"One of your little pop culture references": Argument, Intertextuality, and Literary Affordance in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Fanfiction

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Understanding Fanfiction: Fan Practices and Theoretical Frameworks

[1] In "What Happily Ever After?" by Plunk626, Buffy and Spike are transported to a fairy tale dimension where they are forced to act out stories like "Cinderella," "Little Red Riding Hood," and "The Twelve Dancing Princesses." Ultrawoman's "How Do I Loathe Thee?" casts the characters of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) in the film *10 Things I Hate About You* (1999), presenting a version of that story in which Buffy is Kat and Spike is the bad boy and love interest, Patrick.[1] And in "Pride, Prejudice, and Demons?" and "Pride & Prejudice Revamped," the characters of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* are inserted into Regency England and Jane Austen's narrative (disco-chic, Goddess Arundhathi). A cursory glance through the titles and stories posted to the internet's fanfiction[2] archives illustrates the predilection of *Buffy* fanfic writers for intertextuality: for example, *Buffy* fanfiction takes titles from song lyrics—"Baby It's Cold Outside" (Logan) and "Hungry Eyes" (sabershadowkat)—and films—"About a Boy" (Dee12) and "Back to the Future" (TammyDevil666)—and references existentialist philosophers—"Hell is Other Demons" (Wolfram-and-Hart Sauron).

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This article explores how fans are *using* intertextuality to reflect their understanding of the show and advance their interpretations of characters and relationships. It will consider how songs are rhetorically used to convey themes and reveal characters' unspoken attraction and affection, how fairy tales function as allegory, and how the decontextualization of characters from one narrative (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*) to another (*Pride and Prejudice* [1813]) draws parallels between them.

[2] But first, a definition of fanfiction: Henry Jenkins explains that the term "fanfiction" refers to "original stories and novels which are set in the fictional universes of favorite television series, films, comics, games or other media properties" (Jenkins, "How Fanfiction… Part 1"), and while this definition functions as a manageable entry point for a discussion of fanfic, it does not specify its noncommercial, amateur, and communal nature. As Sheenagh Pugh argues, defining fanfiction is complicated by derivative writing's long literary history: Ancient and early modern writers often drew from existing narratives (13-15). In addition, numerous works by professional authors, like Jean Rhys's *Wide Sargasso Seas* (1966), Alice Randall's *The Wind Done Gone* (2001), J.M. Coetzee's *Foe* (1986), and Margaret Atwood's *The Penelopiad* (2005), could be considered fanfiction under Jenkins' definition. Yet many fans draw a distinction between fanfic and profic, the former being written by fans for free within the gift economy of fandom,[3] the latter written by professionals, generally with the hope of financial rewards (Pugh 13-15).[4] Likewise, technological advances have also altered our understanding of fanfiction and its communities (McCain 4). Prior to the internet, fanfiction was shared primarily through fanzines, fan-made and -distributed magazines. But the advent of online sites like Livejournal, Fanfiction.net, and Archive of Our Own (AO3) has made fanfiction easier to publish and more accessible to users, expanding communities of writers and readers.

[3] However, while the internet might mark a shift in how fics are written and read, many digital fics share epistemological roots with their analogue predecessors. Pugh argues that fans write fics for two primary reasons: "they wanted either 'more of' their source material or 'more from' it" (19). In order to get "more of" a text, fans can recontextualize

stories, providing missing scenes and filling plot holes (Jenkins *Textual* 162) and adding prequels or sequels to a closed narrative (163-65). To get "more from" stories, fans might shift the narrative focus to a different, usually marginalized, perspective (165-67); they invert the moral alignment of characters (168) or change the genre to "intensif[y]" the emotional (174) or sexual relationships between characters (175). Fans might also combine fictional narratives in cross-overs, imagining how characters from one property might interact with the characters or settings of different fictional universes (170-71). Fanfiction allows fans the opportunity to engage with and interpret the object of their fandom, to craft backstories, draw attention to marginalized perspectives, and imagine narrative potentials.

[4] While Jenkins' categorizations identify the narrative relationship between the fan texts and their sources, this article will focus on discussions about fanfiction's intertextual and rhetorical relationships with texts outside of the object of fandom. Fanfiction may be derived from a source text, but this paper is concerned with how and why *other* literary texts are incorporated into fics. After a review of previously articulated theories, including fans as poachers, archivists, and rhetorical monsters, this paper will introduce an additional theoretical framework, Peter Khost's literary affordance, the use of literary texts in unrelated rhetorical situations, for considering fanfiction's partiality for intertextuality and its rhetorical effects. I will argue that in fanfiction, fans use, or make affordances of, nonrelated texts like songs, fairy tales, and other literary and popular narratives to make arguments about the characters and their relationships in their object of fandom. Once the concepts of literary affordance are outlined, I will examine the rhetorical and interpretive function of fanfiction, considering the scholarship that has theorized fanfiction as an argumentative genre, a paradigm for what has been called the "fictional essay" (Van Steenhuyse 55). Then analyzing selected works of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* fanfiction from the Spuffy[5] subcommunity, this paper will demonstrate how fans make literary affordances, through their use of use Disney films, fairy tales, *Harry Potter* (1997-2007), and Jane Austen novels, to present intertextual arguments that can be read as support of their interpretation of the show and its characterization of Buffy, Spike, and their relationship.

[5] Fanfiction, as a genre, tends to be maligned by non-fan culture. As Jenkins notes, fandom has a history of being pathologized and stereotyped, fans dismissed as socially awkward infantile losers, mindless and uncritical consumers, and fanatics who preferred speculative fiction to real life (*Textual* 8). The advent of the internet has mainstreamed fan and geek culture, rendering it more visible and socially acceptable, but fanfiction's reputation remains relatively poor. Fanfiction is often ridiculed as a pornographic wish fulfillment, low-quality and amateurish, unoriginal and uncreative. It is not difficult to find, in the nerdier corners of the internet, articles like "10 Fanfiction Excerpts That Are So Bad, They Will Break You" (Young), "The 10 Absolute Worst Lines of Harry Potter Fanfiction We Could Find That'll Ruin the Series For You" (Wu), and "5 Fan Fiction Sex Scenes You Won't Believe Exist" (Eric; now in its fifth iteration). And while it is also possible to find articles about good fanfiction, such as "7 of the Best Harry Potter Fanfictions So You Can Keep Reliving the Series" (Fitzpatrick) and "21 Completely Engrossing Fan Fictions You Won't Be Able To Stop Reading" (Bate) these titles are fewer and not nearly as hyperbolic. Less emphasis is placed on good fanfiction than its poorly written, weird, or sexually deviant counterparts. The consensus (though not unanimous) of the internet seems to be that fanfiction is laughably and appallingly bad. This paper hopes to challenge some of those stereotypes by illustrating the rhetorical and literary complexity and sophistication of the genre and its interpretative and argumentative role within fan communities.

[6] One of the first scholars to make the academic case for fans, fandom, and fanfiction, Henry Jenkins, drawing from Michel de Certeau's theorization of divergent and resistant reading as "textual poaching," argues that fans are "readers who appropriate popular texts and reread them in a fashion that serves different interests" (*Textual* 23). Taking and using aspects of source texts for social and rhetorical purposes, they create their own texts as they "transform the experience of watching television into a rich and complex participatory culture" (23). One of the forms that this poaching takes is the creation of fanfiction, in which fans "poach" settings and characters, manipulating and reassembling them to create transformative and interpretative narratives (26).

[7] However, theorizing fans as poachers is a bit problematic, because some authors and creators have characterized fanfiction as a form of theft. [6] Abigail Derecho provides an alternative way of thinking about fanfic, removing some of the negative connotations presented by poaching. Derecho draws on Derrida's concept of the archive, which is "forever open to new entries, new artifacts, new contents" (64). The term "archonic" reframes the way in which we consider the relationship between fan texts and source materials, offering a new conceptual metaphor and reshaping our understanding. Rather than pilfering from the source text, "violat[ing]" it, archonic texts add to it, suggesting a broadening and deepening of understanding, rather than a depleting (65). Conceptualizing fanfiction as archival refutes the notion that narrative is a limited resource and challenges current controversies about ownership and copyright. It also removes some of the stigma associated with fanfic; Natalia Samutina explains that Derecho's reframing gestures toward a new focus on inclusivity and intertextuality (3).

[8] In contrast, Sara Howe presents a more rhetorically focused discussion of fandom and fan works, investigating the "persuasive, communicative, and meaning-making strategies employed by fans in their compositions" (21) and developing a conception of fan rhetoric as "monstrous" (20). Rather than a judgment about the morality (or legality) of fans' engagement with source texts, she argues that the term "monster" "theorize[s] the contradictions, complexities, potentials, and rhetorical significances of fandom through a single figuration" (45). Her use of the term "monstrous," here, recalls Gilles Deleuze's description of academic reading and writing practices. Deleuze's discussion focuses on the way we select, use, and recombine aspects of an author's argument or philosophy to fit our own, the "immaculate conception" of a "monstrous" child that goes "through all kinds of decenterings, slidings, splittings, secret discharges" (112-113). Like Deleuze's monstrous child, fan works vampirically draw life from and offer regeneration to the source text (Howe 65) and combine fragments of text in a "Frankenstein-like" assemblage (108), monstrously crossing boundaries and reassembling elements.

[9] If, as Howe argues, the rhetorical function of fanfiction is full of "complexities" (45), this paper proposes an alternative perspective on

the rhetorical strategies that some fan compositions use to advance a particular reading of the source text. My intention is not to supersede the existing scholarship, but to add to it (archonically, Derecho might say). I believe that Khost's theory of literary affordance can give us additional insight into how some fanfiction writers rhetorically use texts and intertextuality to present interpretations in and through fics.

[10] Khost's theory of literary affordance is adopted and adapted from the work of ecological psychologist James J. Gibson and cognitive scientist Anthony Chemero. Gibson and Chemero are concerned with how animals interact with and use their environment. According to Gibson, "The *affordances* of the environment are what it *offers* the animal, what it *provides* or *furnishes*" (127, emphasis in original). Affordances are present in the environment, but must be perceived by the animal, and in this way, they emerge in accordance with the animal's need: "The affordance of something does not *change* as the need of the observer changes. The observer may or may not perceive or attend to the affordance, according to his needs, but the affordance, being invariant, is always there to be perceived" (Gibson 138-39). The affordances are stable, but the animal perceives them based on its context, needs, and abilities. For example, conventionally, the affordance of a chair is to sit in it. If I want to appear edgy and too-cool-for-school, I might sit in it backward, using the chair to communicate something about my character. But I might also use it as a coat rack, if I am too lazy or busy to hang my coat in the closet. If I need to reach something high, I might make an affordance of the chair by standing on it. Or, if I live in Sunnydale, I might use the chair to make an ineffectual barricade against the latest demon attack. All of the uses are present in the chair, but I might not perceive them until the need (and the undead) arise.

[11] As this explanation suggests, there is a degree of creativity involved when it comes to making affordances. While affordances emerge through the interaction of the animal, its needs, its abilities, and its environment, perceiving the affordance is an act of creativity. In his discussion of ethology, subjectivity, and agency, Roberto Marchesini argues that the "animal is a subject" because it is "necessarily free and creative in the expression with the goal of continually adapting itself to the singularity of the situation that the world poses to it" (249). It takes

creativity to respond to a need or desire within the opportunities and restrictions of a given environment, to perceive the different affordances that an object offers. He suggests that "being-animal" is "a state of cognitive intentionality that renders every endowment an instrument of interpretation, not a determinism" (247). For Marchesini, "endowments" do not restrict an animal's actions, but provide the opportunity for different responses. When it comes to making affordances, animals must use their abilities to interpret the world, to creatively perceive the different ways of using the chair.

[12] Literary affordances, as described by Khost, are also an act of creativity, dependent on the reader's ability to perceive different uses for literary texts. Adapting the work of Gibson and Chimero, combining it with reader response theory, as developed by Louise Rosenblatt (1978) and Stanley Fish, and applying it to rhetoric and literature, Khost argues that readers and writers use texts. Whereas Gibson and Chimero are concerned with physical affordances, Khost applies their theory to the intellectual or rhetorical ones. His interest is not in how we use chairs to barricade doors, but in how we use literary works to explain ideas and make arguments. He defines literary affordance as "making rhetorical uses of literary texts" (1), usually by applying "features of literary texts to unrelated rhetorical situations" (2). Very often, these uses are not obvious until they emerge through the reader's creative transaction with the text and in response to a specific rhetorical "situation or context" (4). The use is always present, but it is not perceived until the need for it arises, and may not be perceived by every reader.

[13] The most famous of these literary affordances may be Freud's use of *Oedipus Rex* to describe a stage of psychosexual development (Khost 3). Khost explains the "many rhetorical benefits" of Freud's use of the Oedipus myth: "his difficult and controversial theory becomes easier to understand and remember (both through narrative and naming), as well as initially more palatable" (Khost 3). Freud's affordance of the Oedipus myth, Khost asserts, presents his theory in such a way that easier to comprehend and accept—the use of Greek tragedy rendering his work more rhetorically effective.

[14] Literary affordances, however, are not simply an intellectual exercise, but frequently contain an emotional component, rendering

them of special interest for fan studies. Freud's interest in the text *Oedipus Rex*, for example, was not limited to intellectual or rhetorical engagement. Freud perceived connections between his formative attachment to his mother and the narrative of the play (Khost 3-4). This emotional connection to the text, Khost suggests, not only helped the affordance to emerge, but perhaps played a "*generative* role" in the construction of the theory (3). This emotional aspect of affordance seems to be especially important in understanding fans, who are often characterized by their emotional connections to texts (Jenkins, *Textual,* 18). Fans use texts, make affordances of them, to discuss their lives and develop a social identity (23). For example, Lynne Marie Meyer, a survivor of childhood sexual abuse, uses *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* to describe her struggle with trauma, internalized misogyny, and self-hatred: "The vampires and demons that she fought each week were perfect metaphors for the ones plaguing my nightmares." Meyer is discussing ostensibly unrelated experiences through the rhetorical metaphor of Buffy's battles against the vampires, demons, and other supernatural threats.

[15] Literary affordances are not about the text being used and are not interpretation. Khost asserts that "whereas an interpretation is a textual response that is *about* the text, a literary affordance is a response to something else *through* a text" (2, emphasis original). Meyer, for example, is not suggesting that *Buffy* is really a show about surviving sexual abuse. However, while affordances do not require interpretation, "making effective rhetorical affordances of texts involves some degree of their interpretation" (3). Readers and writers cannot effectively use texts unless they understand them, or at least certain aspects of them, and the way in which a text is used, in the *service* of analysis or interpretation of other texts or ideas, sometimes does depend on the reader's interpretation of it. So while the use of *Pride and Prejudice* to explore *Buffy* characters and their relationships is not an interpretation of Austen's novel, the way in which one reads the novel will likely affect the way it is used: feelings about Elizabeth and Darcy's relationship and thoughts about those characters individually might affect whether they function as an effective argumentative analogy for Buffy and Spike.

[16] Literary affordance is an inherently intertextual practice, which puts it into conversation with fanfiction, an explicitly intertextual genre. The act of writing fanfiction, a story based off another story, literalizes the conception of intertextuality outlined by Roland Barthes in "The Death of the Author." Barthes defines text as "a multidimensional space in which a variety of writings, *none of them original*, blend and clash" and a "tissue of quotations" (146, emphasis mine). He states that "The writer can only imitate a gesture that is always anterior, *never original*. His only power is to mix writings, to counter the ones with the others, in such a way as never to rest on any one of them" (146, emphasis added). Barthes' discussion encompasses all writing; fanfiction just makes its intertextuality and lack of originality explicit. Julia Kristeva makes a similar assertion about intertextuality in *Desire in Language*, in which she describes texts as "a mosaic of quotations" arguing that "any text is the absorption and transformation of another" (66). Fic writers openly acknowledge the intertextual nature of their stories, their focus on imitation, the quotative nature of their writing. Their stories explicitly exist in intertextual relation to the source material, poaching elements, monstrously combining them, adding to the archive. That is not, of course, to say that fanfiction writers are not wildly and wonderfully creative in their use of others' texts, in the way in which the transform existing works. But, as a genre, fanfiction recognizes and makes explicit the intertextuality of writing. Fanfic writers let readers know what texts are in their "mosaic of quotations" and how they are absorbing and transforming them. They are direct about the creative affordances they are making as they weave a "tissues of quotations" into a rhetorically sophisticated narrative.

[17] Fans' intertextual use of other literary and popular works is not limited to their engagement with the object of their fandom. Pugh asserts that fanfiction writers often make references to literary and popular works in their stories (43). Seconding this observation, Angela Thomas argues that intertextual references demonstrate the literary sophistication of many fan stories (332-33). Fans are part of a "cooperative linguistic community" (Khost 16) and can often count on other fans "getting" the reference and understanding its significance. Khost argues that this shared knowledge is "required for establishing

functional perception of literary affordance" (15). If readers are unfamiliar with the text being referenced, the rhetorical effect of an affordance will be lost. In this way, fans have an advantage over other writers; fans "drop literary references… casually" (Pugh 43) because they know their readers will understand and appreciate them. If *Buffy* fanfiction writers allude to a song, television show, film, or novel, they can normally presume that other fans will get the reference and understand its significance.

[18] Using the lens of literary affordance, the latter sections of this paper will explore the function and significance of these references. Other critics have already identified fans' use of intertextual references to make arguments about their source text, though they have not discussed this phenomenon in terms of affordance theory. [7] Pugh, for example, observes that fanfic writers "put the characters of their universe into the narrative of a song, lyric, film, novel, poem, TV series or play which strikes them as somehow being appropriate or casting new light on their own canon" (43-44). Fans are rhetorically using other texts to establish and advance an argument or interpretation about the source text through analogies and juxtaposition (43). They are, as Kristeva explains, "relativizing" texts. By asking readers to approach one text in terms of another, fanfiction writers are giving texts "a new meaning while retaining the meaning it already had" (Kristeva 73). Readers come to understand the texts not just on their own, but through their relationship with one another. We might be familiar with Disney films, but when they are put into the context of *Buffy* fanfiction, they take on new signification relevant to the show while still retaining their original meaning. It is through that relationship that literary affordance occurs. The reader recognizes both registers of meaning and understands how one text is being used to explicate or explain another.

[19] Reading one text through another is a rhetorical tool commonly found in two subgenres of fanfiction: AU (Alternative Universe) and Crossovers. There are variations in how fanfic writers approach AU stories (Kaldmae 9, A. Thomas 226), either substantially altering the histories or relationships of characters (Pugh 62) or changing "the setting of the narrative in order to explore the characters through a different prism" (Eero 8). While some AU fanfics, like high school

stories or coffee house fics, are not intertextual, those that place characters from a show like *Buffy* into the universes of *Harry Potter* or *Doctor Who* (1963-89, 2005-) are. In crossover fics, characters from two different media properties are brought together to interact. Although, as Pugh notes, sometimes these mash-up stories are done just for fun, more often it is an analytical and rhetorical decision: Fic writers use crossovers "to explore the emotions, motivations, and inner lives of familiar characters" (Turk 85). Pugh asserts that crossovers are often analytical and "an extension of the penchant of fanfic writers for using references and comparisons from other fictional sources" (56). Crafting character responses to new settings and interactions with new characters requires considerable insight. So the decision to combine texts in crossovers or displace characters in AU stories has the rhetorical purpose of advancing an argument about fans' interpretation of the text, sometimes through literary affordances. Writers think about how the Scoobies would be sorted at Hogwarts, what Buffy and Spike would do in Narnia, or how they would get along with *Supernatural's* hunters (2005-), their answers depending on their interpretation of *Buffy* and its characters.

[20] While several existing frameworks—fans as poachers, archivists, and monsters—theorize the ways in which fans interact with texts in the creation of fanfiction, I propose another: literary affordance. Literary affordance can help us to understand, not how fans use source texts, but the rhetorical function of fanfiction's predilection for intertextuality—how fans creatively *make affordances* of seemingly unrelated texts to convey arguments about and interpretations of characters and their relationships. In the next sections of this paper, I will draw on the work of fan scholars to discuss the argumentative rhetoricity of fanfiction. Then, by performing a close reading of Spuffy fanfiction, I hope to show the rhetorical effects and sophistication of the literary affordances used by fans in their composition of fics.

Active Reading and Rhetorical Fiction: Fanfiction as Interpretive and Rhetorical Texts

[21] Literary affordance is a creative and interpretive rhetorical exercise. Khost asserts that "Making affordances of texts . . . reconceives reading as an active, applied, and creative practice" (1). In order for it to be done effectively in fanfiction, it requires an analytical understanding of the text being referenced as well as the object of fandom. However, interpretation is not limited to the activity of literary affordance; it is also its purpose. When fans make references to other texts, those references help to advance fic's implicit interpretation of the source text. Comparing Buffy and Spike's relationship to *Pride and Prejudice* (1813) or *10 Things I Hate About You* or *Beauty and the Beast* (1991) says something about that relationship (or very different things, depending on the text being referenced). Intertextuality and literary affordance in fanfiction, then, is both an act of interpretation and way of conveying it. Up to this point, I have been presuming the interpretive and rhetorical function of fanfiction. A review of some of the existing scholarship will support the claim that fans are active and creative readers who apply texts in the service of arguments and interpretation and, in doing so, form interpretive communities.

[22] Although stereotypes about fans represent them as uncritical consumers of their preferred cultural texts, scholars have established that this is not the case. In *Textual Poachers*, Jenkins asserts that fans routinely engage in critical analysis of texts. For example, he argues that fans employ "close scrutiny, elaborate exegesis, repeated and prolonged rereading, etc.," interpretive strategies often used in the service of textual explication (17). Seconding Jenkins' assessment of fans' quasi-academic engagement with texts, Bronwen Thomas asserts that "fans frequently engage in the kind of analysis preferred by literary critics" (18); they employ close reading, explication, rereading, all of which are skills that the academy values and seeks to develop in students.

[23] However, while Jenkins acknowledges that some of the reading strategies engaged in by fans are reminiscent of academic scholarship, he argues that fans' sometimes unorthodox approaches to reading and writing deviate from academic norms. The "intensity" of fan

reading may make them seem "out of control, undisciplined and unrepentant, rogue readers" and fans' appropriation of source texts and disdain for authority defies the standards of academic interpretation (*Textual* 18). Another departure is their use of fanfiction to communicate analysis of texts and characters.

[24] In a blog post about using fanfiction to teach *Moby Dick*, Jenkins explains that "fanfiction uses fiction to respond to fiction. You will find all kinds of argumentation about interpretation woven through most fan-produced stories. A good fan story references key events or bits of dialogue as evidence to support its particular interpretation" ("How Fanfiction…Part 2"). By presenting an interpretation supported by textual evidence, fanfiction fulfills a similar rhetorical purpose as a critical essay. Katherine McCain also observes that fanfic contains "theses, arguments about the canonical work(s) that are akin to those found in academic papers" (81). And she is adamant that the fictional nature of these stories does not detract from their interpretive efficacy, suggesting instead that they communicate "theories, character development, scene analysis" (7). As an entertaining mode of argumentation, these fictional stories attempt to persuade readers to adopt an interpretation of the source text. For this reason, Veerle Van Steenhuyse goes so far as to call fanfiction "fictional essays" (55).

[25] In *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* fanfiction, fans explore and make arguments about the show's characters, ships,[8] and ontology. When fans write the characters in *Buffy*, they are presenting different interpretations of them. These characters are complicated and go through considerable development over the course of the show's seven seasons. Fans have witnessed characters at their highest and lowest points; as Spike tells Buffy in Season Seven, fans have "seen the best and the worst" of them ("Touched," 7.20, 22:56-58). The versions of characters that appear in stories, and how they relate to each other, function as an interpretation of the show. Controversial characters, like Spike and Xander, tend to exhibit the most variance from one story to another. Spike, especially, presents challenges to fanfiction writers, who not only have several versions of Spike, ranging from violent badass vampire to sensitive lovelorn poet, but also must contend with his moral development, soul, and ability to love. Spuffy shippers, as we will see in the discussion

below, use fanfiction to explore Spike's redemption arc and represent his ability to love even when soulless—an assertion that goes against the explicitly stated ontology of the *Buffy*verse.

[26] Character representation often diverges along lines of subcommunity membership. Within the subcommunities formed around specific texts, fans disagree about character motivations and romantic pairings. Ship wars, disagreements about romantic pairings, break out and can become vicious. Just read the arguments between Spuffy (Spike/Buffy) and Bangel (Angel/ Buffy) shippers about who the Slayer's true soul mate is. Depending on the perspective of fans, they will emphasize certain themes, moments, and interactions in the text, while deemphasizing others (Heinecken 49). Once fans begin shipping a pairing, that ship and its accompanying interpretation begin to affect the way that they view the show. As McCain posits, while shippers might cite "an abundance of supporting evidence within their canons" the "'evidence' is not always obvious to other fans" (50). Because fans are looking for textual support to confirm that Buffy should be with Spike, they are more likely to perceive it than fans who are non-shippers or who want to see her with Angel. So evidence from the show referenced in fanfics might be highly persuasive to certain segments of the fandom while rhetorically ineffective with others. Likewise, literary affordances and the arguments that they allow fans to make will appeal to certain fan subcommunities, while being less effective with others. Bangel shippers reading Spuffy fanfiction, for example, will likely not be persuaded by the comparison between Spike and Elizabeth Bennet because of their existing understanding of his character.

[27] In this way, fan subcommunities function as what Stanley Fish has termed "interpretive communities." Interpretive communities shape the way in which their members read and perceive texts by presenting readers with contextual knowledge and interpretive strategies that pre-exist and "shape" the reading (Fish 171). When a shipping community, for example, approaches a text, their interpretive strategies cause them to emphasize evidence of romantic interactions, and thus to "determine the shape" of the source text (171). Different interpretive communities, such as Spuffy and Bangel shippers, can have divergent readings of the same text, so much so that they might "be tempted to

complain to the other that we could not possibly be reading the same" text (169). Because of these significant interpretive differences, Fish suggests that interpretive communities are "made up of those who share interpretive strategies not for reading (in the conventional sense) but for writing texts, for constituting their properties and assigning their intentions" (171). Fish is arguing that readers actually "write" texts because their interpretations "shape" their perception of them. Kristina Busse takes this theorization of readers as writers a step further, arguing that fan communities make manifest the concepts that Fish describes figuratively: "Unlike Fish, for whom interpretive communities denote a collection of interpretive strategies rather than actual readers, fan fiction readers and writers create *actual* communities… fan writers read texts by *writing* within actual *community*, thus literalizing Fish's metaphors" (Busse 58, emphasis original). By writing Spuffy or Bangel fanfiction, fans are literally "writing" texts that reinforce their interpretation of the source and so reinforce the reading of their interpretive community.

Why *Spuffy*?: A Few Words About the Scope of This Article

[28] While I am focusing on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and Spuffy fanfiction in this essay, *Buffy* fans are not singular in their interpretive use of fanfiction or their rhetorical affordances of popular and literary texts.[9] My focus on *Buffy* is the result of my own proclivities as a fan: I have both read and written Spuffy fanfiction and are therefore more familiar with the interpretive and rhetorical conventions of that community. The purpose of this paper is not to make generalized statements about all fanfiction, or to hold up *Buffy* fanfiction as exemplary, but rather to use Spuffy fanfiction to discuss a rhetorical strategy that occurs in stories from diverse fandoms.

[29] Yet, as a text, *Buffy* uniquely *explicitly* encourages analytical engagement. Joss Whedon, the show's creator, has famously proclaimed that "BYO subtext is now the watchword at Buffy" (Whedon). As Gwyn Symonds notes, "This remark implies an openness to a range of inferences from the text he offers his audience, an acceptance of the fact that there will be variant readings." Rather than foreclosing fan

interpretations, Whedon is open to multiple and divergent readings of his plot and characters.

[30] The intertextual nature of Buffy also invites fanfic writers to employ intertextuality and literary affordances in their narratives. Geraldine Bloustien argues that "part of the intellectual fascination with *Buffy* is its multilayered, esoteric, selfconscious referencing of classic texts as well as popular culture" (Bloustien 429). The show is full of what Anya, a newly-human-ex-vengence-demon, calls "little pop culture references" (and doesn't "get") ("Selfless" 7.5, 30:03-05). Part of the pleasure of watching *Buffy* is getting those references, so it is not surprising that fans would also incorporate them into their fics. And according to Dee Amy-Chinn and Milly Williamson, the character of Spike is self-consciously intertextual (275). They note that "Our understanding of Spike depends upon a number of extratextual factors" (275) that range from Sid Vicious to Monty Python to the soap opera *Passions* (1999-2008). It is, perhaps, not surprising then to see Spuffy fans engaging in intertextuality in their fics. They are following the lead of an intertextual show and an intertextual character.

"Give Me Something to Sing About": The Affordance of Songs

[31] Preceding sections of this paper focused on theorizing fanfiction, particularly in terms of Khost's conception of literary affordance. I have argued that fanfiction is an intertextual and interpretive genre, and that those two elements are interconnected; intertextuality is one of the ways through which interpretations are argued, supported, and conveyed. In these final sections, I will apply that theory to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* fanfiction. Through a close reading of four Spuffy fics, I hope to demonstrate some of the sophisticated ways in which fans make literary affordances of non-*Buffy*-related texts to advances arguments about Buffy, Spike, their relationship, Spike's redemption, and his ability to love, thus illustrating the concepts discussed above.

[32] Music is widely used by fans in their creative works. Not only do fans write their own songs, called "filk" (Jenkins, *Textual* Chapter 8),

but they also employ songs to rhetorical effect in vidding.[10] In vidding, Tisha Turk argues that "music is used as an interpretive lens to help the viewer to see the source text differently" (85). The use of music presents an interpretation of the source text, and "the song helps guide viewers" through the argument that the fan is making (85). Music is juxtaposed with images on the screen as fans make an affordance of songs to rhetorically communicate "the thoughts, feelings, desires, and fantasies of the fictional characters" (Jenkins, *Textual* 235). In fanfiction, I would argue, songs serve a similar interpretive purpose.[11]

[33] In "The Disney Version," SosaLola inserts slightly modified lyrics from Disney soundtracks into the plot of *Buffy* episodes. Sunnydale, it is later revealed, is under some sort of curse that causes people to sing, an occurrence not unprecedented according to *Buffy*'s musical "Once More with Feeling." In this fic, SosaLola makes affordances of the songs, using them to provide insights into the characters and present an interpretation of their relationships and emotional states. The story is a clear "mosaic of quotations" as it absorbs Disney songs and transforms them, making them applicable to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, while at the same time, transforming Buffy through the inclusion of Disney (Kristeva 66). For this paper, I will be focusing my analysis on chapter four of this fic, "Beauty and the Vampire," and its exploration and interpretation of Buffy and Spike's relationship during the show's fifth and sixth seasons.

[34] The first song in chapter four is a parody of *The Little Mermaid's* (1989) "Part of Your World," in which Spike expresses his inability to be a part of Buffy's life. "Part of Your World" is a typical "I Want" song, in which the singer expresses his or her motivating desire for the rest of the musical. Here, Spike expresses that his motivation is Buffy and her acceptance of, and eventual love for, him: "*What would I do to see you/ Smiling at me?/ Where would we walk/ Where would we run/ If we could stay all day in the sun?*" (SosaLola, Chapter 4). The affordance of this song not only expresses Spike's romantic desire but also his sense of being an outsider. In the interior monologue that leads up to it, he reflects, "He was a monster after all. Not human. Wasn't invited to her birthday party. Wasn't allowed near her family and friends. Just because he was allergic to the sun" (SosaLola, Chapter 4). SosaLola's affordance

of the line "stay all day in the sun," then, reflects Spike's vampiric nature, which renders the sun deadly and him an outsider.

[35] The reference to the sun also draws some parallels between *Buffy* and *The Little Mermaid*. The sun represents the reason for the separation of both Ariel and Eric and Spike and Buffy: Ariel cannot go "stay all day in the sun" because she is a mermaid; Spike cannot because he is a creature of the night. The interspecies element of each relationship prevents its actualization and necessitates a change. However, while in Ariel's case the hurdle to romance is biological, in *Buffy* it is ontology. Buffy cannot love Spike because he does not have a "*what's that word again?– soul*" (SosaLola, Chapter 4) and is therefore, according to the mythology of the *Buffy*verse, evil and incapable of love. Without a soul, Spike cannot earn love or acceptance from Buffy: at best, he is a monster whom (as he says) she "treat[s] like a man" ("The Gift" 5.22, 23:30-31); at worst, he is (as she says) "a thing. An evil, disgusting, thing" ("Smashed" 6.9, 14:34-38). Spike might have a behavior modification chip that prevents him from hurting people, but that does not make him morally good and accepted by Buffy, a "*part of her world*."

[36] SosaLola's affordance of "Part of Your World" allows the story to explore and interpret one of the more problematic elements of Spike's love of, or obsession with, Buffy. During Season Five, Spike is shown stealing sweaters, underwear, and pictures from Buffy's house to add to the stalker-shrine he has built his crypt ("Crush" 5.14). In this story, Spike sings about his "collection": "*I've got photos and drawings of plenty/ I've got sweaters and knickers galore/ You want some of her stakes?/ I got twenty/ But who cares?/ No big deal/ I want more*" (SosaLola, Chapter 4). Using this song softens the implications of Spike's behavior. Relativizing Spike in terms of Ariel creates a humorous and almost sympathetic portrayal. It presents him as desperate, rather than dangerous, normalizing and romanticizing his behavior by focusing on his love-sick turmoil, rather than considering the violation Buffy is experiencing.

[37] SosaLola's story also makes an affordance of several songs to illustrate Buffy's changing feelings toward Spike during Season Six. For example, this author uses "Beauty and the Beast" from the Disney film of the same name to argue that, although Buffy has not admitted her

feelings to herself, she has fallen in love with Spike. Tara, the most empathetically perceptive member of the Scoobies, catches Spike and Buffy kissing in an alcove of the Summers house, and observes that "the more pronounced want and desire didn't hide the trace of deeper feelings reflected in [Buffy's] eyes" (SosaLola, Chapter 4). The story asserts that, although Buffy maintains that her relationship with Spike is all about sex, she has developed genuine feelings for him, the song functioning, rhetorically, as a reflection of their entire relationship. For example, Tara sings, "*Barely even friends/ Then somebody bends/ Unexpectedly/ Just a little change"* (Chapter 4). Buffy and Spike begin (in season two) as enemies before forming an uneasy alliance. Throughout the series, their relationship is at least mildly antagonistic, although Spike does assist the Scoobies on numerous occasions. However, once Spike realizes that he is in love with Buffy, he tries to reform, to be good, for her; in short, he "bends unexpectedly." Other lines in the song are used to reflect each character: The line "*Finding you can change*" may refer to Spike's determination to overcome his literal and figurative demons, while "*Learning you were wrong*" suggests that Buffy has begun to recognize that she was incorrect in her assessment about whether Spike without a soul could learn to love and earn redemption (Chapter 4).

[38] Depicting Buffy and Spike's relationship through an affordance of "Beauty and the Beast," however, overlooks some of the unsettling abusive elements of that relationship. During the episode referenced in this section of the story, "Older and Far Away" (6.14), Spike's face is still bruised from Buffy's punching him repeatedly, while telling him "You don't . . . have a soul! There is nothing good or clean in you. You are dead inside!" ("Dead Things" 6.13, 36:18-30). While Buffy and Spike seem to be on friendlier terms in "Older and Far Away," he still bears the physical markers of her abuse, and romanticizing their interactions too much seems problematic. SosaLola's relativized presentation of their relationship, as self-consciously asserted in the fic's title, "The Disney Version," deemphasizes some of the darkness (as is Disney's wont) and complexity of their dynamic in favor of a more traditional love story.

[39] Toward the end of Season Six, Spike attempts to rape Buffy, a character beat that many Spuffy fans condemn as OOC,[12] which results

in his decision to regain his soul. However, the language describing his quest is intentionally ambiguous. Spike leaves Sunnydale, stating "Get nice and comfy, Slayer. I'll be back. And when I do . . . things are gonna change" ("Seeing Red" 6.19, 37:56-38:02). He travels to Africa, where he finds a demon who promises to return him to his "former self," after Spike complains that "Ever since I got this bleeding chip in my head, things ain't been right" ("Villains" 6.20, 30:14-17). The demon allows Spike to go through with the trials, to which Spike responds, "Bitch is gonna see a change" ("Villains" 6.20, 32:24-27). This dialogue intentionally misleads the viewer into believing that Spike is fighting for the restoration of his ability to harm humans, not his soul. Even after the latter was revealed to be Spike's reward for completing the trials, some fans speculated that reclaiming his soul had not been his intent; he had wanted the chip removed and got a soul by mistake.

[40] SosaLola's story, however, asserts the interpretation that Spike's intention was always to earn his soul, making an affordance of "I Can Go the Distance" from Disney's *Hercules* (1997). Spike sings, "*I will find my way/ I will find the demon/ I'll be there someday/ I won't be the monster/ I know every mile/ Will be worth my while/ I would go most anywhere/ To be worthy of her*" (SosaLola, Chapter 4). Using this song allows SosaLola to argue that Spike's intention was to fight inner and outer demons to regain his soul. Not only does he face the demon who facilitates the trials, but also the demon that took up residency in his body when he died and became a vampire, fighting his demonic possessor to seek redemption, restore his humanity, and become "worthy" of Buffy. The intertextual reference to *Hercules* also supports this argument. Within the context of the film, this song is about young Herc setting off on the quest that will lead him to become a hero; in the story, it is about Spike taking the steps to truly become one, as well. Thus, reading the character of Spike through the affordance of *Hercules* advances the argument that his motivation in the final episodes of Season Six is redemption, not revenge.

[41] Throughout SosaLola's story, there are affordances of Disney songs to support an argument for an interpretation of Buffy and Spike's relationship. The chosen songs rely on relevant lyrics and intertextual associations to rhetorically create an argument about Spike's redemption and his relationship with Buffy. By using the songs, SosaLola creates a

"mosaic of quotations" that articulates a reading of the characters, their motivations, and their emotions, which the affordance of the Disney texts conveys. However, the "Disney Version" of *Buffy* is not unlike the Disney version of fairy tales, and there are a few places where the use of Disney songs dismiss or diminish some of the more problematic elements of Buffy and Spike's relationship. The use of the songs, then, creates a powerful and sophisticated rhetorical argument in favor of Spuffy, by asserting a Disneyified interpretation of their relationship.

"We Need to Save Buffy from Hansel and Gretel": Fairy Tales

[42] In contrast to "The Disney Version," Addie Logan's "Tale as Old as Time," makes an affordance of *Beauty and the Beast* to confront and work through some of the more problematic elements of Buffy and Spike's relationship. In this first-person fic, Buffy overhears Spike telling a bedtime story to their daughter, his version of *Beauty and the Beast*, the story "mix[ed]" and "blend[ed]" into that of *Buffy*: the use of the fairy tale relativizing *Buffy*, and *Buffy* affecting its narrative (Barthes, Kristeva). Logan's literary affordance of *Beauty and the Beast* allows exploration and analysis of Buffy and Spike's relationship, using the fairy tale as a conceptual metaphor.

[43] The version of the story that Spike tells their daughter suggests that he is analogous to the Beast: "It begins with the Beast. Only then, he wasn't a beast at all. He was just a man—a man who wanted more than anything to find a woman to love him" (Logan). This description presents a version of pre-vampire Spike: William, the lovesick Victorian gentleman. Spike then explains that the man was turned into a beast by "the Dark Princess," a reference to Drusilla, his vampiric lover and sire (Logan). He describes reveling in violence and bloodshed: "See, the Beast, he loved what he was. As a matter of fact, he wanted to be the meanest, nastiest beast there ever was" (Logan), offering Logan's interpretation of how Spike once viewed life as a vampire. Through the story, he conveys his guilt about what he was turned into and his beastly enjoyment of immor(t)ality and violence.

[44] Spike recounts his eventual realization that he was in love with Buffy, his idealization and his unworthiness of her, suggesting his vulnerability and insecurity (Logan). He confesses that "He tried to pull Beauty down into the dark with him, tried to make her a monster, too" (Logan), and here Logan acknowledges the dangerous and destructive elements of Spike and Buffy's relationship, during season six. Later in the story, Buffy also admits that "The Beast was once a monster, and he did hurt Beauty, but Beauty hurt him, too" (Logan). Within the framework of the story, Buffy uses the cover of the fairy tale to admit her culpability to the toxicity of their relationship; she does not allow Spike to take the blame for all the abuse and exploitation. Thus, Logan presents her interpretation of their tempestuous relationship, suggesting that their story has always been "A little more Brothers Grimm than Disney, though…" (Logan), and that both parties were responsible for its dysfunction and abuse. Logan establishes a connection between the characters in Spike's story and the characters in *Buffy*, relativizing them. Readers come to understand Spike and Buffy through their analogues in *Beauty and the Beast.*

[45] Moreover, the affordance of *Beauty and the Beast* also allows Logan to express an interpretation of Spike's redemptive arc. As Buffy listens to Spike tell his story, she experiences a revelation about pre-soul Spike's capacity for love: "His 'spark'—his *soul*—had never been what made him feel the way a human does. I'd be lying to say it made no difference at all, but as far as being able to love me? . . . Spike may have needed a soul to feel true guilt or to understand self-loathing, but he'd never needed a soul to love" (Logan). Despite the show's insistence that one needs a soul to be truly capable of love, many fans argue that Spike demonstrates the capacity for love even before he wins his soul. Fans reject the canonical characterization of Spike as incapable of love, as Logan's story suggests, instead arguing for Spike's capacity for love pre-soul. Buffy's epiphany about Spike's ability to love her, a revelation facilitated by *Beauty and the Beast*, a story in which the Beast loves before his humanity is restored, argues in favor of that fan interpretation. Buffy further advances that argument, saying "The Beast was very worthy. Because even when he was a monster, he could love Beauty like a man" (Logan). She suggests that despite his technically being a monster, and

lacking moral judgement, Spike could love, even when he was a vampire, the Beast.

[46] *Beauty and the Beast* is a tale of redemption, and Logan's story draws parallels between the fairy tale and Buffy and Spike's relationship, using the *Beauty and the Beast* to convey an interpretation of Spike's moral and ontological arc. The Beast only turns back into a human once he has earned a woman's love, this criterion presupposing a reformation of his selfish, beastly ways. Spike, the story argues, must reform from his vampiric ones to earn Buffy's love. However, it takes more than just Beauty's love for the curse to be lifted; it requires the goodness that the desire to earn Buffy's love inspires, including Spike's decision to fight for his "spark," his soul. In Logan's narrative, Spike has regained his humanity through the Shanshu prophecy, which outlines that the vampire with a soul will "Become human.—It's his reward" ("To Shanshu in LA" 1.22, 41:36-38). The implication in this story is that Spike, the Beast, earned his reward, his humanity, by fulfilling his destiny of fighting on the side of good in the apocalypse, something that was only possible because of his love for Buffy and his desire to reform to earn her love in return. So, like the mechanics of curse-breaking in the fairy tale, Spike had to become worthy of love, to regain his spark, before he could truly be a man again. Viewing Spike's story through the intertextual lens of *Beauty and the Beast* allows Logan to clarify this interpretation of his redemption arc and to advance an argument supporting it.

[47] While Logan acknowledges the darkness and dysfunction of Spuffy, use of the fairy tale suggests that their relationship is ultimately redemptive. By drawing a parallel between Belle and the Beast and Buffy and the vampire, Logan suggests that like the Beast, Spike earned redemption through love and love through redemption. It is because he loves Buffy that he wants to be good, that he decides to regain his soul. And it is because of the soul that he is literally and metaphorically transformed, like the Beast, into a man again. The literary affordance of *Beauty and the Beast* in this fic allows Logan to craft a nuanced metaphoric exploration of and argument for Spuffy.

"Anya, tell them about the alternative universes": *Pride and Prejudice* and *Harry Potter*

[48] Fanfiction writers also use AU conventions to mash-up texts and make affordances of other fictional stories. As Pugh notes, fans will insert characters into another fictional world, drawing parallels to highlight character traits and rhetorically assert an interpretation about the primary source text (43-44). In AU fics, disparate texts are connected in a "tissue of quotations" that allows writers to blend a "mix writings, to counter the ones with the others" (Barthes 146). Texts are understood in relation to each other, the affordance of one informing, countering, and illuminating the other.

[49] In "Buffy Pride and Prejudice," fresne blends *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and Jane Austen's novel. Written in the same vein as Seth Grahame-Smith's *Pride and Prejudice and Zombies* (2009), fresne maintains much of Austen's original text, inserting different characters and some dialogue from the show to create the *Buffy*-version. However, despite this fidelity to the original novel, the remixed version of the story provides an interpretation of *Buffy*, its feminist ethos, and the character relationships. The fic mixes the two texts, juxtaposing them so that they counter and relativize each other.

[50] The first notable change that fresne makes to *Pride and Prejudice* is flipping the gender roles. fresne's story begins with the lines, "IT is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single woman in possession of a good fortune must be in want of a husband" (fresne, Volume 1, Chapter 1). The initial line of the fic asserts the power shift that accompanies the gender flip. It disrupts the gender stereotypes and challenges the idea that the goal of all women is to get married, that a happy ending requires a man. This reversal is in keeping with *Buffy's* ethos as the show ends not with a marriage (as this fic does), but with Buffy alone. She does not need to find a man for a happy ending; she needs to finish "baking" and find herself ("Chosen" 7.22, 6:40).

[51] The gender swap also allows for some interesting commentary on both gender stereotypes and character representations. The Le Bloody house, the stand-in for the Bennets, is headed by Mayor Wilkins, the avuncular villain of Season Three, and Joyce Summers,

Buffy's mother. The role reversal helps to dispel some of the gender stereotypes that Austen's Mr. and Mrs. Bennet reinforce. In this version of the story, it is the husband who is flighty, narcissistic, and irrational, while the wife is perceptive and thoughtful, if a bit detached from most of her family. Likewise, casting Faith as "Mr. Wickam" (aka Wickham) allows a woman to be sexually aggressive and predatory. Xander, the *Buffy*-fied version of Georgiana Darcy, and Angel as Lydia, are exploited by Faith, mirroring the events in the show's third season, when she sexually assaults Xander ("Consequences" 3.15) and attempts to seduce Angel ("Enemies" 3.17). These reversals complicate and draw attention to *Buffy's* defiance of and play with gender stereotypes.

[52] The story also allows fresne to present an interpretation of the characters. The author's summary that precedes the story asserts its crack-fic nature, claiming that "the characters [in *Pride and Prejudice* were] replaced with characters from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* where those characters were most inappropriate" (fresne, Summary). Despite this assertion, fresne's affordance of Austen's characters makes an argument about their *Buffy* counterparts. For example, casting Joyce Summers as Spike's mother asserts a reading of their relationship. Throughout the show, Joyce bonds with Spike, first when he returns to Sunnydale heartbroken, and she provides him with hot cocoa ("Lovers Walk" 3.8), and later over their shared love of *Passions* ("Checkpoint" 5.12). By positioning Spike as Joyce's favorite son, fresne is asserting the closeness of their relationship, which, while present in the text, was never substantially shown or developed.

[53] Other character affordances also rhetorically present interpretations. The stoic Oz is put into the role of Jane, whose reserve is misconstrued as a lack of affection. Riley, who is antagonistic toward Spike throughout season five, is put into the role of Caroline Bingley and belittles Spike (cast as Elizabeth) at every chance he gets. Anya is cast in the role of Mr. Collins, which draws readers' attention to her social awkwardness and avarice, and positioning Principal Snyder as Lady Catherine de Bourgh emphasizes his imperiousness and delight in exercising his power. By juxtaposing and relativizing these characters, fresne's affordance of *Pride and Prejudice* emphasizes different aspects of the characters from *Buffy*.

[54] The casting of Buffy and Spike as Darcy and Elizabeth respectively also posits an argument about their relationship. Although the author's note emphatically states, "Now I should add the caveat that this is not intended as a shipper, oh, Buffy and Spike should get together, blah, blah, blah" (fresne, Author's Note), this affordance of Austen's novel can be read as an argument, even if inadvertent, by some interpretative communities. Khost argues that affordances can have "*unintended* rhetorical effects" (2, emphasis original), suggesting that a writer's affordance, like fresne's use of *Pride and Prejudice*, might result in arguments that are not deliberate. fresne might not have written this story as a shipper, but those in the Spuffy community would likely read it as an argument for their ship. Following the ethos of *Buffy*, they would bring their own subtext, informed by their interpretive community, to the story.

[55] In this case, Spuffy shippers would likely read the use of Austen's novel as suggesting that Buffy's prejudice toward Spike, because of his vampiric nature, prevents her from seeing his true worth, in much the same way that Darcy's classism prevents him from acknowledging Elizabeth's. The language that Buffy uses in her first proposal to Spike echos that of the show: "You are beneath me and yet love makes you do the wacky . . . . You must allow me to tell you how ardently I admire and love you" (Chapter 34). The use of the line "beneath me" directly references Buffy's line to Spike in the episode "Fool for Love" (5.07, 35:12-14): "It would never be you. You're beneath me." Incorporating that quotation of Buffy's dialogue into the fic draws a connection between Darcy's treatment of Elizabeth and Buffy's of Spike. The affordance presents a very sympathetic representation of Spike and ultimately ends with a Spuffy union, suggesting that the characters, despite their early antagonism, are well suited for one another.

[56] In "Better be… Gryffindor" ThePsychoticQueen makes an affordance of *Harry Potter* to present a sympathetic portrayal of Spike. This story does not transpose *Buffy's* characters into J.K. Rowling's novels, but instead uses a conceit present in them, the Hogwarts Houses, to analyze and characterize Buffy and her friends. In *Harry Potter*, students are assigned to houses based on their character traits. As the

Sorting Hat, an enchanted sentient hat that can perceive the psychology of its wearer, explains, Gryffindors are "brave at heart," full of "daring nerve, and chivalry" (Rowling 118); Hufflepuffs are "just and loyal" and hardworking (118); Ravenclaws are "wise" and curious, prizing "wit and learning" (118); and Slytherins are ambitious, ruthless, "cunning folks" (118). ThePsychoticQueen incorporates this aspect of the *Harry Potter* novels into her story as an intertextual affordance, a way to explore the characters on *Buffy*, their relationships, and their moral alignment.

[57] Willow is the first person to be sorted. Buffy and Spike sort her into Ravenclaw, because she's "scary smart" (ThePyschoticQueen). This interpretation of Willow is not universal; other fans have sorted her into Slytherin, because of her ambitions for (and occasional misuse of) magical power (Mari, Kathleen). Dawn, Buffy's sister, is placed into Gryffindor, another choice that is controversial. Like Willow, fans have sorted Dawn into other Houses: Mysterious Lights, for example, puts her in Ravenclaw because of her interest in research and translation in season seven. Notably, Buffy as Gryffindor seems to be universally accepted (Host Amy, Mari, Kathleen, Mysterious Lights, May, hpfanfictalk).

[58] ThePsychoticQueen's affordance of the Houses also allows an exploration of the relationships between the characters. Spike sorts both Xander and Angel, two characters with whom Spike has had antagonistic relationships, into Hufflepuff. Spike justifies Xander's placement there by stating "Hardworking, loyal - Harris fits a 'Puff to the tee" (ThePyschoticQueen). However, the progression of the story reveals that Spike has ulterior motives. He describes Hufflepuffs as "the nancy house. I mean, who really wants to be in *Hufflepuff*. They sound like a bunch of stoners" (ThePsychoticQueen). Spike's dismissive and disdainful attitude toward Hufflepuffs reveals that his placement of Angel and Xander into that House is his way of degrading them. When Buffy rejects Angel as a Hufflepuff, Spike goes even further, downgrading him to a muggle, a non-magical person, even lower than a Hufflepuff: "Figure a place like Hogwarts wouldn't let in brooding vampires with large foreheads" (ThePsychoticQueen).

[59] Spike's character arc and relationship are also explored through the Hogwarts Houses. Spike resigns himself to Slytherin, the

house associated with evil, dark wizards: "'Nah, I'm probably a Slytherin.' Spike figured. House of the evil and bad. Yeah, that was him. Because as much as he liked to pretend, he was still a bad man. He'd done horrible, unforgivable things" (ThePsychoticQueen). His lingering guilt over the evil he has done during his over one hundred years as a vampire prevents him from seeing himself as anything other than a monster, a "bad man," a Slytherin, and ThePsychoticQueen's affordance of *Harry Potter* rhetorically expresses his self-doubt and guilt. He is not fully convinced of his redemption, so he places himself in the house stereotyped as evil.

[60] But Buffy is unconvinced and dismisses the idea that he would be Slytherin: "Please. Cunning and ambitious? Spike, you're the least cunning person I know" (ThePsychoticQueen). Instead she places him in Gryffindor: "No. I think you're a Gryffindor. You definitely fit the brash part of the bill . . . .But you're also brave. And loyal. You definitely have the qualities of a Gryffindor. And you're good, too, Spike. You're more good than you know" (ThePyschoticQueen). The affordance of the Hogwarts Houses allows Buffy to express her belief in Spike's redemption. She reaffirms his goodness, and thereby asserts her love: "'You are. To me, you are,' Buffy said, honesty and love radiating through her every word" (ThePyschoticQueen). Her assurance that Spike belongs in Gryffindor offers not only an interpretation of Spike's character, but also demonstrates Buffy's faith in him, mirroring her unwavering belief in him at the end of Season Seven. By making an affordance of the Hogwarts Houses, ThePsychoticQueen rhetorically uses *Harry Potter* to make an argument about Spike's redemption and Buffy's devotion to and love for him.

[61] In both "Buffy Pride and Prejudice" and "Better Be Gryffindor," fan writers use the characters and worlds of other texts to comment on the characters in *Buffy*. Their intertextual affordances of *Pride and Prejudice* and *Harry Potter* allow them to emphasize or reveal aspects of the show, and the use of these texts relativizes *Buffy* so that it is understood *through* them. Spike is represented in terms of Elizabeth or the Hogwarts Houses, in an intertextual and interpretative discourse. The effectiveness of this discourse to communicate, however, depends

on readers' understanding of not only *Buffy*, and the interpretive communities to which they belong, but also of the afforded text.

"Where Do We Go from Here?": Conclusion

[62] This paper only begins to explore the affordances made by fans in their work and there is certainly much more that could be said upon the topic. The goal was not to propose a new, definitive way to view fanfiction, but rather to explore one rhetorical strategy that fanfic writers employ in their "fictional essays" and to show the rhetorical sophistication that fans demonstrate in their writing.

[63] Despite the reputation that fanfiction, undeservedly, has for being juvenile, perverted, bad writing, fic writers demonstrate rhetorical adroitness as they present readers with interpretations of the source material. Although fanfics are fictional works, they are argumentative and rhetorically sophisticated. Khost's theory of literary affordances can help us to better understand the rhetorical function of intertextuality in fanfiction. As Pugh notes, fanfiction tends to be an explicitly intertextual genre, with allusions to other texts frequently made in titling conventions, incorporation of songs and lyrics, and crossover and AU fics. This intertextuality is used to comment on the fic's source text, to advance an argument about the characters and their relationships by finding parallels and juxtapositions. Khost's explanation of literary affordances theorizes the rhetorical implications of these interpretive strategies, suggesting that fic's intertextuality is not only an interpretive act, but also a rhetorical one.

[64] The close reading of Spuffy fanfiction in this essay seeks to demonstrate not only the rhetorical sophistication of fanfiction's intertextuality, but also various ways in which fans use it to convey and support arguments about their source texts. Fanfiction, as an explicitly intertextual genre, demonstrates Barthes' and Kristeva's theorization of intertextuality. Both theorists argue that texts always reference other texts, and in fanfiction, these references are overt. Fanfiction, then, can provide insight into not only how *Buffy* fans (and fans of other media

properties) are using texts, but also the various, creative ways that texts can be combined, compared, contrasted, and used.

Notes

[1] The film *10 Things I Hate About You* is based on Shakespeare's *Taming of the Shrew*, adding yet another level of intertextual referentially.

[2] Also referred to as "fanfic" and "fic," and more broadly as examples of "fantexts" and "fan writing" throughout this piece.

[3] Most fanfiction posted to online archives is free for fellow fans to access and enjoy.

[4] Texts like *Fifty Shades of Grey* (2011) that have moved from one register to another disrupt this dichotomy.

[5] "Spuffy," a portmanteau of "Buffy" and "Spike," refers to their romantic or sexual pairing.

[6] Robin Hobb, for example, has explicitly compared fanfiction to stealing. Other writers, notably Anne Rice and George R.R. Martin, have also strongly objected to fanfiction on largely proprietary grounds.

[7] Khost's definition of literary affordance is not applicable to fanfiction that does not make intertextual references to works outside of the object of fandom. While these fics make use of a text to make a rhetorical argument, the argument is generally about the text being used. Literary affordance is not concerned with how *Buffy* fanfic writers are using *Buffy*, but how they are using the other texts in their stories—the intertextual engagement that reaches beyond a fanfic's source text to weave in other, outside, and perhaps seemingly unrelated, texts for creative interpretive and rhetorical purposes.

[8] A derivative of "relationship," "shipping" denotes the desire to see characters either initiate or maintain a romantic relationship. The most important relationships to fans are often called their "OTPs," or "one true pairing." This paper, for example, will focus on the ship Spuffy.

[9] Although this paper will limit the scope of its focus to the Spuffy subcommunity of the *Buffy* fandom, other fandoms make similar uses of literary affordances. Fathallah references *Supernatural* fanfiction that is based on *House of Leaves* (310-312), *Rosencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead* (309), and Ginsberg's "Howl" (222-23). Anne Kustritz, likewise, analyzes how *Game of Thrones* fanfiction writers use fairy tales to critique the show.

[10] Fan-made music videos that combine footage from the source text and popular music.

[11] See Kaldmae for the different narrative functions of songs in fic.

[12] Out of character.

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