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# From Burke to *Buffy* and Back Again: Intersections of Rhetoric, Magic, and Identification in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

Slayage
The Journal of the Whedon Studies Association

[1] Let me begin with a story about magic. My six-year-old nephew Seth is playing with a mini-skateboard, positioning it half off the kitchen table and smacking it hard to get it to flip over. His father keeps telling him that it's going to break. Seth's only reply? "It won't break." Every time. "It won't break." Exasperated, Jim looks to my sister and says, "I'm an engineer. Why won't our kids believe me?" My theory? It's not that Seth doesn't believe him, it's that he's trying to work some magic. It's a counter-spell. Jim says it will break and, as father, he seems to have magical power. When he tells Seth that it's bedtime, it's magically bedtime. When he says it's time to get up, it's just time to get up. When he says it's time for dinner, there's food on the table. He says, "You're in big trouble mister," and the kid is in big trouble. I'm betting Seth thinks, at least in part, that if Jim says it will break, the skateboard will break. But Seth is having fun and he doesn't want to stop what he's doing. So he's trying a counter spell: "It won't break." His words have purpose. He's hoping they have the same sort of power that his father's words seem to: The power to effect change.

[2] Purposeful language use—rhetoric—has long been associated with magic. Rhetoric can be defined as the ability to move people with your words and, therefore, with your mind. In *A Rhetoric of Motives*, Kenneth Burke, one of the most influential theorists in rhetorical studies, discusses both rhetoric and magic. He defines magic as "the use of addressed language to induce motion in *things* (things by nature alien to purely linguistic orders of motivation)" (42). Rhetoric, on the other hand, is the "realistic use of addressed language to induce action in people" (42). To think of rhetoric as magic, or as a remnant of magic, is to view the whole issue backwards. According to Burke, magic is primitive rhetoric, not the other way around. Burke puts an even finer point on it, saying "the basic function of rhetoric, the use of words by human agents to form attitudes or to induce actions in other human agents, is certainly not Ômagical.' If you are in trouble, and call for help, you are no practitioner of primitive magic" (41). Certainly this is an important distinction to make. Rhetoric attempts to persuade people; magic attempts to persuade things that, by their nature, do not (or are not supposed to) respond to language.

[3] Yet it can be more complicated than that. There are theories that plants respond to language, for example. And even if you don't believe in the link between human speech and plant growth, take a look at what popular novelist Stephen King says about writing. Writing, according to King, is a form of psychic exchange. "Look," he says: "here's a table covered with a red cloth. On it is a cage the size of a small fish aquarium. In the cage is a white rabbit with a pink nose and pink-rimmed eyes. In its front paws is a carrot-stub upon which it is contentedly munching. On its back, clearly marked in blue ink, is the numeral 8" (King 105). King goes on to say that he sent that table to us, that cloth, that rabbit, that number. We can see it in our minds. In the sending and reception, "we've engaged in an act of telepathy" (King 106). We've engaged in an act of magic.

[4] There's much to say about magic and rhetoric, and the matter gets even more complicated when we add to the mix a television show that centers in no small part around both magic and language. In this article I will first briefly discuss some of the ways in which readers

might understand the linguistic overlap between rhetoric and magic. I will then look to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (hereafter *Buffy*) as an illustration of what I am calling rhetorical magic, or the ways rhetorical symbols can effect change. Finally, I will show how the use of both language and magic in *Buffy* operationalizes a hallmark theory in rhetorical studies—identification—and echoes a recent critique of this theory. As one might imagine, the line between rhetoric and magic gets understandably blurred in a show such as *Buffy*. But it is exactly within that blurring that I believe both rhetorical theory and the power of language become clearer.

[5] It is not only within the world of *Buffy* that the lines between rhetoric and magic are muddied, however. There are also hidden—or, more accurately, forgotten—connections between language and magic in the real world. In their *Wickedary* (or *Websters' First Intergalactic Wickedary of the English Language*), feminist scholars Mary Daly and Jane Caputi attempt to recast definitions of common terms, hoping to rattle loose their oppressive effects by fashioning new spellings, recovering forgotten or shrouded denotations, and creating new definitions. One of the things that Daly and Caputi draw attention to in this project is the link between rhetoric and magic. The word "spell" provides a pertinent example. The casting of spells is of course a set of spoken (or unspoken) words believed to have magical power. To be under a spell is the state of being enchanted, like Sleeping Beauty. Magic words made her spell-bound. Morris Bishop, author of "Good Usage, Bad Usage, and Usage" points to the link between spells, spelling, and magic when he writes in the *American Heritage Dictionary* that "There are magic words, spells to open gates and safes, summon spirits, put an end to the world. What are magic spells but magic spellings?" (qtd. in Daly and Caputi 13). In this moment, Bishop emphasizes the link between everyday language and magic. If magic spells might be magic spellings, the reverse is also true: magic spellings might create magic spells. As Daly and Caputi explain, different spellings of common terms can "Be-Speak Other Worlds" (13). When Daly and Caputi recast the term chronology as "crone-ology" to reflect the power of women, for example, they not only change the spelling of the term, but in doing so also change the word, the definition, even the reader's perception. They try to put an end to the patriarchal world by their re-spellings. They're casting a sort of re-spell and are hoping for some social magic.

[6] There are similar magical connections surrounding the word "grammar." The words grammar and glamour—a kind of spell that causes things to appear different from what they are—seem to have the same root. Burke notes that the word glamour "may be a corruption of Ôgrammarye,' which means necromancy, magic" (note to 210). Daly and Caputi believe the word grammar is derived from "grimoire," linking it to a book of magic spells.[1] And as rhetorical historian William Covino explains, "glamour, which originally referred to a magic spell, was once a variant of grammar, and conjoining the two reveals the connection between magic spelling, the elements of rhetoric, and the fundamentals of literacy" (149). Rhetoric and magic are here linguistically linked.[2]

[7] There is perhaps no better medium through which to further examine the connections between language and magic than *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, a program so steeped in both magic and rhetoric that Karen Eileen Overbey and Lahney Preston-Matto have argued that language and rhetoric in the world of *Buffy* have "palpable power" (73). Certainly this is true in what we might call "actual" magic in the Buffyverse. In the world of *Buffy*, magic is real and can enact tangible, sometimes terrible, change. Speech acts, particularly in the form of spells or even spoken wishes, function as literal weapons (Overbey and Preston-Matto 73-74). But language also has power outside of magic, as in Buffy's punning, Giles' book knowledge, the many persuasive speeches throughout the series, and even the creation of what Michael Adams calls "slayer slang": a cross between teen slang and Whedon's own brand of linguistic gymnastics.[3] In fact, the intertwining of language, power, and magic lead Overbey and Preston-Matto to conclude that "In *Buffy*, magic is

the syntax—it is magic that provides the rules and governs the language," (80). Magic relies on language, language can enact magic, and both language and magic are power (and powerful).

[8] There is also an important middle ground between Buffy's somewhat benign punning and the "actual" magic within the world of *Buffy*. Within this middle ground is the power of Daly and Caputi's "Be-Speaking," which they define as "bringing about a psychic and/or material change by means of words; speaking into being" (65). In this way, words have the magical power to change real social structures. Jes Battis draws brief attention to this space when he explains that Buffy re-casts Dawn as a natural part of Buffy's family (21). Battis is primarily concerned here with Dawn's position within the familial structure(s).[4] However, in the midst of exploring how Buffy tries to reestablish family bonds, Battis mentions that "Buffy alters the language so that it more suitably describes her own visible reality. She remakes the world, one word at a time" (21). While Battis does not develop this connection more fully, what he has alluded to is the power of Buffy's Be-Speaking.

[9] Viewers will remember that while Buffy certainly struggles with the knowledge of Dawn's origin, Dawn's discovery of her actual identity as the key causes something of a meltdown. Dawn truly doesn't know who, or even what, she is. She has a very literal existential crisis.[5] Battis argues that in this moment of confusion, when Dawn is revealed as not-sister, "Buffy simply rewords Ôsister' so that it continues to encompass Dawn" (21). But there is nothing simple about this speech act. For Dawn, the situation is clear: she is not a part of Buffy's family and never really was. After a run-in with Glory, Dawn tells Buffy quite plainly that she is not her sister. "Yes you are," Buffy responds. "It doesn't matter where you came from, or how you got here. You are my sister" ("Blood Ties," 5013). After all of the angst associated with Dawn's finding out her true nature, Buffy, in this moment, very confidently calls Dawn her sister and, as if by magic, she is. Buffy Be-Speaks Dawn as sister and in doing so she restores Dawn's identity as such. She not only re-casts Dawn as a part of her family, though; in the process, Buffy also recreates what that word "sister" means in her world.

[10] This is no small feat, even if it is a small moment. It illustrates Buffy's power to organize her world and her families, yes, but it also illustrates her grammatical power, as well as the power of language itself. In changing the definitions associated with the word "sister" to include an energy matrix in human form, Buffy works a little word magic of her own, thereby linking grammar with its roots in "grammarye," "grimoire," and "glamour." In this moment, Buffy (and *Buffy*) reveals the deep connections between rhetoric and magic. With the Be-Speaking of "sister," Buffy performs an act of rhetorical magic: a refashioning occurs, and Dawn is again transformed, this time into the sister that she never physically was.

[11] While magic and language are vital concepts throughout the entire series, the links between the two swirl most pointedly around the character of Willow. As Caroline Ruddell notes in "ÔI am the Law,' ÔI am the Magics': Speech, Power, and the Split Identity of Willow in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*," magic becomes Willow's language. As her own dialect, magic functions as a form of identity creation, in part because it is a language that the rest of the Scoobies don't easily speak (par 2). Yet her language use also helps create and/or strengthen relationships. Willow's entrance into the realm of magic aligns her with Tara and Amy, both witches. Additionally, Willow's use of the magicks and magical language serve to highlight her role as an integral part of the Scooby Gang: as a witch, Willow has a particular form of power that the other members of the gang often find useful, if sometimes confusing and even a little scary. At the same time, however, the magicks distance Willow from Buffy and Xander, neither of whom speak her new language nor completely understand the magical world.[6] In rhetorical terms, Willow's use of magic creates Burkean

identifications (from the work of Kenneth Burke), or identifications on the basis of commonalities between parties. Willow identifies with Tara and Amy because she has something in common with them and because they all speak the same language (witchcraft and incantations). But Willow's increasing reliance on the magicks also creates what we might call Fussian (drawing on the work of Diana Fuss) *disidentifications* as it disassociates, and sometimes even alienates, Willow from other members of her cohort.[7]

[12] These are concepts to which I will return more fully later as I discuss the show's representation of both Willow's identity and of rhetorical theories of identification. For now, however, I want to continue my exploration of the links between grammar and glamour and between rhetoric and magic within the world of *Buffy*. I will start by drawing attention to two moments when rhetoric and magic combine at the end of Season Six, then will look more closely at the Season Seven episode "The Killer in Me" (7013).

[13] As fans and scholars of *Buffy* know, the end of Season Six marks a turning point for the character of Willow. At this point in the series, Willow has gone from experimenting with the magicks, to getting addicted to the magicks, and finally giving up the magicks—the latter in large part to attempt to reunite with estranged girlfriend, Tara. Tara's subsequent death at the hands of Warren jettisons Willow back into the realm of (this time dark) magicks. She hunts down Warren and kills him, literally flaying him alive, thus cementing her transformation into evil Willow (or "Darth Rosenberg," as Andrew calls her).

[14] Two moments strike me at the close of this season. The first is in the episode "Villains" (6020). Seeking more power in order to enact revenge on Warren and The Trio for killing Tara, Willow heads to the Magic Box and finds the books on the darkest magicks. She splays them open on the table in front of her and lays her hands upon them. She then *literally* soaks up the words of the grimoires: the spells themselves run up Willow's arms and across her body, finally turning her eyes and hair black. In this moment, the text itself—the actual text, not simply what it represents—becomes a source of power and magic. The language itself *is* the magicks and is imprinted, momentarily, on Willow's flesh. This is not only a metaphor for her greatly increased power, but for the way that her body has absorbed the text of the books. Ruddell notes that in this moment "the divisions between text and the body are transgressed" (par 32). Similarly, Battis argues that this moment makes Willow "the living intersection of flesh and text" (38). Furthermore, "Willow is thus no longer Ôdistinct' from her power, her magic, because she has allowed it to embody her" (Battis 38). Willow actually becomes, as she later says, the magicks.

[15] These readings draw attention to the collapse between Willow's body and the magicks, as well as the collapse between flesh and text. Yes, the rhetoric of these texts, the language of the spells themselves, becomes a physical part of Willow. Additionally, however, the division between *rhetoric* and *magic* is transgressed as the text and the magicks themselves converge on the site of Willow's flesh. In this case, the text of the spells doesn't create or cause magic; the text itself *is* the magicks, is the power. In this moment, the language of the magicks (their rhetoric) and the magicks themselves overlap. These two readings of this scene (the collapse of body and text and the collapse of magic and rhetoric) can hardly be separated, however. The rhetoric itself becomes the power as it is transcribed upon Willow's body. The text then soaks into and becomes her body. The rhetoric is the magic and the magic is Willow.

[16] Rhetoric and magic also converge in the often-discussed final episode of the season, "Grave" (6022). Near the end of this episode, Giles "doses" evil Willow, giving her all of the borrowed magicks he has left in an attempt to reconnect her with humanity. His strategy backfires, however, and causes Willow to feel "too much." She can feel all of the pain and sorrow of

humankind and decides she must destroy the world to save people from their misery. Upon hearing of Willow's plan, Xander hurries to the bluff to find her.

[17] At first, Xander seems an unlikely subject to confront Willow. After all, Willow, at this point, is at the peak of her magical power.[8] She is fueled by grief, fury, and vengeance (and dark magicks). She has already bested Giles and, to some extent, Buffy herself, both of whom possess some modicum of magical or supernatural power. Xander, on the other hand, is one of the few Scoobies who has never had any real superhuman abilities.[9] In other words, Xander has no magicks to use against this "hopped up uber-witch" ("Grave," 6022). He has only his words, his rhetoric. But, as fans and scholars know, that's exactly what saves both Willow and the world.

[18] As evil Willow funnels her energy toward the demon effigy, Xander steps into the fray, breaking Willow's concentration and explaining that, if the world is going to end, the only place he wants to be is with her, his best friend. Although she pauses for a second at having physically hurt Xander, evil Willow is largely unimpressed, quipping, "Is this the master plan? You're gonna stop me by telling me ya love me?" ("Grave," 6022). While perhaps not the master plan (one gets the sense that Xander doesn't really have a master plan), this is *exactly* what stops Willow. As evil Willow attacks Xander's physical body with magicks, he can do nothing but tell her that he loves her, over and over again, despite everything that she has done and is planning to do. He calls her by her name, reminds her of who she is, and tells her that even if she kills him, he will still love her. As Willow angrily slashes at him, Xander continues to reply with language. And it is, in fact, his rhetoric that finally reaches Willow and allows her to feel the personal sorrow she has been repressing. As she crumbles in his arms, sobbing, the dark color drains from her hair, face, and eyes, and she returns, viewers understand, to the Willow we all know and love.

[19] Much has been said about this crucial moment in the series. Jes Battis connects Xander's triumph over evil Willow to the history between the two characters. By speaking her name and drawing attention to their history together, Xander reminds Willow that he knows her, that he has always known her, and that he can see her even if she can't see herself beneath all of the dark hair and veins. He also reminds her that she is part of a friendship and of a family (Battis 64-65). Similarly, Frances E. Morris argues that in this moment Willow is reconnected to humanity through Xander, thereby placing her back within the confines of the group and allowing her to make the ultimate moral choice and *not* destroy the world (92). Jana Riess as well as Michael J. Richardson and J. Douglas Rabb go so far as to say that Xander functions in the role of Christ within this moment by offering Willow his unconditional love (Richardson and Rabb 102).

[20] Most critics have focused either on the function of Xander in this moment as friend or brother figure (or even Christ figure), or on the content and impact of his words (reminding Willow that she is loved unconditionally and connecting her to a human history and a family). Certainly, these are important insights, and I am especially persuaded by Battis' argument concerning Willow's identification within a family structure. I'd like to turn my attention toward a function that Overbey and Preston-Matto hint at when they argue that Xander's language creates spaces—often safe spaces or at least moments of pause—within the series (77). In this case, Xander's language opens a space in which rhetoric and magic overlap.

[21] At first glance, this famous moment on the bluff seems more like a battle between rhetoric and magic, not so much a union or overlap of the two. Evil Willow's magicks are literally pitted against Xander's language. In this instance, rhetoric seems to win out over magic. While it might be the power of Xander's love that defeats evil Willow,[10] that love is conveyed through Xander's language; it is his rhetoric that finally reaches her.[11] What's most remarkable about this

moment is that magic has thus far failed to stop evil Willow. Empowered by the magicks, Willow nearly physically bests even the Slayer. Buffy's physical strength, imbued as she is with mystical super power, is really no match for evil Willow (as we see when Willow simply wipes her wounds away with the wave of her hand, something Buffy can't do). Similarly, Giles' borrowed magicks only briefly contain Willow, and it is clear from their battle that Willow has the upper hand, nearly killing Giles in the encounter. Yet where magicks—Giles' and Buffy's—seem to fail, rhetoric prevails in the form of Xander's (admittedly somewhat ineloquent) speech.

[22] This dichotomy between magic and rhetoric belies the complexity of the moment, however. Instead, this key scene on the bluff represents a convergence of rhetoric and magic, not a contest between the two. First there is the magic *of* rhetoric in Xander's ability to save "the world with talking, from [his] mouth," a feat even he can't seem to believe ("Same Time, Same Place," 7003). But Xander's rhetoric alone cannot save the world; instead, it is a combination of rhetoric and magic that accomplishes this laudable goal. As Giles explains to Anya at the end of "Grave" (6022), the magic with which he dosed Willow helped her to tap "into the spark of humanity she had left, helped her to feel again," something evil Willow was carefully avoiding. But even this "true essence of magic" does not stop Willow. The result of the dosing simply "gave Xander the opportunity to reach her." But Xander's rhetoric does not stop her, either É at least not immediately.

[23] After all, it is not as if Xander simply shows up on the bluff, tells Willow he loves her, and she gives up her plan to destroy the world. Instead, Xander must use his rhetoric to create a space in which to reassert the interpersonal connections to which Battis and Morris draw attention. Xander's rhetoric creates a gap, or what rhetorical theorist Krista Ratcliffe might call a "place of pause" within evil Willow's actions (Ratcliffe 72). This gap is made possible by Xander's speech, particularly his decision to use humor to get evil Willow to stop her actions and simply talk, if only for a moment.[12] It is then within this gap that Xander is able to change his rhetorical strategy and assert his emotional connection with Willow. However, had Willow not taken Giles' borrowed magicks, Xander's rhetoric might have fallen on deaf ears. The magicks let Willow feel that "spark of humanity," which allows Xander to connect with her, but that general spark needed to be combined with Xander's rhetorical act in order to persuade Willow to remember herself, to feel her *own* grief (and not only the grief of the generalized world), and to become Willow again.[13] In this scene, rhetoric combines with magic to save humanity.

[24] These moments illustrate only a few of the many instances of the intersection between magic and rhetoric so often seen in the Buffyverse. It is in episode thirteen of Season Seven, however, where we see what I would argue is the most blatant treatment of rhetorical magic in the series. In "The Killer in Me" (7013), rhetoric and magic are brought together in a way that illustrates one of the fundamental theories in rhetorical studies: identification.

[25] By this point in the final season, Willow is what one might call rehabilitated Émostly, at least.[14] She is avoiding using the magicks, concerned that she might lose control. In fact, Willow has worked hard to maintain control in all areas of her life since returning from Britain—including her love life. Willow hasn't dated since Tara; actually, Willow has hardly expressed romantic interest in anyone since Tara's death. The reverse is not true: one of the potential slayers, Kennedy, is definitely interested in Willow. In this particular episode, Kennedy tricks Willow into going on a date with her. At the end of the night they share a kiss. Suddenly, apparently as a result of the kiss, Willow turns into Warren, the man she killed. Actually, she is still Willow, but she looks like Warren. Understandably, Willow is confused and terrified. But she, or more specifically Anya, can name this problem: it's a glamour—magic that obscures the form of the person onto whom the spell is cast.

[26] It is easy enough to make the quick connection here between grammar (the language of the spell cast upon Willow) and glamour (the nature of the spell itself), but I think this moment can also be imagined in larger rhetorical terms. Beginning with this transformation and continuing throughout the remainder of the episode, the rhetorical theory of identification is played out. "The Killer in Me" (7013) thus illustrates how magic can explore and even explain theories of rhetorical identification. Similarly, this episode draws attention to the transformative power of rhetorical magic as well as the potential problems with specific modes of identification both within the Buffyverse and the real world. Throughout the remainder of the article I will therefore focus primarily on "The Killer in Me" (7013), but will also reference "Restless" (4022) and, to a lesser extent, "Primeval" (4021), in order to contextualize how Willow's identity confusion might contribute to her problematic identification with Warren.

[27] Willow's identity and her place within the Scoobies is the subject of much scholarly discussion. While many of the characters struggle with issues of identity from the start, James B. South contends that by the end of Season Six, "Willow is the one core character from the series who has not yet found her place in the world. She is still struggling to define who she is" (134).[15] Richardson and Rabb also point to this issue of defining Willow. Drawing in part on the work of Battis, they argue that Willow's early self-image as fashion-challenged computer-geek is determined by Cordelia as early as the very first episode. Similarly, as Willow begins to find a place within the Scooby Gang, her identity is constructed by the other members of that group. More specifically, Richardson and Rabb hold that Willow is "constructed by two conflicting sets of what we have called outside view predicates, those imposed on her by Cordelia and the Cordettes on the one hand, and those associated with the more positive acceptance by the Scooby Gang on the other" (94). And while the latter association is certainly more positive, Willow's own hesitation about self-identity, even in reference to her position as a Scooby, is made explicit by her dream in "Restless" (4022).

[28] It is in this Season Four finale that Willow's unease about her social positionality is most transparent. One of Willow's primary fears within the dream state is that someone (Buffy in this case) will strip away her fashionable new college persona and reveal the Willow of the first episode, the character marked by, as Cordelia says, "the softer side of Sears" ("Welcome to the Hellmouth," 1001). It is also within this episode that viewers see Willow, for a third time in the series, forced to perform in front of an audience without knowing her lines or having the appropriate skill or talent to perform as expected.[16] Perhaps even more telling, however, is the attack on Willow by the first Slayer. As Battis points out, Giles and Xander are attacked in blatantly symbolic ways: Giles is scalped, drawing attention to the importance of his intellect, as well as his role as mind in "Primeval" (4021); Xander has his heart removed, an act that also aligns with his role in "Primeval." Yet Willow, as the "spirit" in the symbolic conjoining spell used to defeat Adam, has no specific "part" to be removed by the first Slayer. Instead, she is transformed wholly: "Her skin becomes yellowish, almost reptilian, and her eyes change" (Battis 35). Whereas viewers and scholars might have been tempted to position Willow as the intellect or mind, we cannot, as Giles already occupies that position. Instead, Willow is spirit, or *spiritus*: breath. There is nothing tangible for the first Slayer to remove; instead she must simply, and violently, take the breath from Willow's body. This action causes Willow's full-body transformation; as the air is sucked out of her, she begins to shrivel, ruck, and collapse inward. As breath, Willow is marked as integral, but symbolically immaterial.

[29] When Willow "becomes" the magicks in Season Six, viewers again see evidence of her identity anxiety. By this point, Willow's identify is so clearly fractured that she begins to talk of herself in the third person, drawing attention not only to the split between evil Willow and "regular"

Willow, but also to her conflicting attempts to understand her own identity.[17] When Buffy tries to remind Willow of who she is, evil Willow quips, "Let me tell you something about Willow. She's a loser. And she always has been. People picked on Willow in junior high school, high school, up until college . . . with her stupid mousy ways. And now Willow's a junkie" ("Two to Go," 6021). Her pronouns then begin to shift from third person back to first person when she remembers Tara, saying "The only thing Willow was ever good for, the only thing I had going for me, were the moments—just moments—when Tara would look at me and I was wonderful" ("Two to Go," 6021). Here Willow vacillates between regular Willow and evil Willow, between computer geek and junkie, remembering only later the space in which she is differently positioned, not only as Tara's lover, but also as powerful witch, as accepted college student, and as a beloved part of the Scooby Gang. Willow doesn't really know who she is, aside from a "loser," especially without Tara.

[30] Even after Willow has begun to "recover," her identity remains fractured, as evidenced by the fact that when Giles asks her if she wants to be punished for attempting to destroy the world she simply replies, "I want to be Willow" ("Lessons," 7001). But after taking a human life (a markedly unWillow-like thing to do) and being removed from her surrogate family, she seems uncertain of who Willow—who she—is. She *is* still Willow, as Giles points out, but she doesn't feel connected to that name or to the identity or identities that have been constructed around that name. She seems to want to return, if nothing else, to her position as levelheaded and trustworthy friend. At this point, Willow would likely even return to the Willow of the first episode, mousy ways and all, if such a thing were possible. By the time we reach Willow's transformation into Warren in "The Killer in Me" (7013), however, Willow has finally started to regain a sense of herself, or perhaps even construct a new version of her identity out of the disparate parts. She is again the computer pro, but no longer the geek as she combines her intellect with a greater level of fashion consciousness. She regains her status as the levelheaded and trustworthy friend, but is also a recovering addict.[18] Still, for the most part, Willow seems to be more comfortably Willow. Why, then, the sudden and drastic shift in identity?

[31] One explanation is that Willow's sense of identity, even at this late point in the series, isn't as stable as it might appear. If she is, in fact, the character who most struggles with a sense of self, then she might be the one most susceptible to such an identity shift. Another explanation, however, is that this isn't really a shift in identity. She isn't *really* becoming Warren—or, perhaps more to the point, she isn't really *becoming* Warren. This is, after all, just a glamour spell and therefore these changes should be primarily cosmetic. Whereas at some point within the series both Amy and Buffy were turned into rats, Willow simply looks like Warren . . . at least at first.

[32] To help reverse the spell, Willow and Kennedy seek out Willow's old college Wicca group. There they find a supposedly reformed Amy who tells Willow that the group will try to help her break the glamour spell. When their attempt fails, Willow lashes out *as Warren*, calling Amy a "dumb bitch," and actually slapping her ("The Killer in Me," 7013). Horrified, Willow insists that it was Warren, not she, who slapped Amy. Upset that she's "turning into him," Willow runs out of the room. Soon thereafter, viewers discover that it was Amy who cast the glamour—actually a form of punishment hex—on Willow. Amy also reveals that she didn't specify the form that the hex would take; Willow's subconscious mind came up with the figure of Warren. Willow shouldn't be morphing into Warren either; that's not part of the spell.

[33] But Willow *is* morphing into Warren, to the point that she begins to reenact Tara's murder, waving a handgun at Kennedy (who Amy has magically transported back to Buffy's yard) and yelling, word for word, what Warren yelled at Buffy ("Think you can just do that to me?! That I'd let you get away with it?!").[19] Kennedy tries to talk Willow down, but Willow/Warren exclaims,

"You were there, bitch. You saw it. I killed her" ("The Killer in Me," 7013). Kennedy picks up on this linguistic slip. "You mean *him*," she corrects, imagining Willow is referring to the night she killed Warren. There's slippage here not only in Willow's pronoun usage, but also in her identity and identification. She is becoming Warren, and yet is still Willow. She uses Warren's language ("bitch,") and laments that "I killed her," which can be taken to mean that Warren killed Tara, but this phrase also references Willow's own belief that in kissing Kennedy she let Tara be dead. This is the reason the glamour spell took the form of Warren: not because Willow feels guilty about killing *him* (although she does), but because Willow feels as though she participated in the killing of Tara by forgetting about her, if only momentarily.

[34] This episode of *Buffy* exemplifies the idea of rhetorical magic in a number of ways. First, Amy need only speak the spell in order to transform Willow, but Willow's unspoken pain completes the glamour and makes her appear different from what she is. She's not Tara's killer, but she *feels* like Tara's killer; she feels like Warren, so she becomes Warren in order to symbolically work through this unspoken grief and guilt. The glamour takes the (symbolic) place of the language, the grammar, that Willow doesn't yet have. Furthermore, the glamour itself functions as a symbol, a key feature of rhetorical practices. The glamour transforms Willow physically, but also allows (or forces) her to confront her perceived role in Tara's death. This recognition also begins to transform Willow's image of her future, now without Tara, and to allow her to move toward that image. The symbol of Warren, then, functions to persuade Willow to change her social and personal position. She transitions from Tara's killer (emotionally and symbolically), to a grieving partner, to someone who, while still grieving, might be able to move on with her romantic life. This is also another place where grammar and glamour intersect. Willow uses the symbol of Warren to come to terms with her own guilt, illustrating the magic of the rhetorical symbol to reveal hidden meanings, to change attitudes, and to bring two people (Willow and Warren) together, if only momentarily. This is a clear example of the power of the symbol—of rhetorical magic.

[35] This moment serves to illustrate not only identity, as many scholars have noted, but also identificatory practices, a crucial aspect of rhetorical theory. In contemporary rhetorical theory, identification is often thought of in terms of similarity, or what Kenneth Burke calls consubstantiality. Of identification, Burke has famously said that you persuade someone "only insofar as you can talk his language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, idea, *identifying* your ways with his" (55, emphasis in original). The connection between consubstantiality and Willow in this episode is apparent. Willow's transformation into Warren as a result of the glamour is a stark visual representation of Burkean identificatory practices, or identification through commonality. Willow's subconscious mind chooses Warren as the form of the glamour and viewers are to understand it is because Willow, in some way, identifies with Warren.

[36] On the surface, Willow and Warren have little in common. Gender, speech patterns, goals, personalities, mannerisms, and tendencies toward violence—all of these mark general differences between the two characters. A power-hungry misogynistic murderer, Warren seems remarkably at odds with the often meek, eager-to-please, helpful "sidekick" Willow. Yet these two characters do, in fact, have a number of things in common. Both Willow and Warren show, to varying degrees, a proficiency in magic. Both are technologically savvy. Both have spent parts of their adult lives working to overcome the "geek" stigma from high school. And both, therefore, struggle with issues of identity. But until episode thirteen of Season Seven, Willow shows no outward signs that she identifies with Warren.

[37] Yet Willow obviously *does* identify with Warren, even though she has had to repress this identification. Recognizing any commonality with her girlfriend's killer is too distasteful and damaging for Willow to voice aloud, or even consciously acknowledge, but is nonetheless finally

brought to the surface by way of Amy's glamour spell. As Willow's subconscious mind draws on her identification with Warren to complete the punishment hex, viewers see the disturbing results of the ultimate form of Burkean identification.

[38] In this instance, Willow so completely identifies with Warren that she (nearly) becomes him. Based on her repressed belief that by forgetting about Tara for a moment she has participated in Tara's death, Willow recognizes what she sees as a common factor between Warren and herself. "I killed her," she says, and when Kennedy corrects the gendered pronoun slip, Willow tries to pass this sentence off on Warren, insisting that it was Warren speaking ("The Killer in Me," 7013). In some ways, it is Warren speaking. He did, after all, kill Tara. And at this point in the episode, Willow not only looks like Warren, but has begun to talk like Warren, walk like Warren, and act like Warren. So, to an extent, it *is* Warren speaking.

[39] Except that it isn't. Not really. Instead it is Willow finally revealing the guilt she feels based on what she believes to be her (partial) responsibility for Tara's death. Like Warren, she participated in the killing of Tara. She "let her be dead" ("The Killer in Me," 7013). While perhaps only symbolic, for Willow, kissing Kennedy is akin to Tara's literal murder. In this moment, she identifies with Warren so completely, sees their similarities so clearly, that, in true Burkean form, Willow can talk Warren's "language by speech, gesture, tonality, order, image, attitude, [and] idea," thereby "*identifying* [her] ways with his" (Burke 55, emphasis in original). In fact, by focusing solely on what (she believes) she and Warren have in common, Willow engages in the process of Burkean identification to such an extent that she begins to lose herself in/to Warren. The distinction between the two of them becomes so blurred that Willow exclaims, frightened, "Kennedy, I can't hold on" ("The Killer in Me," 7013). This conflation of Willow and Warren illustrates one of the critiques of Burkean identification via consubstantiality: that to identify solely across commonalities can serve to elide or even erase differences.

[40] While understanding the importance of identification on the basis of common ground, rhetorical theorist Krista Ratcliffe worries that such a limited notion of identification can serve to erase difference. More specifically, Ratcliffe worries that "Burke's identification demands that differences be bridged" (53). While bridging differences may seem like—and might sometimes actually be—a positive step, Ratcliffe explains that "the danger of such a move is that differences and their possibilities, when bridged, may be displaced and mystified" (53). In other words, when trying to find only what one might have in common with another (or an Other), one might ignore or silence differences. Both viewers and scholars witness the potential problems with Burkean identification in the Willow/Warren transformation.

[41] In Willow's moment of identification with Warren, she so privileges their common ground that it causes her to erase the differences between the two of them (both figuratively and literally). Such a move in turn causes Willow to be nearly subsumed by the Other—in this case, the figure of Warren. One must remember, too, that this is not *actually* Warren (or even the character of Warren). Warren is dead. Instead, it is merely the figure of Warren, a sort of Warren signifier, that Willow is both identifying and identifying with. In doing so, in constructing an Other based solely on commonality, Willow misrepresents that Other and even misrepresents herself. When she ignores the distinctions between them, Willow reduces both herself and Warren to a singular act: Tara's murder. Willow then fails to recognize the complexities surrounding the actual killing of Tara as well as what she sees as her own symbolic killing of Tara. She also refuses to acknowledge the many important ways in which she and Warren differ.

[42] This Willow/Warren collapse visually illustrates Ratcliffe's concern that traditional notions of identification via consubstantiality can serve to ignore or erase differences. In response,

Ratcliffe proposes her own theory of identification in which one attempts to locate "identifications across *commonalities* and *differences*" (Ratcliffe 26, emphasis in original). Identifying across difference proves tricky, however. In fact, even Diana Fuss's discussion of disidentification relies, in part, on commonality. Fuss explains that disidentification is an identification that is "disavowed," not necessarily refused (qtd. in Ratcliffe 62). Because identifying agents can only construct or recognize differences based on how they diverge from known (or understood) commonalities, to construct any version of the Other one must do so first on the basis of commonalities, on what is known or believed to be known. One must therefore *identify* with the Other in order to choose to distance oneself from that Other. In this way, both identification and disidentification are linked to commonality.[20] Indeed, it is difficult to imagine another means by which to identify.[21]

[43] Kennedy, however, represents the check to Burkean identification that Ratcliffe advocates. After a brief moment of shock and confusion at the transformation, Kennedy consistently refers to Willow as Willow, even when she looks, acts, and talks like Warren. Even though Kennedy can't technically *see* Willow, Kennedy knows that she is there.[22] And it is Kennedy who reminds Willow that she hasn't done anything wrong, that she and Warren are not the same person, and that "this is just magic" ("The Killer in Me," 7013). In other words, Willow is *not* Warren. Willow never was Warren. Willow herself isn't so sure, asking even after the dissolution of the glamour, "It's me? I'm back?" But, of course, Willow never went anywhere. Willow was always Willow; she just *felt* like Warren and, because this is magic, she symbolically took his form, highlighting what she perceived to be the similarities between the two of them.[23] But, as both Ratcliffe and Kennedy understand, the differences matter. Why? Because if identificatory practices proceed only along the lines of commonality, then in order to identify with (an)Other, identifying subjects must create the object of identification in the subject's own image, forming incomplete figures based on imagined commonalities. In doing so, the identificatory act becomes more about the subject than it is about those with whom the subject is attempting to identify. In this way, identification via consubstantiality erases unique qualities in favor of similarities—or even perceived similarities. It erases the differences.

[44] Critics might argue that such a move can be enlightening, perhaps even liberatory. It is, after all, Willow who is subsumed into Warren, into the Other. In this configuration, the identifying subject must learn something about the Other. Willow has to, as the saying goes, walk a mile in Warren's shoes—or, in a moment of gruesome and poetic justice, in his very skin. Wouldn't this sort of total identification allow for better awareness of others and therefore of differences? Unfortunately, no. Again, because identification across commonality is primarily about the identifying subject, that subject does not actually have to learn about the identificatory object; the subject need only create his or her own limited image of that object. In "The Killer in Me" (7013), for example, viewers do not get the sense that Willow better understands Warren as a result of her time "as" him. She does not leave this encounter with a new knowledge of his motivations, history, or perspectives.[24] Instead, Willow's subconscious mind constructs an image of Warren based on what *she perceives* to be the similarities between them in order to give some sort of symbolic voice to the pain and guilt that *she* feels. This isn't really about Warren at all.[25]

[45] And, of course, this transformation isn't real. It's not real because Willow's transformation is symbolic, a result of a glamour hex. It's only magic, as Kennedy reminds her. But it's also not real in the sense that it's a television show, one based in large part on magic and the supernatural. The laws of physics, and often of grammar, do not necessarily apply in the Buffyverse. So while this episode provides ways for viewers to recognize the lost connections between glamour and grammar and between rhetoric and magic, when we reach the end of the

episode and leave Sunnydale, many of these possibilities seem to dissipate. The rhetorical magic that allows a glamour to speak for grammar, and allows Burkean identification to become not just metaphor or strategy, but literal transformation, no longer seems to exist.

[46] Except that it does.

[47] The beauty of a show such as *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is that the metaphor becomes, and therefore illustrates, reality. Famously, in the world of *Buffy*, high school not only feels like hell, it is hell (or at least sits on the mouth of it). Feel invisible for long enough—as so many high school students do—and you actually become invisible. As Jane Espenson, former writer and co-executive producer of *Buffy* explains, in *Buffy*, "the problems and emotions of our young characters are physicalized every week as demons and such" (vii).[26] Magic (and the supernatural) allows a show like *Buffy* to highlight in grand hyperbole the emotions that so many viewers have felt while still retaining what we might call the truth of those emotions. And so it is with rhetorical magic. In *Buffy*, rhetorical magic allows words and symbols to make literal changes to the world—sometimes to objects that, as Burke says, do not normally respond to language or symbol use, and sometimes to subjects, such as Willow, who do. Rhetorical magic (almost) turns Willow into Warren because Willow identifies with Warren: the symbol (nearly) becomes reality.

[48] And as in *Buffy*, so in life. Because when we're talking about language—rhetoric—we're talking about power.[27] Like magic, rhetoric has the power to change realities, both within the figurative world of television and in the real world outside of those fictional spaces. These particular episodes of *Buffy* remind viewers that language has the power to (re)structure or even Be-Speak identities, as in the case of Dawn; to help form identifications, as in the case of Willow and Tara; but also to erase important differences in people, as we see when Willow nearly transforms into Warren. It *is* about power. It's about the power of language to transform, and perhaps even to save, the world. And those are some seriously powerful magicks.

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## Notes

[1] This connection also links the term specifically to Willow and Giles' magic books, which Tanya Krzywinska names as grimoires (192).

[2] Covino's book *Magic, Rhetoric, and Literacy: An Eccentric History of the Composing Imagination* provides a fascinating history of this overlap.

[3] The use of the word "pointy," for example, to mean "meaningful, purposeful" (Adams 203).

[4] As viewers know, Dawn's position within Buffy's world is complicated. As the key, Dawn is an energy matrix sent to the Slayer "in the form of a sister" ("Blood Ties," 5013). Dawn, and everyone around her, has been given false memories, making them all believe that she has always been there. But of course she hasn't always been there; she simply appears at the end of "Buffy vs. Dracula" (5001). Faith's coded reference to the pending arrival of "little sis" as Buffy and Faith

make the bed in Faith's coma dream might foreshadow the appearance of Dawn, but that brief aside has no context until Dawn appears later in the series ("This Year's Girl," 4015).

[5] After cutting her arms to see if she'll bleed, Dawn asks, "Am I real? Am I anything?" ("Blood Ties," 5013). Later in the same episode she tells Joyce, "I'm not sick; *I'm not anything*" (emphasis added).

[6] Throughout the article, I use both "magic" and "magicks." I use "magic" to refer to larger cultural ideas of magic and magical powers; I use "magicks" as Willow tends to—to refer to the system of magic of which she becomes a part. Admittedly, however, the distinction between the two terms isn't always so clear. Furthermore, I rely on (and thank) the *Buffyverse Dialogue Database* for the spelling of magicks.

[7] See Battis for a more detailed description of how Willow's use of magic contributes to her position in, and simultaneous alienation from, the Scooby Gang.

[8] At least at this point in the series. Willow as magical goddess in the series finale is arguably more powerful than evil Willow.

[9] Except drywalling (as Xander jokes), and, according to Dawn in Season Seven, seeing. For an interesting discussion of sight and perception as Xander's superpower, see Chapter Two of Battis' *Blood Relations*.

[10] This reading is bolstered by the title of the scene on the dvd: "Power of Love."

[11] As opposed to his physical touch, for example. While Xander does hold Willow in his arms, this physical contact is not what initiates the transformation in Willow (although it might help to complete that transformation—as much as one can call her transformation "complete" in this moment).

[12] While Xander insists that he's not joking, his reference to Willow as "black-eyed girl," his note that he could drywall her "into the next century," and his reference to the cartoon move of walking her off a cliff and handing her an anvil certainly seem meant to inject some levity into this dire situation ("Grave," 6022).

[13] Battis complicates my admittedly optimistic reading of this scene when he argues that she can only "be Willow" again because Xander and Buffy have determined who Willow actually is (32). Xander, then, can only remind Willow of the identity that he has helped to construct for her.

[14] As Dawn laments in "Same Time, Same Place" (7003), Willow apparently didn't quite "finish being not evil."

[15] While I disagree that Willow is the *only* core character who struggles with identity, I do agree that Willow suffers from a fractured identity and struggles with identity confusion.

[16] See also "Nightmares" (1010)—which is actually referenced in Willow's "Restless" (4022) dream—and the delightful post-credit talent show clip from "The Puppet Show" (1009).

[17] This fracture is made very clear by her chilling remark in "Grave" that "Willow doesn't live here anymore."

[18] It's also not quite that simple, either. As Giles points out, this is not just an addiction: the magicks are still inside of her and she is responsible for that power ("Lessons," 7001).

[19] Originally spoken by Warren in "Seeing Red" (6019).

[20] It is tempting to see Willow's identification with Warren as disidentification. While Willow might *ultimately* disidentify with Warren, in this moment she has done more than briefly identify with him in order to disidentify (to say "I'm not like him"); instead, Willow sees solely the commonalities between herself and Warren, the common ground that she and Warren share. In this moment, she is unable to see or even create the differences between the two of them in order to complete the process of disidentification.

[21] Ratcliffe hopes that her theory of rhetorical listening can provide another way toward identification, especially across difference, but even in her own description this new path is rather murky. For more information on listening rhetorically, see Ratcliffe's *Rhetorical Listening: Identification, Gender, Whiteness*.

[22] Interestingly, Amy also knows that it's Willow when she first encounters her (as Warren) at the Wicca group. She says that she can "tell" because she "know[s] her" ("The Killer in Me," 7013). It's possible to attribute this to the fact that Amy cast the spell on Willow, but Amy didn't know what form the spell would take. In other words, she wasn't expecting to see Warren and would not immediately assume that it was really Willow. Amy, though, is probably less surprised to encounter Willow in a different form, and therefore more likely to believe that "Warren" is actually Willow. Kennedy, on the other hand, has never known Warren and therefore, after brief initial doubt, accepts Willow/Warren as Willow.

[23] Despite the important critiques of Willow's identity, and her own anxiety over that identity, readers can at least agree that viewers of the show and the characters within it can (usually) tell the difference between Willow and Warren.

[24] Readers might also note the lack of liberatory power associated with a female character being subsumed into a (often predatory) male character, but that's another topic for another time.

[25] I don't mean to position Warren as the victim in this exchange. The character of Warren is wildly unsympathetic and his violent actions are in no way justifiable. I am only trying to illustrate that in identifying across what the subject (Willow) constructs as commonalities, the other with whom the subject attempts to identify (Warren) becomes only an object constructed by that identifying subject (even when that object is a misogynistic murderer).

[26] Interestingly, Espenson reveals that before coming to the *Buffy* staff, she studied metaphor at U.C. Berkeley (vii).

[27] And as viewers learn from the first episode of the final season, it's always about power ("Lessons," 7001).