6.2
THE ONLINE INTERNATIONAL JOURNAL
Twenty Two Voyage

Erin Hollis

PDF Version

Gorgonzola Sandwiches and Yellow Crayons: James Joyce, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, and the Aesthetics of Minutiae

(1) At the end of season six of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, after having dealt for several years with all kinds of fantastic and strange monsters, the difficulty of connection between people in a supernatural world, and an increasingly shady boundary between good and evil, [1] we are faced with a dark, pained Willow who is out of control with grief. Contrary to previous seasons where the big bad must be killed to save the world, even if he is Buffy's boyfriend, Willow is someone we care about in a unique way, someone we need to save without damaging her beyond repair, so we are bound to know that this season's finale is going to be slightly different. Usually, a viewer might think that this season's world-saving antics would involve the usual gearing up for a big fight, and it does in some ways. However almost everyone gets stuck somewhere along the way to the big dance, and we are left with Xander who must stop Willow and save the world, and in doing so, he must save her as well. For a typical viewer of *Buffy*, that Xander is the only one who stands between the world and its destruction is definitely nerve-wracking; he is, after all, the Zeppo, who saves the school, but is almost always the silly and goofy sidekick, the comic relief. Save the world, he does, however, and not with any magic or weapon, but, quite simply, with the important memory of a yellow crayon.

(2) Throughout Joyce's *Ulysses*, we see Leopold Bloom's daily life, and how every tiny event, every tiny word matters. Readers who approach Joyce often do so cautiously. He has a reputation, you see, of being difficult; some would even say elitist. While, as Robert Alter argues, "Joyce, like many other high modernists, retained a vivid if intermittent interest in addressing the common reader, for all the aggressive elitisms of his literary undertaking," his complex, legendary style often outweighs what is actually going on in his texts (19). But what is actually going on? Is his obfuscatory style, much like the fantastic world of *Buffy*, all that we should really pay attention to? Is the point to be frustrated and realize, wow, this book isn't written like other books, I'm going to have to find a different way of reading it just like *Buffy* isn't like other television shows, I'm going to have to find a different way of watching it and, I would say, reading it? What impresses, for me at least, about Joyce's work, is not his difficult style or his constant allusions, impressive and intriguing though they are, but his attention to the little details—to the quotidian—to the minutiae. As Richard Ellman argues in his biography of Joyce, "Joyce's discovery, so humanistic that he would have been embarrassed to disclose it out of context, was that the ordinary is the extraordinary" (5). In the world Joyce has created in *Ulysses*, there are no mythical monsters, even though myth is a background to the story. Cyclops isn't really Cyclops, just as vampires in *Buffy* aren't really vampires—they are both so much more and less than that all at once. What matters, simply put, is Bloom's experience of his uneventful day. That he eats a gorgonzola sandwich in response to a chapter's worth of pontification about vegetarians and digestion is potentially life-changing. The trajectory of his day is constantly changing because of choices such as this—choices we usually don't recognize in our daily lives. Bloom's day is peppered with the yellow crayons of *Buffy*—that is, potentially life-saving, world-saving, yet seemingly inconsequential, moments. Both Xander and Bloom find their appeal, not in myth, but in an embracing of the everyday. In two texts that are obviously difficult to crack, for significantly different reasons, this privileging of the everyday is a siren's call to the reader to recognize that even though these works are dabbling in difficulty, what really

matters, what we should pay attention to and be good readers about (which is exactly what Bloom and Xander are—excellent readers) is the minutiae. Editors' note: Orwell's well-known praise of Dickens for his inclusion of the "unnecessary detail" is comparable (as so much of Whedon and Dickens is comparable).

(3) Paying attention to minutiae, of course, can be painful. Living a life as minutiae is even more painful, but I would argue that more than any other characters in their disparate worlds, Xander and Bloom are living in the world, living every experience because they aesthetically embrace the daily importance of both their own lives and the lives of others. It would be difficult, it seems, for someone like Buffy to revel in these things, even though she often tries to (she wants to be a normal girl who experiences normal girl things, but try as she might, she will always be a supernatural, "prophecy" girl fated to experience supernatural things and relationships). Of course, sometimes the very fact of Bloom and Xander's ordinary nature may get them down. This is especially the case with Xander, who often feels like he doesn't have an important place in the Scooby gang. At the beginning of "The Zeppo" (3013), for example, Xander is constantly pushed aside and even ridiculed (by Cordelia, of course) because of his ordinary nature. In fact, throughout the beginning of the episode, Xander's ordinariness is often equated with uselessness by both himself and other characters. Starting from the first scene, where Xander does not appear until after the fighting is over, and it is revealed that he got pummeled by the demon they were fighting, Xander is continually pushed aside. As Xander jumps out of the wreckage, both Willow and Buffy and even Faith express concern for him:

> Xander: I'm good. We're fine. Just a little bit dirty. Good show, everyone. Just great. I think we have a hit.
>
> Willow : Are you okay?
>
> Xander: Tip-top, really. If anyone sees my spine laying around, just try not to step on it.
>
> Buffy: Xander, one of these days you're going to get yourself hurt.
>
> Faith: Or killed.
>
> Buffy: Or both. And you know, with the pain and the death, maybe you shouldn't be leaping into the fray like that. Maybe you should be . . . fray-adjacent. (3.13)

And in fact, Xander does seem "fray-adjacent" to the gang for the entire episode. No one ever knows how much his life was at risk in the episode. A few moments later, Giles adds his concern to those of Buffy, Willow , and Faith:

> Giles: Uh, Xander, I think in the future perhaps it would be best if you, you, uh, hung back to the rear of the battle, you know, for your own sake.
>
> Xander: But, gee, Mr. White, if Clark and Lois get all the good stories, I'll never be a good reporter.
>
> Giles: Hmm?
>
> Xander: Jimmy Olsen joke, sir. Pretty much going to be lost on you, huh?
>
> Giles: Sorry.
>
> Xander: Hey, it's ok. (3.13)

Here Xander tries to use humor to cover the pain that the recognition of his ordinary nature is causing. This pain is further aggravated in the next scene, when after an encounter with a school bully, Cordelia taunts him, repeating the Jimmy Olsen reference and highlighting his less-than-supernatural nature:

> Cordelia: It must be really hard when all your friends have, like, superpowers—Slayer, werewolf, witches, vampires—and you're like, this little nothing. You must feel like Jimmy Olsen.
>
> Xander: I was just talking to . . . Hey, mind your own business.

Cordelia: Ooh, I struck a nerve. The boy that had no cool.

Xander: I happen to be an integral part of that group. I happen to have a lot to offer.

Cordelia: Oh, please.

Xander: I do!

Cordelia: "Integral part" of the group? Xander, you're the "useless" part of the group. You're the Zeppo. "Cool." Look it up. It's something that a sub-literate that's repeated twelfth grade three times has, and you don't. (3.13)

In *Why Buffy Matters* in the chapter titled "For Those of Us in Our Audience Who Are Me: Xander, Laughter, and 'The Zeppo,'" Rhonda Wilcox points out just how many forms of humor are used in this episode: "the varieties of types of humor in "The Zeppo" are staggering—puns, slapstick, bathos, irony, parody, to name a few" (132). In fact, throughout the series, it would be easy to dismiss Xander as mere comic relief. He's not the Slayer, he's not the Watcher, and he's not a witch. Of the core group of *Buffy*, Xander never changes supernaturally; he remains Xander. As Wilcox points out, in "The Zeppo," Xander's role as comic relief even comes into question as he repeatedly fails in his jokes: "Xander is unsuccessful even with humor in the early part of 'The Zeppo.' As the opening scene ends, he makes a joke based on an allusion which Giles fails to understand" (133). But what "The Zeppo" demonstrates and what becomes increasingly clear as the series comes to a close is that Xander's ordinariness and his ability to let others shine while he remains a constant presence in the background can prove to be a power, albeit not a supernatural power. Although this fading into the background can, as Jes Battis argues, "draw our attention to Xander's *invisibility* as a character," it also draws our attention to his ordinariness, his similarity to us (45).

(4) In season three, however, Xander has yet to fully recognize this power, and in "The Zeppo," he talks with Oz about finding his "thing":

Xander: But it's just that it's bugging me, this "cool" thing. I mean, what is it? How do you get it? Who doesn't have it? And who decides who doesn't have it? What is the essence of cool?

Oz: Not sure.

Xander: I mean, you yourself, Oz, are considered more or less cool. Why is that?

Oz: Am I?

Xander: Is it about the talking? You know, the way you tend to express yourself in short, noncommittal phrases?

Oz: Could be.

Xander: I know! You're in a band! That's like a business-class ticket to cool with complementary mojo after takeoff. I gotta learn an instrument. Is it hard to play guitar?

Oz: Not the way I play it.

Xander: Ok, but on the other hand: eighth grade. I'm taking the flugelhorn and getting zero trim. So the whole instrument thing could be a mislead. But you need a thing, one thing nobody else has. What do I have?

Oz: An exciting new obsession, which I feel makes you very special.

Xander: Now with the mocking. Which I can handle because I know I'm right about this. I'm on the track. I just need to find my thing.

Oz: It seems like you're over-thinking it. I mean, you got some identity issues. It's not . . . (3.13)

Xander comes up with a fancy vintage car as his "thing" in this episode, but as the episode unfolds, what he comes to learn is that he doesn't need "something" to make him special, he already is special because of who he is and what he sees. He keeps doubting himself as the episode progresses, trying to

get help from Giles, Willow, and even Buffy and Angel (interrupting quite the dramatic scene, I might add), but, in the end, he solves the problem on his own. And although the events of his day are not apocalyptic (as are the events of the rest of the gang's day), he does prevent catastrophe, not with any supernatural ability, but with words, with seeing Jack O'Toole's true nature (i.e., that O'Toole would be more worried about his own survival than about completing his plan to blow up the school). This ability foreshadows Xander's later saving of the world in season six. At the end of "The Zeppo," Giles, Oz, Buffy, and Willow sit around discussing the previous night. Xander approaches them, saying nothing about his night, and asks them if they need anything. As he is walking away, Cordelia tries once again to taunt him, but it is clear she has lost her ability to sting him. He is starting to know that, although he may be less important in the big fights, he is extremely important to the gang as a provider of support and a fulfiller of needs. He hasn't entirely lost his sense of failure, however, which is highlighted in his dream in "Restless" (4022), which, as Matthew Pateman notes, focuses on Xander's overwhelming doubts about himself:

> As shall become clear by its end, Xander's dream concerns itself with the continuing sense of failure and frustration that he feels. Unlike his friends, he has not gone to the university, he has little sense of purpose, no obvious future and still lives in his parents' basement., a basement to which he returns throughout his dream in a nightmare vision of repetition, entrapment and stasis. It is then, a sort of emotional echo of "The Zeppo" (3.13), where he feels redundant, undervalued and lost. (146-7)

Although he doubts himself a lot throughout the series, "The Zeppo" signals the beginning of a valuation of his recognition of his own and others minutiae.

(5) The structure of quite a few episodes in *Ulysses* mirrors the structure of "The Zeppo," placing Bloom in a similar position to Xander—a constant background presence who causes seemingly slight, yet important, changes in the world around him. Perhaps one of the most famous influences Bloom has on the day is the "accidental" tip that he gives on a horse, Throwaway (70). In a conversation with Bantam Lyons, Bloom offers Lyons his newspaper, saying he was just going to throw it away anyway. Lyons mistakenly assumes that Bloom is giving him a tip on a racehorse. This mistake leads to a violent scene later in "Cyclops," where most of the characters believe Bloom is hiding his recent winnings from them. In *Ulysses,* then, minutiae can lead to being pelted with a biscuit tin—but this occurs when Bantam Lyons *misreads* Bloom's minutiae. It is no mistake, I think, that Joyce calls the horse "Throwaway"—this is what most minutiae is often seen as, something to throw away and ignore with little significance. Additionally, Both "Aeolus" and "Lestrygonians" highlight Bloom's intricate involvement with a world that often seems focused on anything but him. Like Xander in "The Zeppo," Bloom is made an outsider and does not seem, to most of the other characters anyway, to have any effect on the world whatsoever. In "Aeolus," which mimics the structure of newspaper, complete with headlines, Bloom weaves his way throughout the newspaper offices as he tries to get an advertisement accepted for publication. He begins in the printing room, discussing the ad with the foreman, who barely deigns to pay attention to him. He afterwards makes his way to the editor's offices, where several Dubliners have gathered. Bloom tries to fit in with them, tries to connect, but he is ultimately unsuccessful as they make fun of him and treat him like an outsider:

> --I'm just running round to Bachelor's Walk, Mr Bloom said, about this ad of Keyes's. Want to fix it up. They tell me he's round there in Dillon's.
>
> He looked indecisively for a moment at their faces. The editor who, leaning against the mantelshelf, had propped his head on his hand, suddenly stretched forth an arm amply.
>
> --Begone! He said. The world is before you.
>
> Back in no time, Mr Bloom said, hurrying out. (106-107)

Bloom's desire to please here mirrors Xander's willingness to please the gang by getting snacks. Unlike Xander, however, Bloom's efforts are not even appreciated as he gets abused upon his return to the newspaper office:

> Just this ad, Mr Bloom said, pushing through towards the steps, puffing and taking the cutting from his pocket. I spoke with Mr Keyes just now. He'll give a renewal for two months, he says.

After he'll see. But he wants a par to call attention in the *Telegraph* too, the Saturday pink. And he wants it copied if it's not too late I told councilor Nannetti from the *Kilkenny People*. I can have access to it in the national library. House of keys, don't you see? His names is Keyes. It's a play on the name. But he practically promised he'd give the renewal. But he wants just a little puff. What will I tell him, Mr Crawford? (120)

Bloom's memory here of the conversation is impressive as is his knowledge of where past ads have been places (i.e. *Kilkenny People*). It would seem, then, that Bloom has done well, has succeeded in selling an ad, which should please the editor, but the editor's response is anything but pleased:

K.M.A.

--Will you tell him he can kiss my arse? Myles Crawford said throwing out his arm for emphasis. Tell him that straight from the stable.

A bit nervy. Look our for squalls. All off for a drink. Armr in arm. Lenehan's yachting cap on the cadge beyond. Usual blarney. Wonder is that young Dedalus the moving spirit. Had a good pair of boots on him today. Last time I saw him he had his heels on view. Been walking in muck somewhere. Careless chap. What was he doing in Irishtown?

Well, Mr Bloom said, his eyes returning, if I can get the design I suppose it's worth a short par. He'd give the ad, I think. I'll tell him . . .

K.M.R.I.A.

--He can kiss my royal Irish arse, Myles Crawford cried loudly over his shoulder. Any time he likes, tell him.

While Mr Bloom stood weighing the point and about to smile he strode on jerkily. (120-121)

Myles Crawford takes Bloom's work for granted and shows a lack of appreciation for Bloom's abilities. Notice, too, in the above quotation how Bloom pays such close attention to the minutiae of others. He remembers Stephen Dedalus' boots, which demonstrates a concern for Stephen's welfare, since his previous boots were so worn one could see his heels. Also, the reader here is encouraged to pay attention to the minutiae of the headlines as each of the headlines in the excerpt can be figured out by paying close attention to the following line (i.e. "K.M.A." means "kiss my arse," and "K.M.R.I.A." means "kiss me royal Irish arse"). Bloom, then, demonstrates for the reader how to read the novel—pay attention to every small thing. This is quite often what Xander does, even though most of the other characters fail to notice. Much like Xander in "The Zeppo," Bloom is treated as extraneous and unimportant, but Bloom persists in going about his day and does not allow the treatment of him as insignificant to make him bitter.

(6) But what exactly does placing importance on everyday life do to these characters? And is putting meaning in every event, every word always a good thing? In other words, are there points at which we just want something to mean nothing? I would not argue that Xander or Bloom always benefit from their constant attention to minutiae—in fact, making every single tiny thing important can often result in pain. Bloom is certainly in pain throughout his day, worrying about his wife's imminent adultery. He constantly tries to cover up that worry by focusing on other things, by wallowing in the minutiae of his day, but he is ultimately unsuccessful, as thoughts of Molly and Blazes Boylan sneak up on him wherever he goes. Minutiae, thus, can be seen as a means of escape, as a way of not really facing up to things. But Bloom, more than anything, would like for some of the little things in his day to mean nothing, like the letter Molly gets in the morning from Boylan arranging their assignation, but what Bloom realizes is that almost nothing is empty of meaning. This realization creates a fraught world where at any moment he may be confronted by even more evidence of Molly's adultery—nowhere is safe. Indeed, everywhere he goes he is confronted with reminders of the event, from seeing Boylan walking around Dublin to hearing numerous Dubliners gossip about Molly. In "Hades," for example, Bloom's carriage passes Blazes Boylan and the other occupants note his presence:

--How do you do? Martin Cunningham said, raising his palm to his brow in salute.

--He doesn't see us, Mr. Power said. Yes, he does. How do you do?

--Who? Mr Dedalus asked.

--Blazes Boylan, Mr Power said. There he is airing his quaff

Just that moment I was thinking.

Mr Dedalus bent across to salute. From the door of the Red Bank the white disc of a straw hat flashed reply: spruce figure: passed.

Mr Bloom reviewed the nails of his left hand, then those of his right hand. The nails, yes. Is there anything more in him that they she sees? Fascination. Worst man in Dublin. That keeps him alive. They sometimes feel what a person is. Instinct. But a type like that. My nails. I am just looking at them: well pared. And after: thinking alone. Body getting a bit soft. I would notice that: from remembering. What cause that? I suppose they can't contract quickly enough when the flesh falls off. But the shape is there. The shape is there still. Shoulders. Hips. Plump. Night of the dance dressing. Shift stuck between the cheeks behind. (76)

The coincidence of encountering Boylan throws Bloom and he focuses on his nails, tries to forget everything else, and remains silent. He focuses on his nails both to seem nonchalant to the other Dubliners in the carriage and to stop himself from thinking about Molly and Boylan, but the minutiae of his life with her creeps back in—no matter how hard we try to focus on something else, these kinds of thoughts are difficult to escape. These repetitive recollections of Molly and her minutiae (i.e. shift stuck between the cheeks behind) occupy Bloom throughout the day, making it clear that not all minutiae should be wallowed in.

(7) Xander, too, is confronted by an unsafe world, where minutiae can lead to death or to saving someone's life, but he also often tries to use his daily small stuff to escape his difficult world or at least make his world more bearable, mostly through the use of humor. Quite often, when things are getting a bit too serious or too dangerous, Xander is ready with a joke or some light-hearted wit. Nearing the end of season seven, for example, in "First Date" (7014), Xander goes out on a date with yet another demon (Ashanti of all people!), and she tries to use him to open the Hellmouth and let out some ubervamps. After being rescued by Buffy, when it has become increasingly clearer that the gang is in for some major trouble, Xander breaks the tension with a joke about his propensity for being attracted to demons:

Willow: What happened?

Xander: What do you think happened? Another demon woman was attracted to me. I'm going gay. I've decided I'm turning gay. Willow, gay me up. Come on, let's gay.

Willow: What?

Xander: You heard me, just tell me what to do. I'm mentally undressing Scott Bakula right now. That's a start, isn't it?

Andrew: Captain Archer . . .

Xander: Come on, let's get this gay show on the gay road. Help me out here.

Buffy: What if you just start attracting male demons?

Dawn: Clem always liked you.

Anya: It would serve you right.

Giles: Children, enough!

Xander: I'd need some new stylish clothes.

Giles: Enough! Have you learned nothing from tonight's assorted chaos? There isn't time for fun and games and quips about orientation. These—these aren't a joke. This—this happens. Girls are going to die. We may die. It's time to get serious. (7014)

Although Giles protests Xander's use of humor at this moment, I would argue that this humor is precisely what the group needs as the mounting tension of season seven needed to be diffused somehow. By making fun of himself and his penchant for attracting demons (some of his own minutiae), Xander creates a space for everyone, except Giles, to relax. Notice how most of the main characters share in the fun here, and the viewer, as well, can join in with the fun. What Xander sees is that sometimes humor about the little things can be the most helpful in moments of crisis. Giles, who must always pay attention to the big picture, does not recognize the necessity of such moments. Both Xander and Bloom recognize the sometimes silly, but important, nature of their own minutiae, but even more they recognize other's minutiae, which is ultimately what makes them both kind.

(8) We need to embrace each other's minutiae, which is what Xander ultimately teaches us and something Bloom learns as he goes about his day. The quotidian is perhaps where human connection lies. Both characters could be described as truly kind, and is this because they understand just how important these tiny, seemingly insignificant events can be? We want people to recognize and validate our minutiae—and what both Bloom and Xander *see* is that that is really important. That is what saves the world, not the big events, but a recognition of the pain, the wonder, the joy in the everyday. We survive on this recognition—each minute has meaning, without that why even gear up for the big fight?

(9) In "Lestrygonians," Bloom wanders throughout Dublin noticing other people and their minutiae, ultimately resulting in small acts of kindness towards several characters. At the beginning of the episode, Bloom notices some sea-gulls, recognizing even their minutiae:

> Wait. Those poor birds. He halted again and bought from the old applewoman two Banbury cakes for a penny and broke the brittle paste and threw its fragments down into the Liffey.
>
> See that? The gulls swooped silently, two, then all from their heights, pouncing on prey. Gone. Every morsel. Aware of their greed and cunning he shook the powdery crumb from his hands. They never expected that. (126-7)

That Bloom both recognizes the bird's need for food and their "greed and cunning" demonstrates his willingness to accept others for what they are. Not only does his gift to the birds help the gulls, it also helps the applewoman, for whom a purchase might make a difference. As Bloom continues to walk, he meets Mrs. Breen, and again, he demonstrates a willingness to notice other's minutiae as he listens to Mrs. Breen, giving her sympathy:

> --There must be a new moon out, she said. He's always bad then. Do you know what he did last night?
>
> Her hand ceased to rummage. Her eyes fixed themselves on him, wide in alarm, yet smiling.
>
> --What? Mr Bloom asked.
>
> Let her speak. Look straight in her eyes. I believe you. Trust me.
>
> --Woke me up in the night, she said. Dream he had, a nightmare.
>
> Indiges
>
> --Said the ace of spades was walking up the stairs.
>
> --The ace of spades! Mr Bloom said.
>
> She took a folded postcard from her handbag.
>
> --Read that, she said. He got it this morning.
>
> --What is it? Mr Bloom asked, taking the card. U.P.?
>
> --U.p.: up, she said. Someone taking a rise out of him. It's a great shame for them whoever he is.
>
> --Indeed it is, Mr Bloom said.
>
> She took back the card, sighing.

--And now he's going round to Mr Menton's office. He's going to take an action for ten thousand pounds, he says. (129-130)

Bloom pays attention to what Mrs. Breen is saying, making her feel important—making her feel like she has something to say, even though she is talking about something that seems so insignificant. The postcard in this section is a famous Joycean moment. "U.p.: up" has been the object of quite a bit of critical speculation. That something so small can lead to such attention indicates how both Joyce's style and content focus on the little things. That solving this might open up new vistas in Joycean studies is intriguing, but perhaps the fact that this puzzle is ultimately unsolveable says even more—sometimes the minutiae of our lives make no sense until we apply our own interpretive model to it. That is, we each give our own minutiae its meaning. (After all, to me an egg means nausea, whereas to most people in means a tasty meal.) One final small act of Bloom's demonstrates his recognition of others and their minutiae. As he is walking to the library, Bloom encounters a blind stripling who is trying to find his way across the street. Bloom's reaction is, well, Bloomian:

A blind stripling stood tapping the curbstone with his slender cane. No tram in sight. Wants to cross.

--Do you want to cross? Mr Bloom asked.

The blind stripling did not answer. His wallface frowned weakly. He moved his head uncertainly.

You're in Dawson street, Mr Bloom said. Molesworth street is opposite. Do you want to cross? There's nothing in the way.

The cane moved out trembling to the left. Mr Bloom's eye followed its line and saw again the dyeworks' van drawn up before Drago's. Where I saw his brillantined hair just when I was. Horse drooping. Driver in John Long's. Slaking his drouth.

--There's a van there, Mr Bloom said, but it's not moving. I'll see you across. Do you want to go to Molesworth street?

Yes, the stripling answered. South Frederick street.

--Come, Mr Bloom said.

He touched the thin elbow gently: then took the limp seeing hand to guide it forward.

Say something to him. Better not do the condescending. They mistrust what you tell them. Pass a common remark.

--The rain kept off.

No answer. (148)

Here again, Bloom tries to empathize, tries to imagine what it would be like to be blind, and tries to treat the stripling with care and recognize what the stripling needs. A simple act like helping the stripling to cross the street demonstrates Bloom's kindness and his ability to alter the world, no matter how slightly, with his philosophy of recognizing other's minutiae.

(10) In "Grave" (6022), Xander has perhaps his most life-altering moment of recognizing another's minutiae—a world-saving moment in which he remembers Willow's reaction to breaking a crayon in kindergarten. This well-known moment marks the only series finale in which Buffy is not involved firsthand with the actual saving of the world. Although Giles does help by giving Willow a dose of pure magic, Xander is the one who turns the tide here by recognizing and remembering Willow's minutiae:

Willow: You can't stop this.

Xander: Yeah, I get that. It's just, where else am I gonna go? You've been my best friend for my whole life. World gonna end . . . where else would I want to be?

Willow: Is this the master plan? You're going to stop me by telling me you love me?

Xander: Well, I was gonna walk you off a cliff and hand you an anvil, but . . . it seemed kind of cartoony.

Willow: Still making jokes.

Xander: I'm not joking. I know you're in pain. I can't imagine the pain you're in. And I know you're about to do something apocalyptically evil and stupid, and hey. I still want to hang. You're Willow.

Willow: Don't call me that.

Xander: First day of kindergarten. You cried because you broke the yellow crayon, and you were too afraid to tell anyone. You've come pretty far, ending the world, not a terrific notion. But the thing is? Yeah, I love you. I loved crayon-breaky Willow and I love scary, veiny Willow. So if I'm going out, it's here. If you wanna kill the world? Well, then, start with me. I've earned that.

Willow: You think I won't.

Xander: It doesn't matter. I'll still love you.

Willow: Shut up. (6022)

As any *Buffy* viewer knows, Xander does save the world, and he does so not only by knowing Willow, but by loving and knowing her minutiae. He recognizes how a tiny event, like breaking a crayon, can be important to her, can demonstrate why Willow is the way she is—this recognition signals kindness, a kindness that Xander shares with Bloom and ultimately with James Joyce as well. What both Joyce and the writers of *Buffy* demonstrate through this attention to the small things is a recognition that each person's space matters and each person's experience of their individual daily life is significant. Too often, we are encouraged to discount the yellow crayons and gorgonzola sandwiches of our lives, but doing so belittles both our own experiences and our actions towards others.

(11) It is no mistake then, that in the final season of *Buffy*, Dawn recognizes Xander for his attention to detail, for his ability to see. Xander, again, recognizes Dawn's pain as others are intent on the bigger picture:

Xander: They'll never know how tough it is, Dawnie, to be the one who isn't chosen. To live so near to the spotlight and never step in it. But I know. I see more than anybody realizes because nobody's watching me. I saw you last night. I see you working here today. You're not special. You're extraordinary.

Dawn: Maybe that's your power.

Xander: What?

Dawn: Seeing. Knowing. ("Potential," 7012)

What Xander sees is minutiae—he sympathizes with people and their everyday plights because he is so able to, finally, embrace his own ordinary nature. Bloom, too, recognizes this as he sympathizes with people throughout his painful day. Both Bloom and Xander help other people by making them realize how extraordinary an everyday thing can be. I end with a quotation from one of Joyce's less-known works, *Giacomo Joyce*, that sums up this attention to detail, this aesthetic of minutiae: "Love me, love my umbrella" (16). As Marian Eide notes in *Ethical Joyce*, this final envoy is a message to the reader that "Joyce's ethic is one of sympathy—feeling beside, never usurping, never assuming, never taking up my place" (144)—this ethic extends to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* as the writers recognize the need for sympathetic understanding that allows each person their place. Eide goes on to argue that "the messenger or envoy leaves behind this last message, a direct address to the reader or patron of the poem: love me, love my weapons, these defensive implements I use to shield me from harm, an umbrella to protect me from rain, a hat under which to hide my vulnerable face and hair" (145). Xander and Bloom are both umbrella-lovers who recognize how fragile each person is and the need for "weapons" whether they be magic or not to defend us from the almost constant pain of life. A Joyce/*Buffy* aesthetic of minutiae, then, says to the reader/viewer: "love me, love my minutiae,"

encouraging an active participation by the reader that reproduces the ethic of kindness created by characters like Xander and Bloom.

Works Cited

Alter, Robert. "Joyce's *Ulysses* and the Common Reader." *Modernism/Modernity* 5 (1998): 19-31.

Battis, Jes. *Chosen Families in* Buffy the Vampire Slayer *and* Angel. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2005.

Eide, Marian. *Ethical Joyce*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2002.

Ellman, Richard. *James Joyce*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1959.

Joyce, James. *Giacomo Joyce*. London: Faber and Faber, 1959.

---. *Ulysses*. New York: Vintage, 1986.

Pateman, Matthew. *The Aesthetics of Culture in* Buffy the Vampire Slayer. Jefferson, NC: McFarland, 2006.

Wilcox, Rhonda. *Why Buffy Matters: The Art of* Buffy the Vampire Slayer. London: I.B. Tauris, 2005.

[1] Consider, for example, the writers' willingness to create "good" or at least harmless dens like Clem, their treatment of both Angel and Spike, and Giles's killing of Ben/Glory at the end of season five.