habit. Even though costume Gothic and Gothic horror make extensive use of Gothic style in plot, imagery and musical effects, they only partially manage to produce the transgression and liminality that characterizes the genre's cultural work.
>
> When they do, the surprise is pleasant. (81)

This statement is particularly true in those instances when this domestication of the gothic is itself transgressed in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, in that the full uncanny potential of the series is particularly well realized in such instances. That they are somewhat few and far between lends them more significance in accomplishing the "genre's cultural work" and marks them as potent sources for analysis to reveal the methodologies through which the sonic is deployed in the series in instantiating the monstrous, and the monstrously feminine, into the uncanny televisual landscape.

Moreover, in analyses of televisual scoring, the sonic is almost always taken as a fundamentally *constructive* process—one *adds* sound, Foley, underscoring, source and non-source sound. Certainly, the absence of spoken dialogue in episodes like "Hush" (4.10) is a powerful choice foregrounding the uncanny power of the Gentlemen and garnering the episode a nomination for an Emmy in screenwriting. Similarly, the absence of obvious underscoring or thematic musical materials in episodes like "The Body" (5.16) subverts the series' own conventions to heighten the uncanny feeling that pervades as the show marks important differences between the metaphoric death of monsters and the "real" death of Buffy's mother. The sonic, however, is never solely a construction in media, never a single teleology toward a unified whole. In this way, the aural serves as herald for the mess that is embodiment—particularly within the realm of Gothic horror. That the series most often used highly

disciplined human bodies, particularly in the form of stunt doubles, dancers, and puppeteers, rather than CGI or motion-capture to instantiate monstrous (and other) subjectivities is of particular relevance at several registers of the analysis.[2] How might figurations trace across sonic constructions, deconstructions, and reconstructions involving, as they do, bodies in motion? What traces do these bodies leave for us to follow, and what evidence do they obscure? Finally, what might these previously unknown artifacts of what is essentially "sub"-diegetic sound reveal, particularly with regard to critical scholars of embodiment engaged with sound in media?

Sounding Subdiegesis

In researching this meta-dialogue around the Slayer's embodiment 20 years hence, I discovered reels from home videos of stunt coordinator Jeff Pruitt in a Google search. Pruitt was the stunt coordinator for Seasons 1-5, now married to Sophia Crawford (Seasons 1-4), the primary stunt double for Buffy for a little over half of the show's seven-season run, ending with the season 4 finale, "Restless" (4:22). The pair met on the set of *Mighty Morphin Power Rangers* and worked together on several productions, but *Buffy* is both their best known collaboration and the place where Pruitt proposed to Crawford on set—so the series bears considerable personal and professional significance. These videos were shot on-set, and most notably in this context recorded the actual ambient audio on-set at the time these stunt sequences were produced. In all honesty, at first they did not appear obvious objects for analysis—indeed, they were intended more as a viewing "treat" after a long day of "actual" research. Instead, they sounded a heretofore silenced layer of production: one of such sonic force it sent the inquiry hurtling through the frame of all previous engagements and into new analytic cosmologies. This should not have been a surprise. Born in the age of hypertext, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* exists across a host of formats and media, from film and television to games (board and video), graphic novels, cons, fan fiction, and video essays; like any work, *Buffy* always already exists *through* its own form of hybrid embodiments. These home videos were published to YouTube long after the series finale (most in 2013); thousands of views and dozens of comments attest

that Jeff Pruitt's decision to publish these for fans wishing to feel closer to the production of the show was quite welcomed. For this work, these clips push *Buffy's* figurations firmly into the realm of the posthuman, and enabled travel beyond the edges of the television screen and into previously uncharted material from the series. More than anything these clips revealed the complex and disciplined physical labor required in "articulating the possible" (Butler) of Buffy's embodiment more profoundly than could have been previously theorized.

The potential of this new archive was apparent quickly, even in the initial clip stumbled across: a mere cut-away from the main action building toward the climactic confrontation in "The Zeppo" (3.13 00:37:27-37:45). In it, Buffy is hurled violently backwards, crashing through the iconic doors of the Sunnydale High School Library and landing in a heap at the other end of the long hallway—near the Hell Beast emerging from the opened Hellmouth beneath the school.[3] She quickly jumps to her feet and runs back toward ground zero, screaming "Faith! Go for the heart!" (00:37:42). For context, this episode is a one-off in the series, a "day in the life of Xander Harris in Sunnydale"[4] which accomplishes a great deal of character development by purposefully obscuring the "main event" involving Buffy and the rest of the Scoobies. So, just seconds of a roughly 43-minute episode, in a cutaway scene, in a one-off: not the place one would consider for earth-shattering revelations in analysis of the overall series.[5] However, these clips open up work heretofore unobserved off of the set itself; they document a new aspect of the immense collective, embodied, rigorous and mostly female labor required to instantiate Buffy's subjectivities on the small screen. Unsurprisingly, they are not quiet. A quick comparison between this footage and its corresponding scene in the broadcast version is warranted.

In the opening of the scene from "BUFFY-ZEPPO home movies and that time we stole Joyce's car" (Pruitt), we first see the completed scene as it aired, with Xander deep into his redemptive mission, chasing the bully he had previously fled in an effort to save the school from a bomb. Meanwhile, we have had glimpses throughout the episode of the "main event"—a band of demons are seeking to open the Hellmouth and bring on the apocalypse. The two quick cuts (approximately 18 seconds) from the episode contained in

the reel capture this main tension almost perfectly. Buffy and Faith fight in the library, a space clearly marked in the series with extraordinary significance in early seasons, so the extreme violence with which Buffy is tossed out, picks herself up and rushes back to the action is almost casually brutal. The glimpses of the extravagant fighting serve here as comedic foil for the drama unfolding around Xander's character, in which he struggles with notions of masculinity and power as he tries to first befriend and then simply survive an encounter with the school's undead bully and his buddies. This episode, as several have cited (Martin; Fields), is in many ways an example of the show spoofing its own formula while dwelling for a moment on masculinity, in particular the masculinity that Xander has been said to represent within the Buffyverse. Thus, these eighteen seconds in "The Zeppo" take on yet more relevance:

> …within the feminist model that *Buffy* presents, Xander is a necessary component: he is the male who doesn't question, debate or resent Buffy's power and leadership, but instead seeks to find his own role and identity. (Martin 0:10:19-28)

Further in both The Passion of the Nerd (Martin) and Mark Fields's episode guides upon which it heavily draws, a central and stable metaphor of embodiments operates throughout the series: Buffy's subjectivity is reflected in those around her—Giles is her "head," Willow her "spirit," and Xander her heart. Thus Xander's choice to face his fears and fight his bully can be seen as coextensive with Buffy's fight against hers—these 15 seconds confirm this equivalence brilliantly, if unintentionally. That the broadcast version is included just before the on-set videos in the YouTube release make it seem that even Jeff Pruitt is eager to make the equivalence even more evident.

For it is at precisely *this* moment (0:00:15) when the home video cuts from the broadcast version to behind-the-scenes footage. From 0:00:16 to 0:00:22, we glimpse casual on-set banter and last-minute discussion between crew and Crawford: the strange low camera angle and distorted sound greatly heighten the contrast between this and the broadcast version. At 0:00:22 another cut takes us to a countdown to stunt rehearsal. From 0:00:23 to 0:00:43 we see two separate rehearsals, in which Crawford's body is launched down

the hallway on a zip line in a harness, only to dangle like a ragdoll until the stunt crew approaches her just before the stunt director cuts. When I first glimpsed this sequence, it took almost the entire twenty seconds for me to process that this was an actual human body; the force with which she flies through the air and stops short is considerable. The fact that the video cuts before we see her move, her body hanging limply from the line and harness at the close as the stunt crew moves towards her contrasts sharply with the relaxed, casual bodies seen seconds before the camera was rolling. The sounds captured by the camera heighten the effect: the bellow of the stunt director shouting the count down, the squeal of the harness against the line, a loud crash off-camera as the video cuts. Throughout, the sounds of humans and machines intertwine in a cacophony resonant with forces and trajectories. Then another disorienting cut, and we see the moments before an actual take on set: from 32 seconds to 44 seconds, when the camera stops rolling, we once again see the body of Sophia Crawford violently launched through the doors of the Library, this time to the bellowing accompaniment of professional fog machines and the armature-operated life-sized puppet-heads used to create the guardian of the Hellmouth. In this actual take, we see her complete motion, from launch to helpless dangling; her ultimate collapse to the floor and stillness is almost horrifying. A spontaneous round of applause breaks the tension. After all this, the 8-second cutaway scene is only half complete.

At 0:01:14 seconds into the video, we see the second half of the stunt: Crawford being shot now from a different angle, the same industrial hiss of fog machines sounding through the chaos. She is bouncing on a mini-trampoline preparing to shoot the landing, Pruitt at the ready to yank the mini-trampoline out of the way for the shot once she is airborne. The stunt had to be filmed in two parts, as Pruitt notes in the details accompanying the video: "Since our ceiling wouldn't allow us to ratchet Sophia Crawford to the floor at the distance I wanted I asked to do this stunt in two sections. It was a wild little ride for her" (Pruitt [1]). Realizing she could not be safety-tethered during the previous shot is chilling. Her hard landing on the floor, while obviously done with considerable skill and technique, is bone-shaking. The overwhelming physicality of her labor in performing Buffy is shocking, even knowing how the body of the Slayer is portrayed in the series. A central tension in the narrative is to

what extent this young woman's body belongs to others, to what extent it is not her own. That this central tension is also expressed at every layer of production (the Slayer is a collective of many laboring bodies, but received by the audience only in the singular) pivots our awareness along a new, hard-to-perceive axis. Indeed, this entire reel of home movies, and the half-dozen others Pruitt has published, enables a glimpse into a heretofore hidden world of bodies whose collective labor is designed to be hidden, subsumed in the audience's awareness as the physicality of Buffy herself. Sticking with this revelation for a moment: what does this revelation of hidden labor and erased subjectivities tell us about the more contentious aspects of subjectivity in the fictional Sunnydale? Which subjectivities are foregrounded, and which ones are subsumed? In other words, which subjectivities are audible, and which are silenced?

Nomadic Affectivity

With these questions in mind let us return to the points raised in the opening, to examples in the series in which it subverts its own domestication of the Gothic, transgresses its own conventions and dwells momentarily in its own liminality. "Restless" is perhaps one of the most critically acclaimed episodes in the entire series, and is frequently noted for its engaging portrayal of dreams as they are experienced rather than typically portrayed in televisual media. Given the host of (mostly Jungian) interpretations of "Restless" thus far published in both the academic and popular literature, the episode's visual and auditory language powerfully touches the non-teleological, telepathic, cyclical, and visceral; there is much of interest for psychoanalytic analysis. There is also an immense amount of interest for our purposes as well, tracing the Gothic and more specifically the sonic uncanny, in particular with regard to the use of audio: scoring, Foley, sound installation, and ultimately the thematic musical score composed by Christophe Beck.

As others have discussed this episode in far greater depth than is possible to address here (Wilcox; Cover; Pateman; Burkhead; Wilson; Lecoq, Kessenich), I will focus in on several aspects that have not yet been adequately theorized. One significantly feminist and underappreciated aspect of the Buffyverse is the repeated and

significant inclusion of liminal states of consciousness as central to the narrative *and* the subjectivities of the characters: trances, dreams, visions, hallucinations—even comas; all produce useful and often otherwise un-knowable information in the universe of the series and offer insight to the subjectivities engaged in traversing the central narrative arcs. Relegated in modernity to the realm of fantasy, pre-rationality, and the feminine, the frequent inclusion of such non-lucid states of consciousness as legitimate sources for often critical in-world information also has resonances with the spectral, the uncanny, and the Gothic. My own earlier analyses placed them firmly within the context of Jaques Lacan's Order of the Real (as that term has been refined by Slavoj Zižek), with sonic elements analyzed as manifestations of the Sublime within the universe of the series. But with such states of consciousness located firmly outside the city walls of modernity, refusing logic and the rule of law, in territories marked as "Primitive";[6] it is perhaps best to forgo those well-worn Orders to observe more directly the traces that Nomads,[7] who frequent these places, understand about what work can only be accomplished here.[8] The sonic is more powerful here anyway, in the landscape where visual cues are scarce and the dangers are many—but we will get to that presently.

The layers of the sonic at work in the final scene of "Restless" are dense and poignant: the percussion-heavy Christophe Beck scoring, the intimate and slightly reverberated studio dialogue recording overlaid onto the expansive exterior shot, the martial arts style Foley added in post-production, and the conspicuous silence as bodies fly through the air in combat. Other musical aspects at work carry over from other dream sequences but find their most distilled expression here, particularly the use of microtonal and melismatic vocal lines, reverberated deep into the mix, along with a conspicuous deployment of non-western instruments. Vocal microtonality immediately references non-Western music, from the Baltic Sea to the Indian Subcontinent and beyond, and signals a shift away from the safe harbors of well-tempered western tonality. Further, the episode often uses sonic distortion or heavy processing, noise—even extended scenes of conspicuous post-production looping (notably once in French)—pushing the "uncanny valley" effects already available within the process of production.

This sonic shift toward the uncanny is established early in the episode's opening. As each character sleeps, a moving dolly shot (0:03:21-38) establishes the location as interior to them; hence, *their* dream follows—the episode is thus structured around four distinct internal dreamscapes. In Willow's dream, which de facto serves as exposition to the plot device, resonant and sparse plucked harp chords bridge establishing shot and "interior," as we cut to an intimate scene between Willow and Tara in the dorm (0:03:40). The chords meander around secondary harmonies that remain directionless until Willow rises to cross to the window and the harmonies condense into a sustained string pad (0:05:06-13). Her drawing back the curtain to reveal the intensely bright desert landscape beyond introduces a crucial new musical element: a microtonal, heavily reverberated and melismatic vocal melody by a solo female voice at the center of the mix. It would seem Willow's drawing back the curtain allows this voice to enter, with the harsh light it accompanies, along with the vision of a barren landscape now before her. The association between this slippery female vocal melody and the wash of bright sunlight is a motif to which we return in several dream sequences: foregrounding the association of harsh desert sunlight and female vocality before the climactic scene. Tentatively, Willow turns back to utter "and there's something out there…" (0:05:17). With this, several thus far sustained notes in the underscoring begin to break out and rise with some processing, creating a distant howling effect. The music swells and becomes more dissonant, the voice gaining amplitude and grain, moving to the front of the mix and drawing out dissonances even longer before resolution (0:05:22-28). There is a quick thunderous rumble of heavily reverberated low frame-drum beater strikes (0:05:23), and each time we catch a glimpse of a human-like form, crouched conspicuously and moving through the landscape on all fours, with blurry jump-cuts lending a distinctly spectral presence-absence. The figure is vague, kept out of focus—hard to distinguish in these initial glimpses as human or animal. As we process these sonic shifts, the camera cuts once again to the interior and Miss Kitty (0:05:26),[9] shot at her eye-level in full screen, her purr and paw treads now menacingly amplified, pitched down and slowed to create a heavy and ponderous effect, all while reverberation implies vastness. Thus Primitive's physicality is only hinted at through association with forces of

nature—wind, animals, thunder—but they are far from natural. The heavy distortion of the comforting sounds of domesticity and warmth (a cat's purr) instead signal the strange, foreboding, and uncanny.

This association pushes further and briefly resolves into focus the next time Primitive is actually glimpsed. Willow has left her intimate scene with Tara to head to drama class; wandering through halls, she is still accompanied by the resonant echo of the scene before. This echo persists as she encounters Xander and Oz, only dissipating when the bell is sounded for her class. All underscoring is absent through the transition as the normal sounds of bustling students and conventional dialogue give the backstage sequence the air of waking reality. It is not until Willow becomes distracted by something that we hear another set of low frame-drum strikes, this time with high dissonant strings that announce the danger as we glimpse a crouched figure stalking almost out of sight—circling like a predator. However, in this instance Primitive's typical "large cat" growls are absent: with her face and body obscured, her dread locks are shaken for a moment to resemble snakes while the movement is accompanied by the loud, almost isolated, shaking of a rattle (0:07:37). The sound installation makes the snake reference clear and unmistakable. The silence and quick instrumental buildup to the rattle shakes acts to mark the sound as especially significant, and the combination of visual and audio cues are powerful. While initially the invocation of Medusa seemed like a simple nod toward Primitive's monstrosity, such careful sound installation surrounding the moment points to something far more significant. Indeed, remembering Whedon's undergraduate years, it seems far more directly a reference to *Le Rire de la Méduse* (The Laugh of Medusa) of Hélène Cixous, a foundational text of modern feminism. A central theme of this text is an argument for écriture feminine, or new, embodied forms of feminist expression. It is a powerful moment in which the uncanny audible and visual references powerfully synchronize to mark the entry of a feminist figuration signaling metaphorical work (Al Azmeh). Invoking *Le Rire de la Méduse* so early into the episode triggers an immediate re-examination of the dream landscape we traverse. First, it is a feminist figuration associated with the monstrous and horrific when seen outside a feminist context, and yet recuperated within the history of feminism as an icon of embodied resistance to male forms of expression and narrative, a reclaiming of

the monstrosity of the embodied feminine. While psychoanalysis may have lingered in the almost clichéd dream narrative about missing the rehearsals for a performance, this sound installation clearly marks Medusa's territory. Here, expression is not structured within the Symbolic Order, but is the direct product of the body—sounding, moving—writing for, with, and through the body, what Cixous terms écriture feminine, as the rejection of teleological or even verbal narrative to embrace new forms of embodied expression of, about and most importantly, for women themselves. Willow does not yet perceive clearly, nor indeed do we, but the establishment of Primitive with Medusa spurs Willow on to further action; she turns away from the bustle of backstage, as the scene slips into an unnatural silence (0:08:26). As Christophe Beck's theme swells, Willow continues restlessly onward (0:08:45-0:09:04). This is perhaps also a notable reference to the element of Nomadism prefigured here within the score: this theme's presence marks a kind of internal flight, toward or against, but movement nonetheless. Prefaced by the brief but strange appearance of Primitive in the audible and visual reference to Medusa, the strangely filtered and echoed theme takes on an even more uncanny presence. It is as if the space implied by the heavily reverberated, echoing and filtered audio is what harbors the monstrous figure of Medusa, barely graspable as of yet, whether friend or foe yet to be determined—effectively stalking the shadows of the liminal and spectral landscape.

Indeed, for here as the reverberated vocal comes back to the underscoring, this time stripped of its attack and fed through an echo and flange distorting it in Christophe Beck's underscoring, the vocal echoes hang even longer in the ether—the harp from earlier in the dream rejoins as the sonic canny (0:09:22) and uncanny begin to merge. A sudden chorus of disembodied whispers, flittering back and forth between left and right channels, interrupts a vital conversation with Tara (0:10:22), allowing her to disappear with spectral efficiency, leaving Willow more bewildered and vulnerable. Suddenly there is a traditional jump-scare, first with the flash of a knapped stone blade through the curtains to her left (0:10:56); then, as she flees, a hideous "human" hand, curled into a claw revealing long, black nails, grasps at her from the right (0:10:59). Each is accompanied by a cacophony of animalistic grunts and growls mingling with Willow's desperate screams as both horns and percussion mark the action sequence with

traditional underscoring. By all the sonic and visual cues being deployed, we are firmly within the space of the Gothic horror genre, and dream is become nightmare. Buffy interrupts the attack, bringing momentary resolution and an end to the action theme (0:11:06-11), but Willow's dreamscape shifts rapidly to her personal anxieties surrounding her identity, and the high dissonant strings swell as these new anxieties grow (0:11:12-30). Tellingly, she is stripped by Buffy of her clothing to uncover her pre-Buffy, teenage persona hidden beneath to a clichéd if somewhat subtle dissonant horn (00:11:51). The subjectivities she associates with her individuation and her adulthood are stripped away and she stands vulnerable, overwhelmingly threatened with the loss of self. Another jump-scare with the sudden return of the horn and percussive underscoring abruptly signals that the escape was only temporary (0:12:32). But it is not until Willow is seemingly devoured to a chorus of grunts and growls in front of the classroom that we reach peak uncanny. It is as her friends and lovers look on uninterestedly, and most important silently, through the brutal diegetic din of the attack (0:12:33-47). One final and quite subtle reference to Medusa: as Willow is at last forced to face Primitive as they struggle on the floor, the results are depicted with Willow's face seemingly turning to stone (0:12:44-47). As the scene ends, we find no resolution; we are suspended at the moment of death, but as we cut back to the establishing shot, Willow's audible struggle for breath lingers as sonic residue of her struggle for life in the liminal dream state (0:12:47-51, as the scene cuts to black). The aurality of her struggle establishes the consequences in the "real" world of the series for battles we now understand to be taking place within the landscape of the dream(s).

In the next two dream sequences, neither Xander nor Giles experience direct references to Primitive as Medusa; in their dream sequences, Primitive is decidedly a monster, but one without graspable sense or meaning. Nonetheless, their movement through their own dreamscapes adds to our understanding of Primitive's effects upon the soundscape, foreshadowing the final confrontation with Buffy. Xander's sequence, for instance, foregrounds an awareness of the nexus between power, sexuality, and the feminine. The most obvious example is in the quick shift from his completely un-scored dialogue with Anya to the full exotic musical theme by Christophe Beck, as he decides to follow Willow and Tara through

his ice cream van for what would obviously be an exotic (to Xander) adventure with the feminine (0:19:50). His movement toward Willow and Tara triggers the re-entrance of our main melismatic vocal melody with the sustained drones we have heard previously, but here the moment is additionally marked with the flourished entrance of tabla drums into the already reverberating microtonal soundscape. The use of Indian classical music tropes here references long associations of Orientalism, taboo sexuality, and the "Primitive." Indeed, the addition of the tabla to the vocal melodies fixes them as Raga—particularly with the addition of tambourine to the already exotic mix[10]—but the horns and drums of the previous horror sequence nonetheless lurk in at the back of the orchestration as if representing Primitive's own lurking presence in the shadows. Even as sounds of dialogue and the environment are obscured by both the foregrounding of the musical score and the weight of this extra-diegetic association, Xander pursues the exotic feminine straight into the Freudian basement again and again, even answering Principal Snyder's question as to where he is from: "well the basement, mostly" (0:22:38). However at this early stage of Xander's dream, Primitive seems able to impact the entire landscape as she draws near, rendering it strange, because it is not *yet* her being articulated—she is not fixed but multi-located, nimble and evasive. Her subjectivity is not distinct from the landscape she inhabits, she is as yet unformed—but her sonic associations become more fixed, more urgent, and more fore-grounded through the episode as we, too, move toward her revelation. This is most notable upon his first accidental stumble into the dream basement, replete with urgently jiggling locked doorknob to complete the horror trope: the dissonant strings swell, and he forebodingly murmurs, "That's not the way out" (0:16:10).

Apart from the decidedly sexual context, in the rest of Xander's dream we have only heard Primitive's music when he emerges into the almost preternaturally sunny next scene, which significantly includes Buffy (0:16:13-0:18:00). That this scene is set in the safe world of a childhood playground pushes the overlay of microtonal melody once again toward unsettling, disturbing, rather than calm and soothing. Visual jump cuts from Buffy in the sandbox to her surrounded by vast desert hint at the uncanny underneath the surface and foreshadow the climactic final confrontation (0:17:21-24). Subtle, as the sonic experience of Primitive (for Giles and Xander

anyway) is almost entirely non-musical, often gutteral, and animalistic when she is glimpsed briefly in the moments before her attack—once again associated with "natural" phenomenon (big cat growls, thunder) identifying her as force of nature. Otherwise, she is hidden in the orchestration or obscured by the very Gothic horror tropes that announce her imminent arrival: the urgent rattling of a door, noise, distortion, or the sudden feedback during Giles' big musical number on stage at the Bronze (0:31:00). These completely different physical and aural relationships with Buffy and Willow on the one hand, Giles and Xander on the other, tacitly underscore that Primitive's monstrosity is perceived quite differently along gendered lines. Ultimately, this reinforces the notion that she is not concerned with anyone comprehending her nature beyond Buffy herself.

But it is the dream encounter between Buffy and Primitive that leads us into new and previously uncharted territory, potential new and nimble figurations, and to the crux of this analysis. Her dream is marked with considerable movement, always echoed by the filtered, reverberating vocals that burst to the front of the mix with sparse accompaniment when she finally emerges onto the desert landscape we have been moving toward all along (0:37:49). The distillation of Primitive's sonic material into its clearest form (voice over drone) is only achieved within the landscape she occupies and continuously transverses—the reverberations sound the landscape, and it, in turn, sounds her. Here another figuration appears, Irigaray's Goddess,[11] her voice's timbre and register matching the wordless vocals, and consonant with the drone (0:37:51-38:21). It is perhaps wise to note that the choice to use non-western scales and drones has yet another relevance here on this landscape: varying interval widths and different starting notes are only the beginning of the distinction between what we might associate with "keys" or modes in the West, and those configured as "other." In many non-western classical traditions, tonal systems and melodies are associated with far more than arrangements of pitch: customary ornaments and melodic passages, meant for particular gods and goddesses; the time of day, feeling, or mood; time of year, or personal milestones like births, marriages, and deaths—all are associations that these tonal arrangements may intrinsically carry in context. They have personalities, if you will, purposes and contexts. They represent non-Western forms of spiritual and religious expression, and in doing so, signal shifts away from those

cosmologies. In this case, like the rattle sound in Willow's dream signaling Medusa, they confirm that we are in the presence of another figuration, another "line of flight" traced through the development of feminism.

It is perhaps also important to recognize that the reverberation in the soundscape is also not incidental: reverb recreates the effect of sound within reflective acoustic spaces, its presence in any mix immediately signaling a spatial relationship between sound and environment—particularly with reference to the sonic dimensions of the uncanny. At the same time, the resonating of spaces, implied through the addition of reverberation to recorded sound, is at once a signal toward Gothic music tropes, as well as the implied vastness of the dreamscape in which they are individually and collectively immersed. This subtle attention drawn to the concept of space by the addition of reverberation reinforces the notion that the spaces traversed are somehow physical. In other words, the reverberated scoring carries within itself the subtle audio signaling of vast landscapes before us, and by extension, the Nomadic journey through them.[12] This reaffirmation of embodiment, here contextualized both within the biosphere of a living planet as well as the internal, imaginary or unconscious landscape of the dream, was powerful motivation to analyze with particular care the location of the final and climactic scene of the episode, and in many ways the season. We will return to this point at the conclusion.

Retracing my earlier Lacanian interpretations of this scene to realize here was the presence of Medusa, the Goddess, and the Nomad (Buffy) before me allows for a serious re-consideration of the meaning of the exchange happening here. That Harroway's Cyborg is yet to be encountered as an uncanny "robot Buffy"—that happens in Season Five—does not detract from the force of their association within this particular episode, meditating on these particular "lines of flight." I originally interpreted the Goddess's remarks about having no speech, no name, as declarations that she was a manifestation of the Lacanian Order of the Real. I interpreted her hail to Buffy as one to reject the Imaginary or Symbolic Orders (speech, name, culture). Therefore, I understood Buffy's rejection of that hail ("you're not the source of me"; "I walk, I talk, I shop, I sneeze") as indications that instead Buffy chooses to embrace the Imaginary, the Real, and the Symbolic in recognition of her individuated subjectivity in late

capitalism. But within this context, Primitive's call and Buffy's response appear far more significant: as recognition of Buffy's multivalent, transitory, and emergent subjectivities—plural "Buffys" as process, as unfixed and unmediated potentials in the process(es) of becoming, encountering herself in the uncanny valley at once self *and* other.

To add a slip of frame to this final scene adds yet more registers through which this transformative account is traced. As with the cutaway scene analyzed earlier from "The Zeppo," Jeff Pruitt has published another reel of "home movies" from the shoot of this climactic scene to YouTube that offer yet more insight. (Pruitt, "BUFFY-Primeval and Restless"). This slip of frame reveals the multitude of embodiments, agencies, and constraints articulated within the sonic landscape that instantiate all the "Buffys" necessary for her subversive work. The clip for "Restless" is less than a minute long: at 0:01:40 we hear the end of the call for "action" and see Sophia Crawford and Sharon Ferguson performing the epic battle from the scene. While I have always appreciated the physicality of the scene as it is scored by Beck (particularly the haunting silence as bodies fly through the air), its deep relevance to embodiment, subjectivities, and figurations is in evidence here. We are confronted with the sounds of bodies engaged in intense physical labor: muffled grunts, the deadened "thud" of flesh and bone hitting sand, cries and yelps as blows land and choreography is marked. The discipline required to perform with this level of precision while appearing both savage and brutal is in evidence in this casually shot reel. That we can *hear* gravity in these bodies, vectors of force, the musculo-skeletal realities of human existence through these bodies re-inscribes them into the desert landscape. The sounds of them tumbling downhill in the final moments (0:01:52-02:15) reminds us that these are humans in performance, engaged in the most intense layer of écriture feminine, writing with their own bodies on this landscape to instantiate a complex figuration: to embody the transformative account(s) of the self, at a moment of intense integration. Ferguson and Crawford's physicality is immense, the skills required for this performance, and its many hazards (witness the horrific pain of sand in the eyes during the last few seconds)—all speak deeply to the cultural *and* physical work being attempted.

A metaphoric reading of this work immediately suggests a moment of Jungian individuation and Buffy's integration of the shadow self (Primitive). But as Bradotti notes in *Nomadic Subjects*:

> Given the nondialectical structure of advanced globalized societies, however, the center-margin relation is neither fixed nor unitary, but rather floating and multilocated. These complex in-between states of social (im)mobility and stages of transit are crucial in that they challenge the established modes of theoretical representation and ask for an extra effort on the part of the social and cultural critic. Cartographic maps of multiple belonging and of power relations can help identify possible sites and strategies of resistance.
>
> A figuration is a living map, a transformative account of the self; it's no metaphor. (10)

Medusa, the Goddess, the Cyborg, the Nomad need no individuation, no integration, no subsumption *into* the self. For Primitive and Buffy, this is notably a battle that neither actually wins. The Jungian surface reading also silences labor, physicality *and* the landscape upon which the action occurs, and in essence evacuates them of meaning. Allowing these clips to enter the field of the analysis, one must confront the intense soundscape of (mostly female) bodies at labor, and bear witness to its silencing in the broadcast version. Hearing such intense physicality on the part of the technical and stunt crew charged with the nuts and bolts of articulating the possibility of Buffy within the physical world revealed a startling new question: what is the status of the production of these laboring bodies in the Whedonverse? How must their sounds be muted, shaped, or altered to articulate complex webs of embodiment as opposed to simple "monstrous bodies she fights?" What does the removal of the sounds of female labor, as well as their re-inscription into the score through post-production Foley, mean for the actual laboring bodies that instantiate Buffy and the Whedonverse—particularly bodies conspicuously marked by their "performance" of genders, races or sexualities within overlapping "scene(s) of constraint" (Butler *Undoing Gender* 1)?

Somehow, stripped of their scoring and sound installation that accompanied the broadcast version, these two bodies dancing in the desert become uncanny yet again: their "sub"-diegetic labors now haunt my rewatching of the episode, causing Buffy's domestication of the Gothic to be as marked by its sonic erasures as by its conventional deploying of sonic tropes.

Apocalyptic Embodiment

But let us linger one more moment here in the desert—in this vast and formidable landscape—and return to the previous point about Nomadic Affectivity. The series run coincides with the rise of mainstream consciousness concerning the urgency of climate change, the desertification of temperate zones, and the apocalyptic implications in the new era of manmade climate change in what has been popularized by Nobel laureate Paul J. Crutzen and others as the Anthropocene (Zalasiewicz and Williams, Steffen, Crutzen). The choice of landscape here, taken in such context, seems far from arbitrary: desertification is as much a part of our collective maps as melting polar ice, thawing permafrost and extreme weather. Considering the labor involved in instantiating this climactic scene within the desert landscape, our understanding of the cosmology of this performance, of engaged and active transformative accounts of existence within, traces embodiments not yet contemplated in the popular imagination at the moment of broadcast. Rife with complexity and power through the labor of sounding and re-sounding bodies articulating the possible through audible effort, at this level Buffy, in her nomadic figuration, becomes something more than the Feminist "Third Wave" might have imagined. Bodies and labor recorded, silenced, re-scored and re-sounded, signal the complexity in our own transformative accounts of existence. The need to be nimble in our subjectivities as we traverse the uncharted territories of late capitalism—we walk, we talk, we shop, we sneeze—but we will become firemen when the floods roll back. We engage, sometimes violently, our figurations in new landscapes and create new lines of flight. Is this a canny instantiation of the posthuman? A culturally prescient prefiguration of the roles feminism, and in particular feminist "lines of flight," might play in re-centering the

landscape, the biosphere, in which all subjectivities, human or otherwise, are expressed? Performing apocalyptic embodiment, Buffy must—as indeed we all must—become multitudes in her transformative account of existence, and like any good shamanic story it must dissonate without resolution and give voice to the silenced. When viewed this way, in the climactic scene of season four we see hidden within the transformative accounts of many, many layers of soundings and silencings, of living maps heard and unheard, made and remade in the slipperiness of our subjectivities in the Anthropocene.

Joss Whedon relates in a post-finale chat that his favorite Buffy moment was a subtle one: a crewmember was vocally marveling with him through the view screen at an action sequence being filmed. Whedon found himself responding "Yeah. That's Buffy. She's my hero" (*Back to the Hellmouth*). This is a pointedly uncanny moment in the auteur's life, one in which he found his character looking back at him, functioning for him as an entity operating within overlapping scenes of constraint—an articulation of the possible—was fully gazing back at him. This is also a moment wherein the spectral and embodied merged, at least in Whedon's imagination, signaling something important for our purposes here. This full embodied status is precisely *because* as creator and primary member of the production team, he had access to these subsequently silenced layers of the soundscape of Buffy's instantiation: the muffled struggle repetitively performed through the small screen, yet enacted painstakingly and noisily on sets, locations and rehearsal studios again and again and again. As this labor is overwhelmingly sounded by female bodies, hearing and resounding them becomes an act of recuperation, of overdue recognition. Acknowledging the dense sonic layers of production required to instantiate a televisual character allows us to trace that instantiation through more layers of televisual production than were previously accessible, and those layers have significant new resonances as we look back. Now consumable through extra-series video artifacts, these stunt reels shot on set increase awareness of the layers of "sub"-diegetic, diegetic, non-diegetic, and extradiegetic aurality through which the title character's complex subjectivities are instantiated. That Buffy's embodiment requires so many skilled and disciplined bodies—whose labor is largely hidden with camera angle and postproduction apparatus—

adds a startlingly fresh spin on the text. We can glimpse evidence that our eponymous Slayer was embodied *through* multiple layers: conception, writing, scripting, casting, the overlapping labors in production and post-production, each with a distinct sonic trace essential to her instantiation. Likewise, the role of strategic *silencing* in constructing this embodiment, heretofore hidden, offers insight as to the limits of her conditions. It is with these insights that potentially new hybrid figurations, recognizable to audiences living through both late capitalism *and* the era of manmade climate change, emerge most forcefully. At this critical moment in the series' overall arc, to have its own domestication of the Gothic inverted allows it evacuate the surface and incorporate the dizzying array of traces across our collective maps. These traces now visible with the perspective of hindsight and clarifications of poststructural feminisms, we can return to the text and uncover even more of relevance—with more of what it means to be embodied and aware, to be fully present to ourselves and to our 'others,' grounded in the landscape but gifted by lines of flight—with all our transgressions, subversions, vulnerabilities and resistances heard.

Notes

[1] In particular, engaging with the themes of critical embodiment and aurality in my earlier published chapters on the series. See Coulombe " 'I Had It All Wrong,'" ."The Insatiable Banshee," and " 'You're Just a Girl!'"

[2] I recognize that the series, particularly in the first season, was produced on a shoestring—and that at the time CGI was primitive, awkward, and above all expensive—which has caused many to see the choice to use dancers and stunt doubles rather than computers as one of necessity and not a creative decision. Nonetheless, it became an aesthetic choice despite arising initially as a "scene of constraint" for the production team.

[3] The same, minus the tentacles and slime, as "Prophecy Girl" (1.12).

[4] For an in-depth discussion of Xander's masculinity, see Andrew F. Herrmann and Art Herbig, "All Too Human: Xander Harris and the Embodiment of the Fully Human."

[5] This is not to deny that other "one-off's" in the series are some of the finest television ever made, and the most critically engaging—like "The Body," "Once More with Feeling" (6.7) or "Hush"—but the Zeppo differs from these significantly in tone, choosing the playful approach and that in many ways laughs at the show's own tone and cosmology. That even such a light-hearted episode in which Buffy's fight scenes are only tangentially glimpsed requires such intense collective and individual physical labor to instantiate gives some hint as to the magnitude of the work from this perspective.

[6] I am intentionally slipping the name of the "First Slayer" in this episode as it is listed in the credits, for she is not referred to as such within the episode. This is an intentional choice so to draw some attention to a complex issue without sidelining the central argument: this character never named in the narrative beyond her function, her physicality and embodiment and its implications within the greater handling of raced bodies within the series is far beyond the scope of this essay See Iatropoulos and Woodall.

[7] Here and throughout "Nomad" or "Nomadism" are used in reference to the work of Rosi Bradotti as developed in *Nomadic Subjects*. These and related terms are also discussed in Al Azmeh; see note 11.

[8] In light of later statements about Jung, the work referred to here is more particularly that of Ione.

[9] Miss Kitty prefigures the mountain lion that will guide Buffy to meet once again out in the desert with her guides in "Intervention" (5.18), including Buffy's greeting "Hello kitty!" For more on animality and humanity in this episode and others, See Mukherjea.

[10] For more on these instrumental associations particularly in the classical Indian instruments, see Coulombe, "Postmodern Polyamory of Postcolonial Challenge."

[11] The feminist figurations referenced here and to follow are drawn specifically from Zeina Al Azmeh's article "Nomadic Feminism: Four Lines of Flight" in which Al Azmeh proposes four significant figurations, Harroway's "Cyborg," Cixous's "Medusa," Irigaray's "Goddess" and Bradotti's "Nomad" as primary both to poststructuralist feminism and prefigured throughout feminist history.

[12] Bradotti's development of the concept of Nomadism toward Nomadic Affectivity challenges the anthrocentrism of previous feminist work and the failure to account for the very foundational relationship between feminism and the natural environment, landscape, and biome. This "environmental awareness" of Nomadic affectivity will be developed later in the essay.

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