THE ONLINE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL OF BUFFY STUDIES 3.1 Nine

Holly Chandler

Slaying the Patriarchy: Transfusions of the Vampire Metaphor in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

PDF Version

> I saw so many horror movies where there was that blonde girl who would always get herself killed, and I started feeling bad for her. I thought, you know, it's time she had a chance to take back the night. The idea of Buffy came from just the very simple thought of a beautiful blonde girl walks into an alley, a monster attacks her, and she's not only ready for him, she trounces him.
>
> Joss Whedon

[1] In this and other interviews, Whedon, creator of the television series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, has stated that his show has a feminist agenda. His use of the phrase "take back the night"—a national rape awareness slogan—immediately suggests that the war between Buffy and the vampires is intended to mirror the real-life feminist battles against rapists, domestic abusers,[1] and other side effects of male-dominated society. However, the show has since evolved beyond its original concept. Vampires on the show do more than embody the dangers of a patriarchal society; they are fluid metaphors, changing to allow the show to reflect different facets of feminist problems. Drawing on the horror film tradition, *Buffy* adapts popular metaphorical meanings of vampires for a feminist narrative, not only to portray the unhealthy consequences of patriarchy, but also to offer a fantasy (in two senses of the word) in which one woman successfully disrupts this oppressive system. Diverse vampiric characters such as the Master, Angel, Spike, Darla, and Drusilla each make unique contributions to the feminist text of *Buffy*. In essence, Whedon plans to do to the patriarchy what Buffy does to vampires: "Set 'em up, and knock 'em down" ("School Hard," 2003).

[2] In the first episode, the character Rupert Giles describes how a girl becomes a Slayer: "Into each generation a Slayer is born, one girl in all the world, a Chosen One, one born with the strength and skill to hunt the vampires . . ." ("Welcome to the Hellmouth," 1001). The title character is an ordinary, white, middle-class American teenage girl who, at the age of 15, is magically endowed with superhuman strength and is called on to protect humanity from vampires, demons, and the end of the world. Every night she must plunge her trusty stake (or any convenient piece of wood) into the heart of each vamp she encounters; the vampires promptly turn to dust, leaving no bodies behind for the police to wonder about. The first season of the show begins after Buffy turns sixteen, when she moves to the ironically named Sunnydale, "a center of mystical energy" ("Welcome to the Hellmouth") where the forces of darkness are perpetually on the verge of taking over. However, Buffy doesn't have to fight them alone; Giles, her "Watcher" or mentor, provides her with academic knowledge of the demon world, and her friends Xander and Willow also help, battling the enemy alongside her as well as doing research. As the series progresses, an odd assortment of characters joins the original gang: Cordelia the cheerleader, Oz the werewolf, Tara the witch, Anya the former demon, and Riley the paramilitary agent. Angel and Spike, two highly unusual vampires, also decide to fight the good fight.

[3] Using its demonic characters as metaphors, *Buffy* engages the viewer in a dialogue on the difficulties of contemporary American culture, including "shifting gender scripts, sexual maturation, sexual violence, drug use, peer pressure, clueless adults, the numbing banality of educational systems, the fragmented heterosexual, middle-class family unit, and the failures of the rational world paradigm"

(Owen). The staple metaphor for the show is the interdimensional portal—or Hellmouth—that lies under Buffy's high school. By portraying high school as a literal hell, the show uses the fantasy genre to express emotional realities. Critics of *Buffy* group the significance of the vampire threat with the Hellmouth; both represent the dangers and fears associated with growing up in America (Wilcox, "There").

[4] The world of magic and monsters into which Buffy and her friends have been initiated is the literal expression of the underground in real-life society—an extremely marginalized subculture. A humorous exchange between Xander and the owner of a demon bar employs this metaphor for a pun: "I heard a few things, you know, from the underground." "The underground?" "Yeah, you know. From things that live under the ground" ("Amends," 3010). Buffy, Willow, and Xander are also outcasts, having been rejected by the "in" crowd at school. Thus, the fight between good and evil is fought entirely below the radar of mainstream society.

[5] Moreover, the demon-filled world on *Buffy* is cast as the "real" world; the sunny world of American middle-class culture is a façade, concealing the dangers inherent in its very structure. A scene in the first episode makes this analogy explicit. The camera cuts from Buffy expressing her disbelief that anything evil could be lurking in such a sunny and boring suburban town to an exterior shot of the school supposedly substantiating her claim. Then, the camera moves downward through the ground, and the audience sees a gothic chamber where vampires are chanting ominously.

[6] In the third season, it is revealed that the mayor of Sunnydale, an evil politician, is actively preventing people from finding out that they live on a hellmouth. Although he spouts nothing but traditional "family values," he turns out to be a hypocrite; he wants to eat Sunnydale's children, whom he professes to be so fond of—a disturbing vision of what family values do to children. The adults in Sunnydale, like people in real life who fail to question the system, never notice what's happening under their noses. As Giles explains, "People have a tendency to rationalize what they can and forget what they can't" ("The Harvest," 1002). Furthermore, one character later reveals that, "The mayor built this town for demons to feed on" ("Enemies," 3017). The literal structure of the town—its sewer systems and other pipelines—supports the evil plan of the patriarchal figure who runs it.

[7] Here, *Buffy* subscribes to the theory, made popular in the 1970s by feminists like Adrienne Rich and Jill Johnston, that the structure of American society was intentionally built and maintained by men, who wanted to keep women out of power. Despite recent advances in civil rights, many feminists believe that the roots of oppression have not yet been destroyed. Reading Sunnydale as a microcosm of society in general, the culture of the vampires and demons is a manifestation of the continued presence of unconscious sexist attitudes often ignored by the complacent. Women's Lib may have changed laws and modes of expression, but the underlying attitudes remain, hidden beneath layers of legislation and "politically correct" terminology.

[8] Sexual politics play a prominent role in the *Buffy* narrative. In popular culture, vampires have taken on a wealth of meaning, from their representation in classic horror films and novels as devils incarnate to more recent portrayals as relatively sympathetic outsiders.[2] Many would agree that the key ingredient to the myth of the vampire is his—and the pronoun is intentional—seductive, often forbidden, sexuality.[3] Vampires are sexy. Yet, vampires are also predators, and their sexuality is coded as a threat, not only to conventions, but also to their victims, mostly women. The vampire's bite is generally read as a form of rape—a forced exchange of bodily fluids. By using vampires as a concrete expression of the sexual dangers of the patriarchy, *Buffy* first exposes and then defeats the menace.

[9] However, like the metaphorical significance of vampires, their literal definition on the show is fluid; they have evolved considerably over the course of six seasons. In contrast to those of other recent narratives, *Buffy*'s vampire mythology relies heavily on *Dracula* (1931) and other classic horror films. Stacey Abbott remarks that, "Joss Whedon's vampires seem to make a return to a pre-modern representation of vampirism." Religious objects—crosses and holy water—can hurt vampires on the show, although the source of their power, Christianity, is rarely mentioned.[4] Furthermore, vampires are defined as pure evil because they lack a human "soul" (a nebulous attribute that seems to mean less and less as the show progresses). According to Jules Zanger, most depictions of vampires since the 1970s have excluded religion entirely and often ignore the concept of evil (Zanger 22).

[10] On the other hand, Abbott contends that the show has "gradually disembedded itself from these traditions in order to create a modern vampire and slayer, both independent and self reliant." A few of the show's undead characters demonstrate many qualities Zanger ascribes to the "new" vampire —moral ambiguity, complex emotions, and the ability to gain the viewer's sympathy (Zanger 21-22). In addition, many of the vampires form groups or "families," and their social interactions are comparable to human relationships. Yet, in an early episode Giles states unequivocally that a vampire is a demon that inhabits a dead human body, and that unlike the creatures in (for example) Anne Rice's novels, it has no conscience.[5] "A vampire isn't a person at all. It may have the movements, the memories, even the personality of the person that it took over, but it's still a demon at the core" ("Angel," 1007). Later, other characters reveal that this view is at worst a human prejudice and at best an oversimplification.

[11] The vampire mythology on *Buffy* is unusual; whereas most narratives treat vampires as unique creatures, Giles equates them with demons, which, in the series, include everything from a large snake to things resembling the Hunchback of Notre Dame. Ultimately, *Buffy*'s vampires are a blend of the old, the new, and the original. This blend lends flexibility to creating the vampires' meanings and personalities, allowing the writers to discuss a diverse set of feminist issues, including, but not limited to, rape.

[12] Nevertheless, Giles' definition has its uses; *Buffy* draws on the imagery of the "old" vampire to create a parody of it. Like Dracula, the creatures on the series are for the most part characterized as irredeemably evil; they kill humans and feel no regret. However, the vampires whom Buffy kills on a nightly basis have none of Dracula's more frightening qualities. In the 1931 version of the movie, Dracula is an aristocratic, handsome (to the character Lucy, anyway), foreigner with a dignified and polite demeanor. His pale skin, an indication of vampirism, is the only clue that he is a monster and not a man. On *Buffy*, vampires can easily be distinguished from humans by their ugly "game faces"—ridged foreheads, yellow eyes, and large fangs. They can lose these features at will to look human, but the minor guest stars almost always wear their game faces, thus reinforcing their demonic status (and consequently preventing Buffy from seeming a murderer in the audience's eyes). Their animalistic growls and violent attacks have replaced Dracula's graceful movements and hypnotic gaze. (Owen) In contrast to his trademark elegant black cape, many of the vampires that Buffy encounters wear Grateful Dead T-shirts. In fact, Buffy is often able to identify them based purely on their outdated clothing, as she condescendingly explains, "[O]nly someone living underground for ten years would think *that* was still the look" ("Welcome to the Hellmouth"). Where Dracula maintains a gothic aura of mystery, these vamps hide nothing.

[13] Indeed, it is this very lack of mystery that eliminates much of the fear that *Dracula* inspired in its original audience. Whatever is unknown appears infinitely more powerful and dangerous than what is known. After all, it is difficult to combat effectively something one does not understand. The episode "Fear, Itself" (4004) explores this concept; a noncorporeal demon that feeds on fear terrifies the protagonists until the end of the episode, when Buffy accidentally forces the creature to become solid. In a moment of hilarious visual effect, the demon comes roaring out of the ether, only to reveal that it's two inches tall. Buffy squashes it easily. There's nothing to fear, especially not fear itself.

[14] Significantly, Buffy only trades blows with vampires wearing game faces; because the demon in these creatures is visible, it can be fought. Giles' collection of archaic volumes on demon lore, in addition to the easy-to-read markers of vampirism, work to demystify the threats that Buffy faces and give her the tools to defeat them. By creating concrete demons for the girl to fight, the series responds to women's frustration when trying to combat male domination in society. Because ideas are more elusive than smelly monsters, it is difficult to change, let alone recognize, attitudes that are not expressed. Thus, the fight between slayer and demon can be seen as a physical manifestation of a more abstract, often subconscious battle between women and deep-rooted sexist attitudes.

[15] Buffy herself, accustomed to solving the world's problems with violence, expresses the frustration of trying to fight an immaterial concept. When the "First Evil"—an unspecified, noncorporeal force—comes to town in the episode "Amends," she desperately demands that her watcher give her a concrete opponent: "Find me something I can pummel." Eventually, she finds and beats up the First Evil's henchmen, who are corporeal, but she never defeats the First Evil. After all, as the F. E. says, "you have no idea what you're dealing with."

[16] Like ignorance, silence is a key element of terror in the film tradition. In *Dracula*, when a villager utters the name "Nosferatu," his wife fearfully covers his mouth. In the 1922 film *Nosferatu*, directed by F. W. Murnau, the character Jonathon reads a book that warns, "That name rings like the cry of a bird of prey. Never speak it aloud." No problem there—it's a silent film. Instead, he hides under the bedsheets. Although in later films, the victims add screaming to their arsenal of fruitless gestures, their incoherence still marks them as powerless. In contrast, not only Buffy's physical power, but also her verbal power banishes fear of the undead. Karen Eileen Overbey and Lahney Preston-Matto examine in detail how this "materiality of language" acts as a weapon on the show (73). On occasions when the blond female victim in a horror movie would scream helplessly, Buffy instead playfully remarks, "You have fruit-punch mouth" ("Prophecy Girl," 1012). Thus, she undermines the confidence of her enemy while bolstering her own.

[17] The act of speaking shifts power from the (male) vampire to the girl (Owen). Using puns as well as fists, she asserts her identity as an independent, powerful young woman. "We haven't been properly introduced. I'm Buffy, and you're history" [6] ("Never Kill a Boy on the First Date," 1005). The punch line is literal; in mid-sentence, she introduces the vampire to her weapon, a sharp wooden stake. Not only does the clichéd phrase "you're history" acquire a double meaning in its unorthodox position in the sentence, but it also adds a third connotation: Buffy makes no secret of the fact that she doesn't like history as a subject, and, no doubt, there are times when she would like to do to her history homework what she proceeds to do to the vampire on this occasion. Many vampires can't even get a word in edgewise before she stakes them; Buffy does all the talking. "You were thinking, what, a little helpless coed before bed? You know very well, you eat this late … you're gonna get heartburn. Get it? Heartburn?" He doesn't have a chance to respond, since she has already staked him—through the heart ("Wild at Heart," 4006).

[18] Laughter undermines fear. It is fear that immobilizes Dracula's victims, as much as his hypnotic gaze. The ridiculous figures that vampires cut on *Buffy* serve to remove the audience's fear not only of them, but also of the thing they stand for—the patriarchy. As Xander tries to articulate with a quote from *Star Wars: The Phantom Menace*, one must overcome one's fear in order to act. "Buffy, this is all about fear. It's understandable, but you can't let it control you. 'Fear leads to anger. Anger leads to hate. Hate leads to anger.' No wait, hold on. 'Fear leads to hate. Hate leads to the dark side.' Hold on, no, umm . . ." ("The Freshman," 4001).[7]

[19] The main villain of the first season, a vampire called the Master, presents a more sophisticated parody of the "old" vampire than *Buffy*'s weekly stake fodder. Unlike the minor vampire characters, he has a sense of humor, as he demonstrates during an earthquake: "This is a sign! We are in the final days! My time has come! Glory! GLORY!" After a pause, he undercuts the melodramatic tone of his own speech. "What do you think? 5.1?" ("Prophecy Girl"). Thus, he combines the stylized diction of the traditional supervillain with an ironic awareness of the modern world. His wit and intelligence indicate that he poses a real threat to Buffy, and, in fact, he is the only vampire she truly fears; in the episode "Nightmares," she dreams that he kills her.

[20] However, the Master's tendency to use archaic phrases like "three-score years" ("The Harvest") links him to the old horror film tradition and, by extension, the patriarchal values behind it.[8] He is the leader of a clan of devoted followers called the Order of Aurelius, but he describes the order as a family (Wilcox, "There"). An evil father figure, he instructs his child protégé, an eight-year-old vampire named Collin, on how to behave in his hierarchical society. "Pay attention, child. You are the Anointed,[9] and there is much you must learn" ("Angel"). After another member of the order suggests a plan for killing the slayer, he turns to Collin and says enthusiastically, "You see how we all work together for the common good? That's how a family is supposed to function!" ("Angel"). As Rhonda V. Wilcox notes, "There could hardly be a nastier incarnation of the patriarchy than the ancient, ugly vampire Master" (Wilcox, "There").

[21] Because the actual lessons he imparts in his persona as a parent concerned with his kid's education label his family as dysfunctional, he saturates another common paternal role—the disciplinarian—with negative connotations. When three members of his family (appropriately called The Three) whom he sends to kill the slayer fail, he has them killed. Significantly, Giles is at the time the only other father figure on the show—Buffy lives with her divorced mother—but his role is much less authoritarian than the Master's. He is incapable of disciplining Buffy, since, as she points out, he cannot

physically compete with her if she chooses to disobey him. Furthermore, his gender is de-emphasized by his tendency to stutter and his stereotypically feminine profession—librarian (Owen). This leaves the Master as the only male character acting as the head of a household. As if the Master's murderous behavior isn't enough to condemn male-dominated societies, his name implies that his children are his slaves. *Buffy* clearly disapproves of social inequalities.

[22] The Master also resembles a classic vampire character—Count Orlock in *Nosferatu*; they are both bald, pale, and stick thin. The Count has a deformed head, hooked nose, and bad teeth. The Master's countenance, permanently stuck in game face, resembles a fanged rat. When they fold their hands in peculiar, similar gestures, their overgrown fingernails become apparent. Moreover, both Orlock's and the Master's behavior lack the sexual element of vampires, yet their relationship with the heroine supplies this motif.

[23] One of the main characters in *Nosferatu*, Jonathon's wife Nina, in a rare moment of initiative, consults the vampire book to determine how to get rid of the Count and discovers that, "Only a woman can break his frightful spell—a woman pure in heart—who will offer her blood freely to Nosferatu and will keep the vampire by her side until after the cock has crowed." Despite the fact that Nina is married, "pure in heart" suggests virginity. (Considering how childishly and effeminately Jonathon behaves throughout the movie, one could almost believe that she *is* a virgin.) Moreover, given the popular reading of the vampire's bite as sexual intercourse, Nina is essentially consenting to rape. Appropriately, the action is set in her bedroom. The fact that the camera doesn't capture the actual bite reinforces the sexual interpretation; in 1922, films generally didn't show any hanky-panky.

[24] Buffy, too, is a virgin when she faces the Master. For sixty years, he has been stuck in a cave near the opening of the Hellmouth, trapped by the mystical energies surrounding it. In the season finale, Giles discovers a prophecy that states that the Master will finally "rise" and kill her. Buffy decides to fight the Master anyway, knowing that she will die, yet hoping that she can still kill him before he escapes. In direct contrast to the events of *Nosferatu*, she learns (too late) that the way he is able to free himself is by drinking her blood. He gloats, "You're the one that sets me free! If you hadn't come, I couldn't go" ("Prophecy Girl"). Because he has Dracula-like hypnotic skills, he immobilizes her, bites her, and lets her fall face down into a pool of water. She drowns.

[25] The entire scene is disturbingly reminiscent of more traditional vampire narratives. Buffy's terrified face, her helplessness, and her white prom dress all force her to be read as the passive female (Krimmer and Raval 158). Indeed, the white dress is the most telling marker; the fact that everyone, including the Master, compliments her on it, brings its symbolism to the foreground. Not only does it signify her virginity, but also, as Elisabeth Krimmer and Shilpa Raval discuss, it represents a wedding dress; the act of biting can be read as a "form of sexual initiation" (Krimmer and Raval 158)

[26] However, unlike Nina, Buffy doesn't stay dead; her friend Xander resuscitates her. It is interesting to note that whereas in the earlier work, a woman's death is required to destroy the threat, on *Buffy*, a woman's death creates a threat that can only be subdued by her resurrection. *Buffy* sends the message that passive self-sacrifice, however noble, is not only a waste of a good person, but also unhealthy for society as a whole. The show subverts the Western tradition that "the death of a woman is necessary for the establishment or the restoration of civil order" (Krimmer and Raval 157)

[27] Emphasizing that her death was a threshold event, Buffy notes, "I feel strong. I feel different." After a season of having nightmares about the Master, she "wakes up" and discovers that he no longer has any power over her; since the worst that could happen has already happened, she has nothing to be afraid of anymore. Furthermore, this conflation of power and confidence reminds the audience that being afraid to face a threat is as fatal as the threat itself.

[28] When they meet again, the Master is bewildered by Buffy's apparent failure to conform to her assigned (gender) role. "You were destined to die! It was written!" She replies with a trademark pun, indicating that she has regained the power that she lost in their previous encounter. "What can I say? I flunked the written." He can't hypnotize her, and she confidently kills him. A. Susan Owen writes, "Buffy's embodied strength, power, and assertiveness destabilize the traditional masculinist power of the vampire character in the horror genre" (Owen). The show enacts this destabilization with the physical act of killing the Master.

[29] Although the sexual aspects of vampirism and biting are relegated to subtext in the early episodes, during the second season, in Giles' words, "I believe the subtext here is rapidly becoming text" ("Ted"). In the second season, Buffy becomes romantically involved with a vampire named Angel. Gypsies cursed him with a soul a hundred years ago, so he's wracked with guilt over his former evil deeds. Dating the enemy has given her a new arsenal of vocabulary to use in battling vampires. In "Bad Eggs" (2012), when the slayer rescues an unsuspecting woman about to be bitten in an arcade, both Buffy and the vampire use the language of dating as a code for their true intentions:

Lyle: (to Girl) Well, ain't you just got the prettiest little neck I ever did see.

Buffy: Boy, you guys really never come up with any new lines, do you?

Girl: Do you mind? We were talking here.

Buffy: (stares down the vampire) But you promised you'd never cheat on me again, honey.

After they fight for a few minutes, he runs away, saying "This ain't over," and she comments sarcastically, "Oh, sure. They *say* they'll call."

[30] Meanwhile, two of Angel's vampire acquaintances, Spike and Drusilla,[10] come to town to kill the slayer and restore the ailing Drusilla to health. Both Spike and Angel are unusual. Diane DeKelb-Rittenhouse describes how the text emphasizes their sexual desirability, not only by focusing on their handsome human faces and "cool" clothing, but also by showing that female characters (both guest stars and regulars) drool over them (146). Spike also has a self-consciously "cool" Cockney accent. His language marks his interest in Buffy as sexually charged; he calls Buffy "love," "pet," "cutie," and later "gorgeous" (146-47). Both vampires desire Buffy; Angel wants to have sex with her, and Spike wants to bite her.

[31] The connection between biting and sex is made explicit in the fourth season episode "The Initiative" (4007) when Spike tries to bite Willow, Buffy's best friend. DeKelb-Rittenhouse marks this scene as a transition toward a more open acknowledgement of "sexual tension between Spike and his purported enemies" (147). He strolls confidently into her room, turns on the radio so no one will hear her scream, throws her onto the bed, and pins her down so he can get at her neck. Read as an attempted rape, this scene uses the show's tradition of associating vampires with the hidden dangers of American society. The cinematic tradition of the vampire as a metaphor for sexual predator is also invoked. But there's a comic reversal; Spike can't "perform" because a demon-hunting paramilitary group (the Initiative) has recently captured him and performed an experimental operation on him. Consequently, the following scene recasts the situation as a couple coping with impotence instead of a frightening image of rape. Spike, sitting on the bed and holding his head in his hands, mutters, "This sort of thing's never happened to me before." Willow, sympathetic to a fault, tries to assuage his ego with suggestions like, "Why don't we wait half an hour and try again." As if the parallel between lust and bloodlust weren't clear enough, she also asks him if the reason he can't bite her is that he doesn't find her attractive enough. Once again, *Buffy* takes a potentially terrifying event and dissipates fear through humor.

[32] In fact, the entire episode equates the vampire's pursuit of Buffy with a human male's interest in her. Riley Finn, a psychology graduate student and secret member of the Initiative, is attracted to her. In one scene, Riley says, "I'm gonna go see a girl." The camera then cuts to Spike escaping from the Initiative, and he remarks, "Sorry, can't stay. Got to go see a girl." Both men walk into Willow's room to ask about Buffy and eventually try to comfort the obviously depressed Willow. Recently dumped, she reveals her insecurities about her appeal—"I know I'm not the kind of girl vamps like to sink their teeth into"—but Spike assures her that she is very attractive: "I'd bite you in a heart beat."

[33] The characters of Spike and Riley, as well as their situations, are linked. While Riley pursues a degree in psychology, Spike demonstrates a native talent for reading the hidden feelings and motivations of other characters. While the love-struck Riley indulges in clichéd "spontaneous poetic exclamations" ("A New Man," 4012), the audience learns in the following season that Spike wrote bad love poetry before he became a vampire ("Fool for Love"). Moreover, the fifth season reveals that

Spike's interest, like Riley's, is not only sexually charged, but also truly sexual; unbeknownst to even himself, he's been in love with Buffy all along.

[34] The juxtaposition of their pursuit of Buffy has disturbing implications for the dating game in general. Is it true, as a cynical character posits, that "All men are beasts . . . They're all still just in it for the chase" ("Beauty and the Beasts," 3004)? *Buffy* certainly applies the tradition that vampires articulate the suppressed darker impulses of men. The structure of patriarchal society, as indicated by the Master's and the Mayor's presence in the narrative, fosters the very elements that it is ostensibly opposed to; according to feminist Adrienne Rich, sexual violence is subtly encouraged by cultural institutions (13).[11] Consequently, Spike's behavior represents an unraveling of the elaborate rituals of courtship into its purest form. Although Riley's behavior is explicitly coded as socially acceptable (he uses words like "courted" and shows no interest in killing her), he does end up hitting her, albeit unknowingly. On the other hand, his intentions toward her are not violent, so Riley succeeds in getting the girl, whereas Spike fails abysmally. Dangerous sublimated desires or no, politely asking girls out on dates is better than stalking and murdering them.[12]

[35] This philosophy reflects badly on Angel, Buffy's first love and the cause of much angst and melodrama in the series. The first time she meets him (which is not the first time he's seen her), he follows her into an alley, and she attacks him, thinking he's planning to harm her. In fact, this scene is the one most similar to the image Joss Whedon describes in the quote at the beginning of this paper; Angel is the symbolic rapist Whedon imagined. Ominously, he has several qualities in common with Dracula; he's secretive, mysterious, and sexy, and he wears black clothes. He can also enter or leave a room so quickly and silently that the exasperated Xander sarcastically remarks, "Okay, that's it. I'm putting a collar with a little bell on that guy" ("School Hard"). Moreover, his character is a sincere representation, rather than a parody of Dracula; because he is neither funny, nor an object of fun, Angel has the potential to be much more frightening than the minor guest stars.

[36] Despite the fact that Buffy loves him, she doesn't know him very well; he remains silent on the subject of his past. The portents are justified in the middle of the second season, when he loses his soul and reveals himself to be one of the most evil vampires ever created. His name signifies a frightening irony instead of the straightforward description that Buffy unconsciously assumed. One of the conditions of his ensouled state, which he doesn't learn until too late, is that he must be miserable; if he experiences "one moment of true happiness … that soul is taken from him" ("Innocence," 2014). Sex with Buffy does the trick.

[37] As Wilcox comments, "The symbolic implications of seventeen-year-old Buffy's first sexual encounter being with a vampire of course emphasize the dangers of sexual encounters" (Wilcox, "There"). Moreover, in "Innocence," the now evil Angel represents the boy who doesn't call after sex; he sarcastically remarks, "I'll call you" (Wilcox, "There"). His dialogue reflects a common occurrence in real life: a man's pretense of affection in order to seduce an inexperienced woman. "You know what the worst part was, huh? Pretending that I loved you. If I'd known how easily you'd give it up, I wouldn't have even bothered." The dramatic reversal of any such boy's behavior confuses and hurts the girl; from her perspective, he has "changed," although in reality, his motives have simply been unveiled. On *Buffy*, the emotional reality of many teenage girls' point of view becomes literal.

[38] Angel's transformation allows the show to examine "common fears and apprehensions about what might happen when we explore our sexuality" (Sieman 128), but where do these fears come from? For centuries, Western society has been suspicious of female sexuality; even in contemporary American culture, women are often criticized for being sexually active, as evidenced by the often-cited limiting definition of a woman as either virgin or whore. Angel invokes this tradition when he calls Buffy a "pro" (prostitute), even though he knows that she's never had sex before and takes her decision to have sex with him very seriously. Similarly, girls in real life are often labeled "slut" even if they have had sex only once.

[39] Having sex makes people emotionally vulnerable to their partners, and sexist attitudes expressed by a lover can hurt women more than what passing strangers might say. Consequently, Angel is a danger to Buffy not in spite of the fact that she loves him, but because of it. Furthermore, he knows it and plans to use it to his advantage: "To kill this girl, you have to love her" ("Innocence"). In the space of a single episode, he purposefully runs through a catalog of lines traditionally ascribed to

misogynists, from "Like I really wanted to stick around after that" to "Was it good for you, too?" The show illustrates how emotionally destructive this disrespectful attitude is; Angel cannot batter her physically, but he hits her with such a barrage of words that she is too emotionally wounded to return his taunts with words of her own, a significant change for someone known for her clever use of language. However, by the end of the episode, she draws on her slayer reserves to kick him in the groin—a symbolically appropriate gesture.

[40] The feminist text of *Buffy* denies the "slut" label, not only by reasserting the title character's heroic strength, but also by reversing gender roles. As the hero in a fantasy battle between good and evil, Buffy plays the traditional masculine role; Angel, as her sidekick, is feminized.[13] As Xander points out in "Teacher's Pet," even his name is effeminate. "What kind of a girlie name is 'Angel' anyway?"

[41] The gender switch is made literal in the episode "I Only Have Eyes for You" (2019), when the two characters are possessed by the ghosts of dead lovers; Buffy becomes James, a teenage boy, and Angel is taken over by Ms. Newman, the female teacher with whom James has an illicit affair. The identifications of Buffy with James and Angel with Ms. Newman are reinforced by their parallel situations. Both Buffy and James feel responsible for "destroy[ing] the one person [they] loved the most in a moment of blind passion"—Buffy for sleeping with Angel, James for accidentally shooting Ms. Newman. Both Angel and Ms. Newman believe that the relationship is unfair to the younger party: "I just want you to be able to have some kind of a normal life. We can never have that."

[42] Consequently, Angel, instead of Buffy, is ultimately subjected to the binarism normally reserved for women. The distinction between souled Angel and soulless Angel mimics the virgin/whore dichotomy; he turns from angel to devil. Thus, the patriarchy's attempt to compartmentalize women into binary categories is reflected back on itself, an extraordinary feat considering that vampires can't look at themselves in the mirror.

[43] However, although the dichotomy between pre-sex and post-sex characterization of women is reversed, it doesn't appear to be subverted; the feminized Angel still suffers binary categorization. Only the evil Angel directly questions the polarization that the other characters force on him. When Buffy finally figures out that he has lost his soul, although she is understandably grieved, she is also slightly relieved to know that the Angel who doesn't love her is literally not the same person as the one she slept with. "You're not Angel," she declares in response to his taunts. Angel replies, "You'd like to think that, wouldn't you?" ("Innocence").[14]

[44] In "Passion," Angel represents another danger women face when sleeping with someone they don't know well enough—the stalker boyfriend. When he confronts Buffy's clueless mother, she assumes he is exactly that—a boy who can't accept the fact that his girlfriend dumped him. She says, "I'm telling you to leave her alone." Playing on her interpretation, Angel responds, "I'll die without Buffy. She'll die without me." Joyce thinks he's threatening her, which, according to the audience's knowledge of evil Angel, is a gross understatement. Buffy then gets the equivalent of a restraining order for him—a deinvitation spell. Significantly, she doesn't rely on the (traditionally masculine) police to stop him, but rather on her witch friend Willow, who performs the spell. Through its use of magic, *Buffy* gives women the power to contain the threat of male violence.

[45] Angel's behavior in "Passion" (2017) not only explores the psychopathic, murderous behavior of the stalker, but also presents the viewer with a modern argument for the dangers of a philosophy expressed in the European visual art tradition. John Berger explains in *Ways of Seeing* that paintings of female nudes assume a male viewer (in this case, Angel) and that the passive expressions and postures on the canvas reveal more about the desires of the observer than the figure's desires. Feminist film critic Laura Mulvey posits that the "male gaze" strips women of their agency as well as their clothes; possessive and dominating, it treats them as passive objects whose sole purpose is to give visual pleasure. "Men act and women appear" (Berger 47). While Dracula's hypnotic gaze gives him real power over women, Angel's display of merely symbolic power is disturbing enough. The moment when Angel caresses Buffy's unconscious face, reclaiming his (sexual) possession of her, makes explicit the connection between the male gaze in visual art and the treatment of women as sex objects.

[46] Later, Angel first chases and then kills Jenny Calendar, Willow's teacher and Giles' love interest, and artfully arranges the body on Giles' bed.[15] When Giles walks in, the dead Jenny appears

to be returning his gaze, but her body is arranged in a passive position—her arms laid out with palms upward, her torso twisted to achieve maximum visibility. Of course, she's not really looking at Giles, but at Angel; the last thing she sees before her death is Angel's game face.

[47] Jenny's posture, although not her clothes, expresses the same idea as Sir Peter Lely's 17th century painting "Nell Gwynne" discussed in *Ways of Seeing*. In the painting, a female reclining nude passively displays her body and stares languidly at the viewer. Historically, the primary viewer was King Charles II, who commissioned the painting as a portrait of one of his mistresses. Consequently, the painting can be read as an affidavit of her sexual submission to him (Berger 52).

[48] However, there is an important difference between the scene and the painting; Giles has never "possessed" Jenny (or had sex with her), and now he never will. Through this heinous act, Angel is intentionally thumbing his nose at Giles. By placing Jenny on the bed, the vampire seems to communicate his awareness that Giles was planning to have sex with her that same night, while simultaneously claiming exclusive possession of her because he got to her first. Angel's unstated assumption in this scene is a Western cultural belief that to rape a woman is to "defile" her, to render her unusable for legitimate purposes by anybody else.

[49] By linking voyeurism, stalking, and violence, the series displays the sinister implications of the male gaze—shades of murder and rape. Because Jenny is dead, Angel is able to manipulate her as a painter would. Buffy, on the other hand, has agency to spare, and at the end of the episode, Angel gets punished for his desire to oppress women; she beats him up. Whereas the tradition of female nude paintings assumes that the male gaze is a necessary and appropriate staple of society, *Buffy* unveils the horrifying implications of this attitude.

[50] The presence of female vampires in the narrative has the potential to disrupt the show's treatment of female power as good and male power as evil. These women are physically just as strong as the men, and vampire society is not overtly sexist. Drusilla, who appears in more episodes than any other female vampire on the show, has special talents that her lover Spike lacks; she can hypnotize her victims. In fact, she is so dangerous that she shows up on the prophecy radar: a guest star warns Buffy that, "A very dark power is about to rise in Sunnydale" ("What's My Line," Part 2, 2010).

[51] However, she is a bad example of a strong female role model; sick when she arrives in Sunnydale, she uses her temporary frailty to manipulate her lover. Whenever he gets angry at her, she pouts and whines, and he immediately gives in with phrases like, "Oh, I'm sorry, kitten" ("What's My Line," Part 1, 2009) and berates himself for his insensitivity: "I'm a bad, rude man" ("Lie to Me," 2007). A conversation between Xander and Willow ostensibly about a celebrity couple, the Captain and Tenille, at the beginning of the episode "Ted" (2011) indirectly comments on Spike and Drusilla's relationship:

Xander: You don't know what you're talking about.

Willow: Xander, he was obviously in charge.

Xander: He was a puppet! She was using him!

Willow: He didn't seem like the type of guy who would let himself be used.

Xander: Well, that was her genius! He didn't even know he was playing second fiddle.

After Angel loses his soul, Spike does find out that he's the second fiddle; Drusilla loses interest in him and instead has an affair with Angel. Evil female characters may be strong, but they manipulate the patriarchal system instead of opposing it, thus perpetuating negative stereotypes of women.[16]

[52] In addition, the women are few and far between; the majority that Buffy actually fights are male, and she rarely comes into contact with the females. Instead, the series identifies her with them. In the two-part episode "Becoming," Buffy echoes a line spoken over 200 years before by Darla, the vampire who turned Angel into a vampire. Both women say "Close your eyes" to him just before penetrating his body with pointy objects; Darla bites him, and Buffy shoves a sword into his stomach.[17] Drusilla and Buffy share the same birthday. In "Surprise," the camera cuts from a scene in which Buffy's friends are planning a surprise party for her to a scene in which Drusilla and Spike talk about the female vampire's upcoming party. Later, the camera fades from a close-up of Buffy's face to a

close-up Drusilla's face. Moreover, both characters can see into the future—Buffy through prophetic "slayer dreams" and Drusilla through painfully sudden "visions."

[53] *Buffy* destroys the fear of vampires as agents of the patriarchy so successfully that after the second season, the main villains are no longer members of the undead. In the third season, Mayor Richard Wilkins III, a human who sold his soul to become immortal, fulfills this function; his trite phrases and 1950s language[18] identify him as the patriarchy incarnate. Wilcox points out that he is a transparent father figure (Wilcox, "Who," 14); he lectures his deputy about washing his hands, then his adopted "daughter" about drinking milk. Although these lines are played for laughs—family values seem at odds with the desire for world domination—they mark him as the villain. The only similar comments that good characters make are self-consciously humorous: "Sorry, but I'm an old-fashioned gal. I was raised to believe that men dig up the corpses and that women have the babies" ("Some Assembly Required," 2002).

[54] When the Mayor becomes invincible, his continued presence illuminates the reason for the switch from vampire to human as main villain. The show stresses that Buffy shouldn't kill humans, no matter what they do; in the Mayor's case, she literally cannot kill him. Consequently, humans in the series are potentially more frightening than vampires because there is no clear-cut way of eliminating the threat they pose. Vampires can be killed, but the problems of gender relations in America cannot be dealt with so easily. Ultimately, sexist human mind-sets are a real problem, whereas vampires don't exist.

[55] Instead, the vampire characters in the later seasons serve to confuse the binary categories of good and evil. Whereas Angel represents the fusion of polar opposites, Spike's character shatters the idea of absolutes altogether. As early as the second season, there are signs that evil is relative. The Judge, who plans to "separate the righteous from the wicked and burn the righteous down," almost burns Drusilla and Spike because they "stink of humanity. [They] share affection and jealousy" ("Surprise"). Soulless Angel, on the other hand, is judged to be purely evil. "There's no humanity in him" ("Innocence"). However, the ambiguity in Spike's character is developed more fully in later seasons.

[56] Unlike the radical feminists of the 1970s, modern feminist theory suggests that binarism itself, regardless of which side is demonized, is an unhealthy patriarchal worldview. "That the alternative to the archaic 'either/or' is an anarchic 'neither and both' has become something of a critical truism in contemporary cultural studies" (Pender 43). While the characters may prefer binary thinking,[19] *Buffy* itself questions the aptness of these distinctions.

[57] The Initiative and its creation, a Frankenstein-like cyborg demon named Adam, become the fourth season's main antagonists. Ironically, the Initiative, supposedly a champion of humanity, dehumanizes both its victims and its soldiers. Although the Initiative agents, including Buffy's boyfriend Riley, appear to be the good guys because they are human and kill demons, their regimental methods and militaristic dialogue identify them as potential villains. They lump vampires with demons under the neutral classification "Hostile Subterranean Threats" and refer to Spike, despite his obvious masculinity, as "it." Furthermore, the Initiative's scientists perform experimental surgery not only on captured demons—reminiscent of illegal experiments done on dogs and cats—but also on their own men. Consequently, their belief that all demons are bad is portrayed as narrow-minded, and the link between binary thinking and patriarchal values is reinforced. Contradicting the Initiative's position on demons as mindless animals that need to be put down, Spike goes against his nature and reluctantly joins Buffy's gang to insure his own survival.

[58] Spike is a perfect example of how proponents of an oppressive system can become its victims. A left-over representation of the second season's interpretation of the patriarchy, he becomes the victim of a later incarnation; the Initiative captures him and implants a computer chip in his brain that gives him a migraine every time he tries to hurt a human. Just as some feminists suggest that we must save men from themselves, Buffy and her friends repeatedly save Spike from both the military and the demon underworld.

[59] Elaborating on the biting-as-sex metaphor, characters make fun of the Initiative's sterilizing effect on Spike—whose name, like Angel's, turns out to be ironic—calling him "impotent," "neutered,"

and "flaccid." Even Spike takes a shot at himself when he quips, "Spike took a little trip to the vet's, and now he doesn't chase the other puppies any more" ("Pangs," 4008). Similarly, feminists argue that American society has damaged both men's and women's sexuality by forcing them into constrictive roles. In the past, women were taught that they should not enjoy sex. Meanwhile, men were encouraged to be sexually aggressive. Angel's transformation has already revealed the catastrophic results of this attitude, but clearly demonizes the aggressor. On the other hand, Spike's predicament is treated quite sympathetically, considering that not long before, he was trying to kill the hero. His pathos emphasizes that men, too, are victims of the system.

[60] If binary thinking condemns the Initiative, it also casts suspicion on Buffy herself. Despite her acceptance of ex-demons, werewolves, and Angel, she still views her nightly battles with demons on an absolute scale; she is Good, and vampires are Evil. Yet, since the first season, the show has identified her, first with the female vampires Darla and Drusilla, then with vampires in general. Her slayer powers are similar to her enemy's; they both have unusually fast reflexes and incredible muscular strength, and they both heal quickly. Moreover, a vampire named Dracula tells her, "Your power is rooted in darkness" ("Buffy vs. Dracula," 5001).[20] If anyone would know, Dracula would. His statement implies that her supernatural heritage is vampiric, a disturbing possibility for someone so righteously committed to the extermination of all vampires.*****

[61] Equating the slayer with vampires not only exposes the danger of absolute morality, but also questions the method of Buffy's feminist war. By appropriating male power, she is subject to the same criticism; other characters chastise her for her overly aggressive tendencies. When authority figures such as Principal Snyder—"a tiny impotent Nazi with a bug up his butt the size of an emu" ("Becoming," Part 1, 2021)—dish out punishment, their disapproval is clearly misplaced; she is usually protecting herself or someone else. But her friends' criticism is valid. After Buffy asserts, "I don't *always* use violence," Xander replies, "The important thing is, *you* believe that" ("Inca Mummy Girl," 2004). Returning violence with more violence works for the supernatural elements of the show, but proves a liability in dealing with humans.

[62] *Buffy* argues, not for women's rights, which are now ostensibly guaranteed, but for women's inherent power and independence, which are still ignored or demonized on many TV shows. Whereas in the classic horror film *Dracula*, vampires represent a threat to society that must be contained by good men, on *Buffy* the vampiric threat is ultimately traced back to these same men. The show does not recommend that women take on sexism in America by blowing up schools and stabbing people with swords. Rather, it offers the knowledge that women are strong enough to confront the dangers fearlessly and successfully. Instead of cowering in fear, *Buffy* confidently yanks the ugly face of the patriarchy out into the light of day, where, she hopes, it will be burnt to a crisp.

Bibliography

Abbott, Stacey. "A Little Less Ritual and a Little More Fun: the Modern Vampire in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*." *Slayage: The Journal of the Whedon Studies Association* 3 (June 2001). http://slayageonline.com/essays/slayage3/sabbott.htm.

Auerbach, Nina. *Our Vampires, Ourselves*. Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995.

Berger, John, Sven Blomberg, Chris Fox, Michael Dibb, and Richard Hollis. *Ways of Seeing*. London: British Broadcasting Corporation and Penguin Books, 1972.

DeKelb-Rittenhouse, Diane. "Sex and the Single Vampire: The Evolution of the Vampire Lothario and Its Representation in *Buffy*." Wilcox and Lavery 143-152.

Dracula. Directed by Tod Browning. Produced by Carl Laemmle, Jr., and Todd Browning. B/W 1931.

Krimmer, Elisabeth and Shilpa Raval. "'Digging the Undead': Death and Desire in *Buffy*." Wilcox and Lavery 153-164.

Nosferatu. Directed by F.W. Murnau. Produced by Enrico Dieckmann and Albin Grau. B/W 1922.

Overbey, Karen Eileen and Lahney Preston-Matto. "Staking in Tongues: Speech Act as Weapon in *Buffy*." Wilcox and Lavery 73-84.

Owen, A. Susan. "Vampires, Postmodernity, and Postfeminism: Buffy the Vampire Slayer." *Journal of Popular Film and Television* (Summer 1999), published in the online archive *Wilson Web* http://vweb.hwwilsonweb.com/.

Pender, Patricia. "'I'm Buffy, and You're . . . History': The Postmodern Politics of *Buffy*." Wilcox and

Lavery 35-44.
Psyche: Buffy Transcripts. http://studiesinwords.de/buffy.html.
Rich, Adrienne. *Compulsory Heterosexuality and Lesbian Existence*. Antelope Publications, 1982. First published in *Signs: Journal of Women in Culture and Society*, 1980, vol. 5 no. 4.
Siemann, Catherine. "Darkness Falls on the Endless Summer: Buffy as Gidget for the Fin de Siècle." Wilcox and Lavery 120-129.
Whedon, Joss. Interview. "Welcome to the Hellmouth/The Harvest." Videocassette. 20th Century Fox, 1998.
Wilcox, Rhonda V. "There Will Never Be a 'Very Special' Buffy: Buffy and the Monsters of Teen Life." *Journal of Popular Film and Television* (Summer 1999), archived in *Slayage: The Journal of the Whedon Studies Association* 2. http://slayageonline.com/essays/slayage2/wilcox.htm.
___. "'Who Died and Made Her the Boss?' Patterns of Mortality in *Buffy*." Wilcox and Lavery 3-17.
Wilcox, Rhonda V. and David Lavery, eds. *Fighting the Forces: What's at Stake in Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002.
Zanger, Jules. "Metaphor into Metonymy: The Vampire Next Door." *Blood Read: The Vampire as Metaphor in Contemporary Culture*. Ed. Joan Gordon and Veronica Hollinger. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1997. 17-26.

* Editors' note: In Season Seven's "Get It Done," the powers of the Slayer are, of course, revealed to be demonic in origin.

---

[1] In the sixth season of the show, the link between vampires and sexual violence shifts from the metaphorical to the actual; after Buffy ends her months' long dysfunctional affair with the vampire Spike, he tries to rape her. Although the sixth season's lack of metaphoric discourse places it somewhat outside the scope of this paper, the fact that the connection between vampires and patriarchy still holds true is worth mentioning.

[2] In her book *Our Vampires, Ourselves*, Nina Auerbach discusses the evolution and proliferation of the vampire image in the last two centuries, from the literary tradition to TV and movies. The examples in this paper certainly illustrate her point that "There is no such creature as 'The Vampire;' there are only vampires." (5) Not only is the nature of vampires imagined differently in *Buffy*, *Carmilla*, *Dracula*, and *Interview with a Vampire*, but also vampires within the text of *Buffy* demonstrate this range. Auerbach also links the changes in popular vampire images to their specific cultural and political context.

[3] In the homoerotic tradition of *Dracula* (1897), the sexuality of vampire characters on *Buffy* becomes rather ambiguous from the second season onward. The tension between Angel and Spike, Angel and Xander, and Spike and Xander all have homoerotic implications. Vampire Willow, who appears in the third season episode "Doppelgangland" (3016), is "kinda gay." Furthermore, on the spin-off series *Angel*, Drusilla's re-siring of Darla is understood to be a sexual act:

> Gunn: No, no, what I'm saying is, that means the granddaughter remade the grandmother.
> Wesley: Oh... yes.
> Gunn: Man, somehow that weirds me out more than the whole bloodsucking thing ("Reunion").

[4] See Abbott's discussion of Buffy's cross.

[5] Angel: She's cute. Not too bright, though. Gave the puppy-dog "I'm all tortured" act. Keeps her off my back when I feed!
Spike: People still fall for that Anne Rice routine. What a world! ("School Hard")
(Actually, Angel is lying; he truly is "all tortured.")

[6] Patricia Pender uses the phrase to discuss *Buffy*'s problematic relation to political and cultural history in her essay of the same title.

[7] This and other references to pop culture demonstrate the series' awareness of the varied genres and myths that it draws on.

[8] Abbott classifies both the Master and Giles as relics of a medieval, religious "Old World" order.

[9] The "Anointed One" is a literal translation of messiah; Colin is, then, a sort of Antichrist consistent with Bram Stoker's presentation of Dracula.

[10] In contrast to the medievalized Master, Spike and Drusilla are modeled after Sid Vicious of the punk rock group The Sex Pistols and his girlfriend Nancy Spungeon. Abbott states that the overtly secular Spike represents a break from the religious "Order" of the Master.

[11] "Pornography does not simply create a climate in which sex and violence are interchangeable; *it widens the range of behavior considered acceptable from men in heterosexual intercourse*."

[12] Riley's behavior in the fifth season complicates his "good guy" image; in a scene rife with sexual implications, he first lets a female vampire bite him before killing her while she's busy sucking. Riley, it would seem, is not exempt from *Buffy*'s cynical attitude

toward the dating game.

[13] Angelus plays on this switch in a sarcastic rejoinder to Spike's question in "Innocence":

> Spike: Do you know what happens to Angel?
>
> Angelus: (appears at a side door) Well, he moves to New York and tries to fulfill that Broadway dream. It's tough sledding, but one day he's working in the chorus when the big star *twists her ankle*.

He refers to the musical *42nd Street*, in which a female chorus member gets a lucky break.

[14] See also Abbott's discussion of the distinction between souled and soulless Angel.

[15] Angel's interest in treating murder as an art form is mentioned explicitly in "Fool For Love" (5007) and on the spin-off series *Angel*.

[16] The female hellgod Glory, the fifth season's supervillain, is another such example.

[17] Darla also echoes Buffy in the second season *Angel* episode "Epiphany;" after Angel has sex with her, he is jolted awake by a flash of lightning—an allusion to the original coupling.

[18] His last line before dying is "Well, Gosh!" ("Graduation Day," Part 2, 3022).

[19] Buffy explains, "I like my evil like I like my men—evil. You know, straight up, black hat, tied to the train tracks, 'soon my electro-ray will destroy Metropolis' bad" ("Pangs").

[20] This character is *the* Dracula; the entire episode is a heavy-handed parody of the original movie. Miss Mina (Buffy) kills Dracula, while the three sisters seduce Van Helsing (Giles).