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„We haven’t been properly introduced“

Fan Representation in *“Buffy the Vampire Slayer”*

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Please allow me to introduce myself...

Pleased to meet you

Hope your guess my name

But what's puzzling you

Is the nature of my game

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PREFACE

This thesis dealt with the phenomenon of fandom from a new perspective. Instead of focusing in the fan community and their views, the work roots in the product itself, zeroing on one of the more successful TV shows of the last 15 years: *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (henceforth *BtVS*). The herewith presented hypothesis states that the product *BtVS*, addresses the fan community both, by making use of fan related strategies and by presenting a specific image of the fandom in general. As we will see in Chapter 3, in its interaction with the chosen product the fandom community employs different strategies, ranging from almost fully passive (merely watching the TV show regularly) to complex and highly active (such as the hosting of websites and the writing of fanfiction). This thesis explores the use of fanfiction techniques in the show (Chapter 6) as well as the representation of the "fan" as a given entity (Chapter 7).

The classical ethnographic research envisions an homogeneous community, in which every aspect of everyday life is part of the cultural system of the community. This model does not wholly apply, whether to modern communities, nor in any case to fan and virtual communities. In this kind of research the researcher does not exclusively live with the members of the culture for extended periods of time, which lead some academics to negate the ethnographic value of fandom studies. The fact that they here overlook is that fans, even still when forming a community, do have a life of their own, with families to care of, works to do and places to go. They do not expend their lives being "fans" 24/7. The fan "part" of their lives takes place into the fandom community. The researcher forms part of this community and lives in within for "extended periods of time", fulfilling thus the premises for ethnographic research.

The fans are linked to another through their fandom. They show common interest and tastes, even if their opinions are situated along a wide range. Some of them are members of multiple fan communities, in which they perform in different ways, according to taste, availability and conveniences.

The method of research for this thesis followed two paths. On the one side a direct approach to the product (the show) was carried out by screening previously selected episodes. The large corpus of the show, comprising seven seasons with a total of 144 episodes was narrowed down to the last two seasons, each with 22 episodes. These 44 episodes were precisely selected for their closed interaction with the phenomenon of fandom. Their placement into the complete series story arc, allows a self-contained research, independently from the previous five seasons of the story. The major target during this part of research has been the keeping of an objective point of view, when dealing with the plots. In order to be successful this part of the research has been conducted independently from any fan interaction.

On the other side, the research stood into the aims of *BtVS* fandom. Firstly an "open intentions" research was attempted, where the fans were informed on the objectives of this thesis and asked to share their insights. Unfortunately the fan reaction was sparsely, if not openly negative, confirming Hills views on "lurking"

"[...] lurkers may be discursively constructed and fantasized as parasitic, as invasive, as lacking motivation or the ability to engage, or they may be simultaneously welcomed as a form of friendly readership." (Hills, 2002:173)

"The ethnographic 'lurker' is itself an interpellated position which hinges on reproducing the net as neo-televisual and /or literally textual, and therefore as familiar and controllable within a generationally specific set of practices. 'Cyberspace ethnography', then becomes a media-hybridised form in which the 'viewer' carries out a textual analysis not of the isolated originated media text, but rather of the constructed 'text' of cult fandom which nevertheless unfolds with as much scheduled regularity and predictability as its point of origin/attachment." (ib., 2002:176)

In fact only the "academic fans" responded most avidly to this "open intentions" approach, among others Rhonda V. Wilcox, David Lavery and Joss Whedon were most generous with their comments and further help and should be acknowledged here for their kind support. Nevertheless all

their support didn't solve the problem posed by the fact that the "non-academic fans" were not responding to this approach, even if this fact prove my previous hypothesis that "academic fans" and "non-academic fans" are not one and the same, and that both groups react in very different manner to surveys. From this point forward and to avoid complexity and unnecessary extra qualification of the fans, we will refer to "fan" or "fandom" and use the prefix "aca-" only where an explicit reference to academia is strongly needed.

The problem of reaching the fans was surprisingly easy to by-pass in the end requiring only the full immersion in the fandom. In other words, the researcher (in this case myself) need only to blend into the fandom by becoming part of it. In the practice this means to look into forums, to open accounts and to actively participate into discussions, without never losing a word about "writing a thesis" or "having academic interest" in any specific issue. I made the mistake once, and paid the price immediately, gaining in the process a new insight: fans love to discuss their fandom among themselves but despise stalkers, and it is as such, as stalkers, as they see any outside interest in their fandom. The first rule of fandom is "either you're in or you're out". Observing the rule and "staying in" the further research was amazing fast-paced, some themes were already on the run in the forums, others could easily be approached by initiating new threads. This method has a solely drawback: after a while the objectivity of the researcher begins to blur in favor of a more biased fan point of view. If objectivity is to be preserve, which I wished to at all costs, the research must be cancelled. After months of research in the forums such a break comes not easily, in order to maintain some "fandom integrity" my groups were informed that "due to a new job obligation, I would be outside without being able to checking my account regularly", they all surprised me one more by wishing me all the best and giving me most accurate (always Buffy related) quotations for the time being.

After some reflection time, the insights gained during the fandom research were checked among the already hypothesized premises and flew into this thesis.

A specific notation system is used throughout the thesis. In order to avoid misunderstandings the acronym *BtVS* (cf. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*) will be used when addressing the series, while the term "Buffy" is reserved for the character *Buffy Summers*. This notation will be followed through this paper with the sole exception of quotations from another works. Each namely mentioned episode is write out with its full title *and* a numbered code in brackets in the form [x0yy], where "x" designates the season number, "yy" the episode number within the season, and "zero" functions as "spacing" between season and episode denomination, i.e.

Lies my Parents told me [7017]

refers to the 17th episode of the seventh season, which bears the title "*Lies my Parents told me*". This system is consequent with the one used by the "*Whedon Studies Association*", the institution dedicated to the study of Joss Whedon's work, particularly the series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, *Angel*, *Firefly* and *Dollhouse*.

Finally a clarification on the spelling using in this work: this thesis is consistently written in American English in concordance to the theme, nevertheless author quotations show the original author spelling, a fact that accounts for some cases of mixed spelling throughout the text.

PART I - THEORETICAL REVIEW

1. TV PRODUCTION & AUDIENCE

TV production and audience have gone hand in hand from the very beginning of the media. In the first days of TV, the programming followed a governmental agenda to "educate and entertain". The primary purpose of TV has always been entertainment, without which the "education goal" could not been achieved. Networks have thus always been interested in audiences' tastes, what "works" and what "does not" in order to package the contents in an adequate entertainment wrap to ensure their spreading through the audience. The role of advertising is paramount, as advertising pays for a great portion of the programming cost. Advertising companies are responsible for the big part of the audience studies in the last fifty years. These studies aimed to find a correlation between viewers and possible buyers to being able to find the best placement for the advertised products into the programming. The process of correlating audiences to certain products shifted from a passive to an active one by the end of the 1980s. If formerly the advertising companies adapted their products to the audience, placing their commercials at the airing time of the favorite programs of the potential buyers, by the beginning of the 1990s the advertising companies take an active role in locating programs that attracted the interested buyers in their advertising slots, in Marshall McLuhan words "*if the TV tubes fires the right ammunition at the right people it is good.*" (1995:11). By the end of the 1990s advertisers and industry were working together in designing the television programming. In 1998 a corporation trust of over 40 major advertisers and controlling over 30% of all US advertising - led by Procter & Gamble - founded the *Family Friendly Programming Forum (FFPF)*. "*to encourage the creation of series that parents would enjoy viewing together with a child*". The trust worked very closely with the *Parents Television Council (PTC)*, an organization "*highly concerned*" with the television consumption of

children, that was itself affiliated to the nationwide *PTA* (Parents and Teachers Association). The concept of the *FFPF* was to package moral indoctrination into television entertainment. The 1995 new established *WB* Network affiliated itself with the *FFPF* and implemented the initiative. The first of such engineered programs was *7th Heaven* a family series revolving about a pastor, his wife and their seven children, famous for their weekly “very special” episodes on moral guidelines, from Aids and Drug Consumption, to Teenage Pregnancy and Religion. *7th Heaven* became the flagship of *WB*. Ironically the second place regarding viewers-rate belonged to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, a series which did not endorsed the *FFPF* directives. As programs deemed offensive by both *FFPF* and *PTC* were target for cancellation, *BtVS* took its share of the blame. After being accused repeatedly of “*glorifying violence*”, the critique reached its peak on April 20th, 1999 as *WB* aired the episode *The Zeppo* [3013] on the night of the Columbine High School Massacre. *BtVS* was irremediably blamed as a series that incited their young viewers to the use of violence in High School: the episode relates how four (zombie) teenagers, come back from the grave to blow up the High School with a bomb, and how the somehow shy and coward Xander saves the day by avoiding a catastrophe. The wisdom behind the decision to air this episode on this very date is questionable, even more so as the episode was a rerun. Anyway the blame was not directed to the network, but to the series. The campaign went on, delaying the airing of two more episodes *Earshot* [3018] and *Graduation Day, Part 2* [3022]. As this last was the second part of the season finale, its cancellation drove the fans to the use of stream videos from Canada, where the series had aired regularly. From there on *BtVS* became a problem for the *FFPF/PTC*; on one side it was labeled as a series that emphasized violence by the *PTC*, which even issued a hearing to cancel the program (this hearing was ultimately rejected in a voting 5-0, stating that the show did not violated indecency rules), on the other side *BtVS* audience were a broad consumer market for the products advertised by the *FFPF*. The existence of a gap between the *PTC* targeted tween-audience (aged 11 to 24) and the actual *BtVS* audience of only 26% of the viewers belonging to this

group became clear. The problem seemed to be that the *PTC* had not a real knowledge what their children were seeing. This gap shows that audience is a virtual term without factual correlation in the day-to-day of watching television

"there is no such a thing as 'the television audience', defined as an empirically accessible object, for there cannot be meaningful categories beyond its boundaries - what on earth is 'not the television audience'?"
"Categories focus our thinking on similarities: people watching television are best modeled according to a multitude of differences." (Fiske 1996a:337)

According to Jenkins & Hartley (1978:53) mass media fulfils the needs of the "audience" in at least five different fields. First in the "cognitive" level, fulfils the need for information, knowledge and understanding. On a second level addresses the "affective" needs, such as emotional and aesthetic experiences. Thirdly takes care of the human "personal integrative" needs of self-confidence, stability, status and reassurance. At a fourth level functions as "social integrative" instrument that allows and implements contacts with other persons. Finally offers "tension-release" providing escape and diversion.

Even if we agree with Jenkins (1996a) stating that audience as such do not exist, we must accept the existence of a preconceived *targeted audience* on the networks' side. In the 1990s most American networks target a broader audience in order to duplicate the time preteens, teens and younger adults consumed television. The new target group was labeled as "tweens" and comprised audiences aged 11 to 24. Up to the moment the strategy had been to "narrowcast" the product in order to fulfill the need for a very tightly chosen audience, with the downside of losing potential views, who did not meet the narrowed objectives. The new strategy consisted of building coalition audiences, by offering multifaceted products that could attract consumers with wide dispersed tastes

"The building of coalition audiences does not require doing away with

narrowcasting strategies, but rather reconfiguring such an approach to produce the results generated by broadcasting. For example, instead of scrapping the traditional broadcasting goal of reaching a mass audience, the WB attempted to create a large coalition audience out of several smaller population segments, such as pre-teens and young adults. At the same time the WB created this coalition by narrowcasting not to individuals who share demographic traits, but to those with a similar cultural sensibility: youthfulness" (Kearny, 2007:20)

Audience responds to a given product according to a given "meaning system", which can be "dominant, subordinate or radical",

since the three codes are available to all viewers at the moment of meaning, then the same message can be decoding according to different codes, corresponding to the social experience of the decoder, and yet remain meaningful for all groups" (Fiske & Hartley, 2003:81)

We must bear in mind that a

"code is a rule-governed system of signs, whose rules and conventions are shared amongst members of a culture, and which is used to generate and circulate meanings in and for that culture." [...] "Codes are links between producers, text, and audiences." (Fiske 1996b:134)

that allow us to make sense of reality. Coalition audiences decode the very same product according to different systems. One product can thus attract a numerous audience and increment the quote, the audience becomes larger, as the product appeals to more viewers. Audience as such remains a passive entity, the active entity, the fan, do not necessary grows in number automatically due to the fact of issuing a product for a coalition audience. More often than not the response of the fan community to a product depends on narrow parameters that target only a fraction of the audience, which equals a normal narrowcast audience. This means that as the viewers - the passive consumers of products aimed to coalition audiences - increase, the fans contrarily do not. The distinction between audience and fandom should be present at all times when referring to this research. While "fan" representation is

the object of analysis, audience representation is irrelevant for the purpose of this thesis. BtVS audience is formed, according to the network ideals, by all middle-class 11 to 24-year-old viewers, preferably female. The fans of the show belong mostly to an older segment (18 to 40-some-years), most of them with academic background, and – as the contributions to the “Official *BtVS* Online Journal *Slayage*” show – are in great percentage males.

2. FANS & FANDOM

According to the Oxford Dictionary the term “fan” originated

“in US in the late 19th century as an abbreviation of “fanatic”, which appeared in “mid 16th century as an adjective and derived from French ‘fanatique’ [or] Latin ‘fanaticus’ in the sense of ‘of a temple, inspired by a god’, from ‘fanum’ [temple]. The adjective originally described behavior that might result from possession by a god or demon, hence the earliest sense of the noun ‘a religious maniac’” (Oxford Dictionary, 2002)

Peterson offers a more media oriented definition

*“consumers who build social affiliations around media text are fans.”
(Peterson 2003:151)*

These consumers should be perceived as both independent and critical thinkers, dealing with a given product

“fans are by no means under the control of producers. Fan activity may be intensive and sympathetic, but it is not necessarily marked by uncritical acceptance of media text. On the contrary, fans are more likely to be able to discuss their own pleasures in sophisticated and often critical ways.” (ib. 152)

*“[fandom is] a collective strategy, a communal effort to form interpretive communities that in their subcultural cohexion evaded the preferred and intended meaning of the ‘power block’ represented by popular culture.”
(Gray 2007:2)*

For the sake of completeness some definitions of anti-fans should also be offered:

"[antifans are those] who strongly dislike a given text or genre, considering it inane, stupid, morally bankrupt and/or aesthetic drivel".
(Gray 2003:70)

"antifandom will either involve audiencehood from afar, as the antiferan refuses to watch, or may be performed with close knowledge of the text and yet be devoid of the interpretive and diegetic pleasures that are usually assumed to be a staple of almost all media consumption." (Gray 2005:842)

the so-called "anti-fans" are often instrumental in providing not only critical views of fandom, but also insight about its functionality and workings, as both fandom and anti-fandom use the same instruments to gain a profound knowledge of the fandom they dealt with. The difference lies often in a nuance of appreciation, while fans are positively drawn by the product, anti-fans have negative views of the same, *"the two sharing significant attributes, behaviors, and performances."* (Gray 2005:855)

The epitome of "fans" as fanatic followers of fictional topics are the *Trekkies*, the followers of the science fiction series *Star Trek*, the largest fan community in the world, who also created the first media fanzine, *Spockmania* (September 1967). *Trekkies* became famous twofold: on one hand for his visible presence in public life, dressing like characters of the series and provoking William Shatner's (ill-)famous saying *"get a life"* in a room full of fans during a Saturday Night Show in 1986. On the other hand Trekkies are recognized as the mother-of-all fandoms, the ones who even succeeded in reinstalling "their" series in television after their original cancellation in 1970, just due to their perseverance and pressure campaign against the network. In fact the reruns of the show achieved the necessary audience to release five subsequent series including an animated series for kids and eleven motion pictures.

From the late 1950s on television audiences have been studied, first in

order to accordingly shape the programming, later - with the arriving and exploding of advertising - to help to achieve high sale revenues. In the 1980s some works about concrete shows were issued. However, with exception of Tulloch & Alvarado (1984), who actually worked on the reception of *Doctor Who* by its fans and posterior fan production on the series, these early studies cannot still be truly considered as "fan studies" as the majority of the studies on television products used audiences "requested" to watch the shows object of the study, which have not proper interest of their own in the shows (cf. Jenkins 1992:9-10). The first and most acknowledged book on fandom is without doubt Jenkins *Textual Poachers* (1992). As Jenkins himself notes

"Textual Poachers has now been passed from generation to generation of fans, it's one of the things you read when you want to be integrated into the fan community. They say, 'You want to be a fan? Read this'. It's become a sort of 'how-to' book." (cf. Fans, Bloggers and Gamers, Jenkins, 2006:14)

Unfortunately *Textual Poachers* is also the most misreading (or not read at all, even if repeatedly quoted) book on fandom. The title, chosen by Jenkins for its provocative innuendo, mislead his "non-readers" to the idea that *Textual Poachers* is a work against the practice of fanfiction, when it is indeed the first book on fandom with an insight point of view, as Jenkins later stated in his own words:

"Hello. My name is Henry. I am a fan" (cf. Jenkins 2006:1).

Jenkin's claim to consider the fans as "active designers and transformers of content" has been broadly ignored by authors and TV-creators, who insist on their intellectual property on their copyrighted products, failing to see that fans in fact "manipulate [these products] and integrate them with their own resources, knowledge, backgrounds and identities to construct something new" (Thomas 2007a:138).

The study of fandom splits into two disciplines: psychology and cultural studies. The former persist on the view of fandom as some kind of

medical condition, while the later underlines the cultural nature of the field and the creativity of their members "[...] *there is very little literature that explores fandom as normal, everyday cultural or social phenomenon. Instead the fan is characterized as (at least potentially) and obsessed loner, suffering from a disease of isolation, or a frenzied crowd member, suffering from a disease of contagion*" (Jensen 2002:345) in the contrary "*the fan-as-pathology model implies that there is a thin line between 'normal' and excessive fandom, [...] the literature implies that 'normal' fans are constantly in danger of becoming 'obsessive loners' or 'frenzied crowd members'.*" (Jensen 2002: 346).

Accordingly this pathological model of fandom classifies the fans in two categories: "*the obsessed loner*" who doesn't fit in his milieu and refrains of participation in social life, thus alienating himself from the rest of the group and fleeing in a world of fantasy, and "*the frenzied crowd member*", unable to autonomous thought, who succumbs to outside persuasion and follow the "mass" in order to find his own place in society (cf. Jensen 2002: 346). Psychoanalysis targets fans as schizophrenics unable to distinguish reality from fiction, who enjoy themselves in dressing games and attract attention for prioritizing inadequately their TV-favorites, "*this depiction of fandom as a consequence of psychological or cultural dysfunction constitutes the background against which fans first attracted attention from media and cultural studies scholars in the 1980s*" (Sandvoss 2005:2).

Lately due to the widespread of the media, the existence of DVD and video-sharing internet programs, isolation seems to have less repercussion. Anyway fans "are still known" to plug out the phone (or shut out the cell) in order to sit together at a given time, to see their chosen program. TV-reruns are obligatory, even when the community owns the series in DVD. Reruns are regarded as a "holiday" that must be observed at all cost. Such images contribute to the general view of fans as outsiders, social inepts and isolated individuals. Even if fans have a great insight into the backstage information on their fandom, they are usually seen as "brain-dead people" driven by a frantically pursuit of

objects not matter how loosely connected with their subjects of worship. (cf. Jenkins, 1992).

In the last decade the web overcame social isolation, constituting a forum for fans to meet and discuss among their own. On the other hand cyber-communication has its own rules, which differ from that of face-to-face communication. In this sense fans still are situated "outside" of everyday human society. What it's been missing all along is the fact, that fans are indeed rooted in society: they have normal jobs, most of them are intellectuals (cf. Jenkins, 2006:13), their fan activity being one among many of their live tasks.

As fans are "*associated with the cultural tastes of subordinated formations of the people, particularly those disempowered by any combination of gender, age, class and race*" (Fiske 1992:30), they are continuously driven to the edge of society, which results in the perniciously remaining preconception of fan as a desexualized entity, with male fans constantly in need to affirm their sexuality. Even nowadays homosexuality is still used as a tag. The image of puerile overweight middle-thirties haunts our minds. Numerous Hollywood productions have exploited this fan-image right into this day. *Live Free or Die Hard* (2007, directed by Len Wiseman) deals with a hacker attack to the governmental database. As every system shuts down, the only hope for counterattack is a computer freak and conspiracy theorist, who nevertheless gets depicted as a overweight thirty-something, who - surrounding with fan paraphernalia! - still lives his mother basement (Fig. 1). In *Surrogates* (2009, directed by Jonathan Mostow) the world is depicted as a place where humans interact with another using android bodies that allow them to "be perfect" in each other eyes. The cliché image is explicitly shown, as one "user" is found killed in his chair (Fig. 2). The victim is an overweight middle-aged man, who lives in a world of fantasy in which he uses a female body to interact. Both movies are but the top of the iceberg in a very widely spread Hollywood practice, using the cliché of social impairment, when addressing fan phenomena.



Fig. 1. Live Free or Die Hard, 2007.

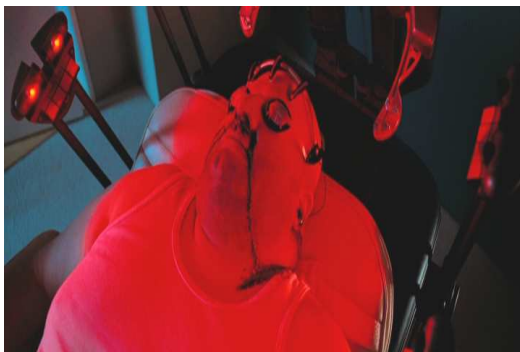


Fig. 2. Surrogates, 2009.

Of course there are some individuals (sometimes even appearing in groups) that use fandom as an outlet for their own frustration and aggression potential. The point that goes perpetually missed is that they are not frustrate and aggressive *because* they are fans, but that they are frustrated and aggressive *in spite of* being fans.

Let us translate this situation to a broader and understandable example. Each soccer fan rejoices with his team victories and suffers with the defeats, the majority of them leaves the soccer field afterwards and returns to their everyday life, which includes their fascination for soccer but is not made out it. **Some** of the fans however use the result of the match to instigate riots. They do so not **because** they are soccer fans, but **in spite of** it. Does this mean that somehow soccer is responsible for their attitude, or would we rather conclude that the attitude was inherent to the individual **before** soccer even came into frame? As we are not researching soccer but television fans, let us return to fandom.

Prejudice against fans being "the mass" roots on sociopolitical thinking, on the dichotomy of high-culture and low-culture, according to which high class interest are to be considerate as rational and the interest of the lower class are to be discarded as pathologic and obsessive (cf. Jensen 2002: 349-350). Fans of television shows are (still) being seen as illiterate, in spite of the fact that a great number of them in fact possess a high education level. According to Jenkins is necessary

"to recognize that a lot of fans carry a large amount of intellectual capital around them. They are very good critics; they are very good theorists. [...] many of them are trained academics, librarians, or teachers, many of them decided consciously not to become academics, having had some exposure to academic knowledge, and many of them are professionals in other sectors. To say that they don't have intellectual capital is a bizarre statement". (Jenkins 2006b: 18)

This implies that the only big difference between academics and fans is the former are paid to do it, the later do the work on a voluntary basis. And still in our eyes, a fan of Shakespeare is more intellectual than, for instance, a fan of Joss Whedon, even if confronted to the fact that some late 1500s Shakespeare's fan had a much more bad reputation than the aforementioned mentioned Whedon fan today. This simple Shakespeare/Whedon comparison should suffice to clarify the difference between erudite connoisseur and fan as just a matter of politics.

On the other side the very optimist position of classifying all fans as academic fans "*aca-fen*" (cf. Jenkins 2006b:13) is also biased, even by the fact that the leading academia on fandom studies Jenkins, Hill, Fiske, Wilcox et al., are themselves fans.

A more realistic approach shows that fandom is a broad phenomena that relates to the interaction of interested parties (the fans) with a given product (the show, the books, etc), within a community (the fandom) in which the interaction lives on. This is a sentient community that evolves continuously. As each other living entity, it is formed by a larger more homogenous group and some marginal occurrences among which we

encounter the pathological cases as well as the high intellectual academic fans on both sides of the scale. The arrival of *aca-fen* in the scene help to revised the image of the fan in the public view

"Poachers' described a moment when fans were marginal to the operations of our culture, ridiculed by in the media, shrouded with social stigma, pushed underground by legal threats, and often depicted as brainless and inarticulate. [...] 'Convergence Culture' describes a moment when fans are central to how culture operates." (Jenkins 2006b:1)

For the purpose of this work, it is once more necessary to address the difference between fans and audience. When confronted with a given product, i.e. the television show, the boundaries between fan and interested audience seem to blur. If the fan always form part of the audience, the opposite does not hold true: the audience becomes fan only and when, it has an active role in the further evolution of the given fandom. A group of persons who willingly set down in from of the television set weekly in order to watch a determined program, and do not engage themselves further with the product, are not a fandom, but an audience. In order to become fandom they must actively discuss, reread, and rewrite the given product. This is a notion of fandom that comes directly from the field

"some sit there each week and tap in, then come across squalling 'I am his biggest fan' and 'I wish I'd marry him' and all the pathetic wailing, then you ask 'why?'.... blank stares, big eyes, 'because he is so cool'... come on! Give a break ☹, this is not fandom, this is mental impairment!" (CHRISISALL, <http://www.fireflyfans.net/mthread.asp?b=9&t=39028> accessed 2011.05.27)

The somehow harsh above statement of CHRISISALL (referring here to the spin-off Series *Angel*, N.A.) emphasizes the active role of fandom and the deep interaction of the fans with their object of adoration.

This interaction is shown twofold: by active participation in discussion forums, conferences and conventions and by text production, "*fans*

display[ed] agency in their everyday media consumption" (cf. McKee 2005:67).

According to Jenkins (1992) fandom operate on four levels; firstly using different forms of "*reception*", linked to culture, social level, language; secondly as a specialized, institutionalized form of "*perception*", that manifest itself through newsletters, fandom meetings or conventions; thirdly with the "*creation*" of artificial worlds through fan material, and finally by "*generation*" of alternate social structures based on relationship to the fanfics. The admission in the fandom equals an admission in a new society, with results in the attraction of fandom for fringe groups.

Even if fandom is believed to be egalitarian and class-free, there is in fact a fan hierarchy based on knowledge, engagement, access to stars (& staff), leadership, event location or web mastery. Thus, members with more knowledge of the fandom, greater access to the stars & crew, living nearby location events (which allow them to participate more often) or webmasters of fandom sites get to have a higher place in the whole community, while members without the above possibilities, are regarded as non-VIPS. Nevertheless it must be point out that the fandom community revolves around both the forums and the fanfics. Some fanfic authors are most productive even if their participation in the forums is less active.

3. FAN FICTION

Text production in fandom is generic called fan fiction, fanfic, fic, or ff. Fan fiction usually generates literary texts which are known as *fanfics*, it can also generate art, such as paintings, posters, (internet) banners and screensavers, or video clips, all of them under the name of *fanart*, and finally can take in the form of songs based on the original text, these musical pieces receive the name of *filkings*.

Fanfic productivity has a semiotic component of interaction with the text.

This is an inner process that leads to development of opinion-based arguments, which are then expressed in an enunciative process of textual production, without financial purposes. Productive fans also are active audiences. Following Jenkins (1992) fan production is only relevant for the producers (the fans) themselves, not for the totality of the fandom, as the fanfic writer is bearing in mind just his own taste and likings. This assumption is not always correct, as a general rule, fanfic must be accepted, after posting, by a staff board and must comply with the stated rules within the site, directly uploaded fanfic can be removed from the site by the webmaster(s) should these rules be not followed.

"Fan fiction [...] is a cultural performance that requires a live audience; fan fiction is not merely a text, it's an event." (Hellekson & Busse 2006:239)

The relationship between writer, fanfic and fandom is a synergetic process, through the fandom the writer gets feedback on his work, this feedback is incorporated into the fanfic, the process evolving in a spiral loop.

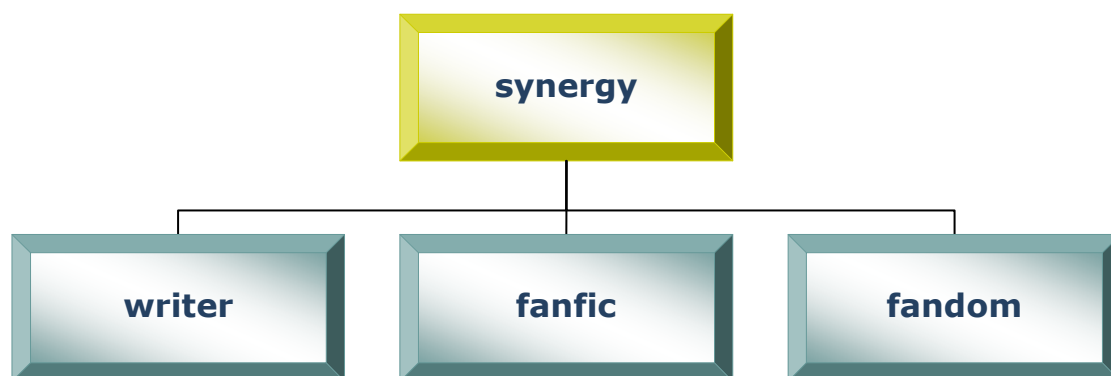


Fig. 3. Writer, fanfic and fandom influence another.

This synergy enables the expansion of the original text to include elements which are not part of the original canon. The fan produces without authorization from the original author(s) thus *"lack[ing] the authority of the official texts. [...] Lack of authority, which stems from lack of authorization, allows a freedom unavailable to an official canon*

striving for internal consistency." (Jenkins 2006a:67).

Fans produce texts to explore their chosen fandom. Here the emphasis should be put as well on the media and techniques used to approach the subjects, which bear as much importance as the narrative text in itself

"A[nother] important feature of fan fiction spaces is that language and technology are used as 'means ' rather than as 'ends'." (Black, 2008:127)

With the border between fanfic and "real" literature becoming diaphanous, some fanfic authors have also succeeded in publishing "print books" (i.e. Greg Cox, Nancy Holder, Jes Battis, Kalayna Price) and "real book authors" are producing fanfic-like texts (i.e. Jasper Fforde "Thursday Next" Series, and more recently A.E. Moorat "Queen Victoria: Demon Hunter", Seth Grahame-Smith "Abraham Lincoln: Vampire Hunter", etc.). The widespread of new media, in particularly e-book readers, had also make it easier for so-called aficionados to publish their works, and most of the techniques used in fandom had found their way into everyday life of the broad public

"Traditionally there has been an emphasis and privileging of the written word. Communication has been primarily through spoken and written texts. But new forms of communication are layered and complex, involving words, icons, coding languages, images, movement, sound, space and the body. Traditional language skills are necessary but not sufficient for the interpretation and construction of everyday texts in the digital age." (Thomas 2007b:183)

This process is not intrinsically positive, here I agree with Jenkins in that *"as fandom becomes part of the normal way that the creative industries operate, then fandom may cease to function as a meaningful category of cultural analysis"* and thus *"we should certainly avoid celebrating a process that commodifies fan cultural production and sells it back to us with a considerable markup."* (2007:361-362). By offering "fandom-style" products on canon text, the industry, at the same time

undermines the widespread of “real fanfics”. In fandom communities

“not every member must contribute, but all must believe they are free to contribute and that what they contribute will be appropriately valued. In such a world, many will only dabble, some will dig deeper, and still others will master the skills that are most valued within the community. The community itself, however, provides strong incentives for creative expression and active participation.” (Jenkins 2009:66)

The industrial “fanfic style” published products select a specific kind of contributions that eclipse the impact of the majority of fanfic text, which are in fact not “book length” products.

3.1 Fan Fiction Genres

Fan Fiction works can be classified into different genres, according to their content. A first classification occurs regarding to the parent text (book, movie, TV-show) they refer to. A second one bifurcates the text into “romantic” vs. “non-romantic” context. Most stories depict romantic or sexual content, in that case they are called *slash fics* (for gay pairings) or *het fics* (for heterosexual), text with no romantic content whatsoever are known as *gen fics*. A third classification refers to the “rated” content of the text. There are various rating systems, most of them based on the official rating for movies and printing media.

Some websites allow automatic upload of texts by the authors, some others “publish” the texts only after they have been cleared by an appointed publications board. Others facilitate the free publishing of any kind of text.

Table 1 shows the classification of the FanFiction.Net, the largest fanfiction archive worldwide, where each submitted fanfic text should be rated according to the following parameters:

Table 1. FanFiction.Net rating system

Rating	Recommended Age	Description
K	5+ Content suitable for most ages	Intended for general audiences, 5 years and older. Content should be free of any coarse language, violence, and adult themes
K+	9+ Some content may not be suitable for young children	Suitable for more mature children, 9 years and older, with minor action violence without serious injury. May contain mild coarse language. Should not contain any adult themes
T	13+ Content not suitable for children	Suitable for teens, 13 years and older, with some violence, minor coarse language, and minor suggestive adult themes
M	16+ Content suitable for mature teens and older	Not suitable for children or teens below the age of 16, with possible strong but non-explicit adult themes, references to violence, and strong coarse language
MA*	18+ Explicit content for mature adults only	Content is only suitable for mature adults. May contain explicit language and adult themes

* The MA (18+) content are not allowed for publication on the FanFiction.Net

The FanFiction.Net, the biggest fanfic published platform, was created 1998 by Xing Li in Los Angeles (US) and has steadily become an unofficial standardization body for fanfic. The first fanfics to ever be published on the site, were in fact some *BtVS* fanfics. The platform is open to all submitters via free membership and supports its work with advertisement. The above presented rating system was introduced in 2002 after some stories with adult content have to be deleted. As stories with MA (18+) content are not allowed on the site, the FanFiction.Net has become a very popular and widespread site for teenagers, with the blessing of most PTAs (Parents & Teachers Associations) around the world. Even if the FanFiction.Net itself is an English language site, stories in a multitude of other languages can be posted and read online.

The fourth classification of fanfic text refers to its length. The FanFiction.Net classifies according to word count (>1000, >5000, >10.000; >20.000; >40.000; >60.000; >100.000). Another currently used denominations are

dabble texts of exactly 100 words)

ficlet short stories, which can be read as a stand-alone stories, but form part of a major narrative thread)

oneshot text of about 1000 words in one and only chapter

serial text comprising three or more chapters

For purpose of this research work classifications depending age and length will be disregarded, as *BtVS* appears already as a pre-classified product. The TV-show was formerly classified as PG-13 in its WB-years (1997-2001) and aired as "16+" during the two final seasons in UPN (2001-2003). The length of the show is also a given factor (± 40 min.). Thus the sole factor to be accounted for the further research will be the genre classification of the texts.

Fanfic texts rarely appear as a homogenous genre, and most frequently use various genre strategies to get the message across. Nevertheless

and for the sake of simplicity each genre is listed below as a independently form and will be also treated in this way in Chapter 6, when discussing its use in the show. A more detailed insight into fanfic genera can be found in Jenkins (1992:162-177) among others.

1. **recontextualization.** Explains the plot by adding new context into the story. Background information is provided by new characters arrivals, through hidden documents that become available or/and "missing scenes" of previously narrated plots that are inserted into the current story;
2. **expanding the series timeline.** Usually published after the original text has already been closed. These fanfics spread the story into the unknown future. Another form consists of issuing "prequels" to the story. This differs from the above as this expansions uses plots that have not been previously narrated, but oft hinted at in the main product;
3. **refocalization.** Focuses on secondary roles and/or the reuse of ephemeral characters, who become protagonists of the new stories;
4. **moral alignment.** Retells previous stories from the point of view of other characters;
5. **genre shifting.** Here the original genre of the story is replaced by another genre, i.e. romantic texts can evolve into horror texts and/or thrillers become comedies;
6. **crossovers.** Use characters from two or more independent original stories to create a new one, in which the characters of the original plots mix and interact with others, who never appeared in the original texts;
7. **character dislocation.** The character develops a new identity or finds himself in a new world or situation;

8. **personalization.** In these stories the fanfic author inserts his own experiences into the plot:
 - a. *Mary Sue* stories. A blatant form of the above genre. The author writes himself into the action, often under his own name or pseudonym and becomes prime character in this fandom. The name is taken from the first story of this kind, a Star Trek fanfic on the ensign "Mary Sue". If the prime character is a male these fanfic are called *Marty Stu* stories; In borderline cases the stories are only related to the original text by the use of some characters and the rules of the verse are completely ignored;
9. **emotional intensification.** Add some emotional content to the story in order to draw the characters together. Occasionally they are issued as hurt/comfort stories (see below under 12.f);
10. **death stories.** Evolve around the death of one character. As a rule death stories about main characters are taboo and a break of etiquette. In order to bypass this fact most of such stories are masked as dreams or visions;
11. **erotization.** Draws erotic context into the action.
12. **slash.** Issues non canon pairs in sexual contents. The name alludes to the sign "/" (the slash) that it is inserted between the two intended main characters, in the form (character)name/(character)name that are used as classification for such stories. The first slash stories depicted homosexual activities between Capitan Kirk and Mr. Spock from *Star Trek*, also known as KirK/Spock or abbreviated as just K/S stories. The original same sex male stories were predominantly written by women, who found through her writings a way to interact with the majority of male characters in screen. With time these stories evolved to include female characters interacting in same-sex and opposite

sex pairings, now slash can be subdivided into:

- a. *slash* (or male slash) for male pairings, also M/M,
- b. *fem* for female pairings, also F/F and
- c. *het* for heterosexual pairings with unorthodox sexual practices.

All slash stories can be further classified into

- d. ***first time stories***. The sexual encounter is depicted to be "the first time", at least for one of the characters. After the encounter the characters "discover" their "pre-existing" bond, and in most cases the encounter signals the initial step in a long lasting relationship;
- e. ***virtual marriage***. Two characters plan, or carry on their marriage. Another possibility is to show the characters are already married and living in a conjugal life;
- f. ***hurt/comfort***. The stronger character in the pairing becomes badly injured and is forced to accept comfort from the weaker character, the situation is loaded with innuendo and usually the characters share a sexual moment;
- g. ***sex scenes***. As the name denotes depicts sex scenes between the characters, the framework is non-relevant, the story plot is based on sex depiction;
- h. ***noncon***. Noncon fics depicting non-consensual sex, forced sex with or without "knowledge" of the victim (i.e. by "roofies") and rape;
- i. ***SM & bondage***. These fics use bondage and sadomasochist elements in the action.

Sometimes slash is condemned by writers of non-slash fiction, "some

critics of slash complain that it distorts characters and lacks grounding [...] Writers of non-slash fan-fiction sometimes defend their own marginal position by condemning slashers. Sometimes [...] this condemnation derives from a homophobia". It should be noted that slash writers do not randomly pair characters, but in fact they painstakingly research the canon plotlines for hidden subtext, in order to find a base for their storylines (cf. Saxey 2002, 1991).

As each fanfic inserts elements from various genres to get the story across, most stories can be classified under different categories, but usually one of the aforementioned elements prevails in the action.

PART II – BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER

4. THE SHOW

Initially only 12 episodes of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* were ordered by WB as a replacement to *Savannah*, a soap revolving about three former High School best friends that return to their hometown to face a murder and the subsequent whodunit. *Savannah*, produced by Aaron Spelling did not live to the expectations and was cancelled in February 1997, after barely a year on screen. After the success of the first 12 *BtVS* episodes, Whedon signed on for whole five seasons with an extension clause. After five seasons in WB the show moved onto UPN for further two seasons. Through a total of seven seasons (1997-2003) the protagonists of *BtVS* went through the motions of High School, college and working life by day while continuing to fight vampires and other monsters by night. Back in the late nineties Buffy was one of the first TV-shows to feature a girl in a leading action role. The series portrayed a group of teenagers in their daily struggle for maturity under the metaphor of “fighting vampires and the forces of evil”.

4.1 The Plot

BtVS the series takes over immediately after the events depicted in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, a 1992 motion picture. At the beginning of the movie Buffy Summers (Kristy Swanson) a cliché L.A. cheerleader comes across a group of vampires and accidentally succeeds in killing them. At school she meets her “Watcher”, Merrick Jamison-Smythe (Donald Sutherland), who informs her about her destiny as Vampire Slayer, the “chosen one” in this generation, and of his own role as her guide. Eighty-six minutes later, Merrick has been killed, the school have been burned by Buffy’s own hand to prevent its overtake by the vampires, and Buffy saves the day and her friend Oliver (Luke Perry), who acts as “damsel in

distress" in this somehow, but not really, feminist horror comedy. The movie achieved \$16.6 Mio at the Box office, which for an initial budget on only \$7 covered the cost but did not reach the expectations put on the cast. Whedon has repeatedly putting the blame on the interaction of Sutherland with the script

"[...] he would rewrite all his dialogue, and the director would let him. He can't write - he is not a writer - so the dialogue would not make sense. And he had a very bad attitude. He was incredibly rude to the director, he was rude to everyone around him, he was just a real pain. And to see him destroying my stuff... Some people didn't notice [...] But the thing is, he acts well enough that you didn't notice, with his little rewrites, and his little ideas about what his character should do, that he was actually destroying the movie..." (Stafford 2007:4)

For Whedon the *"original vision [of Buffy] was grounded in the idea of subverting standard conventions of the horror genre"* (Stevenson 2003:2) and was intended as a feminist critic view of the horror genre, making the blond girl not the prey but the hero. The movie, however, went on as a shallow horror comedy. Whedon received a second opportunity to elaborate his views and the characters in the first commissioned episodes for the Warner Bros Network (WB) in 1997. In Whedon's own words, he *"designed the show to create that strong reaction. [he] designed Buffy to be an icon, to be an emotional experience, to be loved in way that other shows can't be loved. [...] it basically says, 'Everybody who made it through adolescence is a hero.'"* (Robinson 2011:28).

The series format allowed Whedon to get his dialogues across, developing a new kind of television language that had largely influenced the young speech in the English speaking countries, and coined the so-called *"slayer slang"* that *"has left its mark on everyday speech"* (Danesi 2003b:66). The program acted as a kind of *"field laboratory"* with *"new terms and phrases coined on nearly every episode, many of them formed in the usual ways, some of them at the crest of new formative tendencies [...]* For the teens of that program, as for teens worldwide, it

serves as a transgressive code. Meaning, then, is sometimes difficult to isolate, but not the sociolinguistic importance of the slang words." (Danesi 2003a:64).

4.1.1 The WB Years

After burning her old school in L.A. Buffy relocates in Sunnydale, California, a little town situated rightly at the Hellmouth, in the historical "Boca del Diablo", a bay named by the Spaniards due to its rough sea-tides, which provoked numerous shipwrecks. In Buffy's mythology the Hellmouth marks the threshold between dimensions, the one place where demonic forces can cross into our human dimension.

Right after arriving at her new school Buffy meets his new Watcher, Mr. Giles, and retakes her old role as Vampire Slayer, this time with help of her two best friends (Willow and Xander) and the occasional bystanders. The core group (Buffy, Giles, Willow and Xander) nicknames themselves "the Scooby Gang" after the Hanna-Barbera animated series featuring a group of four teenagers and a dog specialized in resolving ghost mysteries. The *Buffy Scooby-Gang* mirrors the animated series characters. Buffy, with her fashion sense and her ability to step into dangerous situations is a dead ringer for *Daphne Anne Blake*, with whom she even shares her middle name. *Frederick Herman Jones, Jr.* the leader of the group, becomes a middle aged British Watcher, Mr. Giles. *Velma Dinkley*, the brain of the animated group, is a blueprint for Willow and of course, *Shaggy Rogers*, the "clown" becomes Xander Harris, the "zeppo". Even *Scooby*, the dog, enrolls the Gang latter on as Oz (played by Seth Green), Willow's werewolf boyfriend. Three High School years come and went. At Graduation Day the High School is destroyed during the fight against a giant worm demon, the alter ego of the Mayor, somehow positioning Buffy against the establishment and leading her into the road of maturity.

In Season Four the Gang makes it through College (Buffy and Willow) and working life (Xander and Giles). Season Five offers a new turn, with

the inclusion of Dawn's character, a mystical energy key molded into a human sister to Buffy (cf. Battis, 2005) *"she was also the key to allowing the writers to have Buffy experienced the terrible loss of her mother [...] while not losing her family altogether."* (Ciencin 2004:279). In Season Six Dawn gives Buffy a reason to fight for adulthood, to take responsibility, while in Season Seven she serves to reconcile the audience with the idea of the Potentials taking over the Slayer's powers.

Season Five represents a coming of age for the characters. Buffy loses her mother, becomes surrogate mother for her sister and ultimately dies instead of her. The end of the Season marks also the end of the Warner Bros years. *WB* decided to terminate *BtVS* due to allegedly critical fan views on the series content, which did not seem to match the "family format" of the network. Even if then an end to the series was heavily rumored, Buffy arose literally from the grave, for two last seasons at the United Paramount Network (*UPN*). *UPN* aimed at a more mature audience and placed the series on the evening program, which allowed Whedon the production of a show of more darker content, as Dough Petrie pointed out *"the censorship went lighter"*, even if they *"gotten away with unbelievable things on the WB"*, now they will be able to *"doing exactly the show that [they] wanted to be doing all along"* (Lavery 2009:6).

The metaphorical meaning of the Network was not lost on the fans

"Buffy the Vampire Slayer is a series that repeatedly play with the question of closure, of finality, of ending, of death. In many respects is a about termination and about resurrection, a point emphasized by the fact that it 'ends' in one network only to begin on another." (Levine, Parks 2007:4)

With these premises the show started in *UPN* in October 2001.

4.1.2. The UPN Seasons

At the beginning of Season 6 we encounter the Scooby Gang mourning

Buffy, who has died at the end of the last season to save her sister Dawn. Dawn has lost her mystical energy after the final battle and become human. The Gang pursues the fight against the forces of evil, using the Buffybot (a mechanical Buffy life-size doll) as Slayer to prevent the monsters from learning the truth about Buffy's death and taking over Sunnydale. Willow decides to arise Buffy from the grave using dark *magick*. She succeeds, but Buffy returns changed, "*she comes back wrong*" [Afterlife 6003]. Season Six represents the struggle of Buffy the hero to live a "normal life", an enterprise at which she fails. This time the enemy is not a supernatural entity, but a threesome of "losers", who aspire to overcome Buffy and take her place as Sunnydale heroes. By the end of the Season the nerds have lost, at a terrible cost: Willow's madness.

"Noxon concurrently oversaw the narrative construction of fan as the Big Bad in Buffy's sixth season. Fancying themselves super villains ('like Dr. NO'), unpopular geeks Warren, Jonathan and Andrew become 'The Evil Trio', the season's ongoing threat to Buffy. Instead of bringing the apocalypse, like most Buffy nemeses, these weak, ineffectual, pathetic villains complicate Buffy's attempts to manager greater (arguably soap-operatic) real-world problems. What distinguishes these flaccid antagonists, however, is their intertextual referentiality to cult texts."
(Johnson, 2007:295)

In the beginning of Season Seven things seem have returned to normal. The new Sunnydale High is inaugurated and Buffy succeeds in getting a job at the school.

"No less an authority than Joss Whedon has remarked that Season Seven was intended as a return to the series' beginnings: hence the use of the newly rebuilt High School as a locus for much of the action."
(Koontz, 2008:164)

Willow comes back from England apparently free of her evil self. Xander is doing business as usual. But in *BtVS* the appearances beguile the facts: the school is in fact haunted by the spirits of the death; Spike is

hiding raving mad in its basement; the new Principal has a secret of his own; and Buffy is still to confront the First Evil, who has as its goal the destruction of all human existence. The quest for salvation reveals the ultimately truth regarding the Slayer-myth. By the end of the Season, and ultimately of the Series, Sunnydale does not exist anymore, and the Slayer-power is shared by all chosen ones. This final season zeroes in the image of Buffy as heroine in a quest for both her own salvation and the rescue of the world from the forces of evil.

"The seven-season narrative of Buffy the Vampire Slayer traces not only Buffy Summers' heroic progress, but also her personal growth, associating the Slayer with heroes of myth who precede her. In particular, the show exploits the myth of descent and return in its full richness, referencing the traditional heroic underworld journey and invoking the pattern of death and rebirth to mark the process of initiation for its heroine." (Fritts, 2009:32)

At the end of the journey Buffy claims victory and can finally become what she always was meant to be: "a normal girl". According to Whedon *"this last season [Season Seven] has been about [that,] taking the idea of how the Slayer is different from other people and really exploring it."* (Miller, 2011:71)

Season Seven also marks an epiphany regarding the character construction of the show. For over six years the most social critic *BtVS* audience was confronted with the fact that the show opted to ignore the role of the African-American sector of society (cf. Grzanka 2010:189). In fact the only African-American roles depicted on the past WB years were, whether extremely ridiculed (as in the case of Kendra) or thoroughly evil (Mr. Trick). Kendra was introduced in the double feature episode *What's my line?* [2009 & 2010] as a Jamaican Slayer, without proper command of English or modern life. After her interaction with the Gang Kendra "improved" socially, only to be murdered in her next appearance [*Becoming, Part 1* 2021] by Angel, Buffy's (re-)turned evil boyfriend-vampire. Mr. Trick's character, as his name proposed, was a crook. Being

a vampire he was immediately evil according to the series verse and beyond that he became instrumental in allowing the major to almost destroy Sunnydale in the Season Three finale [*Graduation Day* 3021 & 3022]. The critical view of these facts, drove the writers to (re-)invent the character of one of the two nameless slayers killed by Spike, as stated in *School Hard* [2003], as the Afro-American Nikki Wood in *Fool for Love* [5007]. The fact fail to appease the community as this slayer was portrayed as a victim

"It is difficult to imagine a white character in Buffy explicitly discussing matters of race, and it is difficult to remember significant characters in Buffy who are not white." (Chin, 2003:97)

In Season Seven the character of Robin Wood was introduced as the grown-up son of the killed slayer. D.B. Woodside was chosen for the role, due to his strong presence and appealing physique, unfortunately that did not much to change the views of the community regarding Afro-American representation, as Chin accurately states

"Buffy fails to confront a variant of white supremacy in which whiteness is a universalized concept. This form of white supremacy erases differences and maintains that everyone is the same as long as everyone assumes or aspires to whiteness as their fundamental consciousness of self." (Chin, 2003:93)

Woodside's character has a most appealing physique, is strong and well trained as vampire killer, but fails to grasp the basics of the Buffyverse, such as Spike having a chip, a soul and a trigger (Fig. 3)

BUFFY Spike? What about him?

GILES I told you my concerns when you recklessly chose (puts glasses on) to remove the chip from his head.

*ROBIN **Wait, sorry, chip?***

GILES Uh, it's a long story.

BUFFY The military put a chip in Spike's head so he couldn't hurt anyone.

GILES And that would be the abridged version.

BUFFY But he wouldn't hurt anyone anymore because he has a soul

now.

GILES Unless the First triggers him again.

ROBIN **Triggers the chip?**

BUFFY No, the trigger's a post-hypnotic thing. The First put it in his head. It was—made him— He was killing again.

ROBIN **So, he has a trigger, a soul, and a chip?**

GILES Not anymore.

BUFFY It was killing him, Giles.

ROBIN **The trigger?**

BUFFY No, the chip. The trigger's not active anymore.

ROBIN **Because the military gave him a soul** Sorry.

Lies my Parents told me [7017]



Fig. 4. Robin Wood does not understand the “basics”.

The UPN years form part of a separate narrative that distances itself of the previous five seasons. After her series death at WB, Buffy comes back from the death to walk a classical hero's walk in Odysseus sense: by day she walks like a death person in the realm of the living (her friends) while by night and in Spike's presence she mimes the living one among the death. In Season Six all three stages of the classical Odyssey are present

"[Buffy's journey can be traced from four perspectives on the mythic interpretation of descent (or death) and return: its potential shamanic origin [...]; its association with Christian myth and ritual [...]; its connection to Jungian] psychology [...]; and the synthesis of mythic traditions [...]. In all these perspectives, a pattern common to an

individual/hero's initiation emerges: 1) separation from the body, 2) a journey to a dream landscape led by a guide, and 3) return to the world with a reward. (Fritts 2009:32.33)

4.2 The Cast

For this paper's purpose only characters relevant to Seasons 6 and 7 are listed herewith.

The Scooby Gang

Since the beginning of the Series, the original Slayer Group, consisting of four individuals (Buffy, Giles, Willow and Xander), the four pillars against evil, has been enlarged to accommodate family and friends such as Anya or Tara. Some characters have been lost to spin-offs (Angel and Cordelia), or character death (Buffy's mother Joyce). In Season Five the character of Dawn was introduced as Buffy younger sister, in an effort among others to regain the interest of the preteen audience strata.

Buffy Anne Summers (Sarah Michelle Gellar)



According to the *Buffyverse* lore "*in every generation there is a Chosen One. She alone will stand against the vampires, the demons and the forces of darkness. She is the Slayer*" (*BtVS* Prolog). Buffy Summers is this generation's Chosen One, Vampire Slayer by night, working-girl by day and surrogate mother to Dawn (her sister) at any time. After her death at the end of Season Five, she was reawaked by her friends and must now struggle with life.

Dawn Summers (Michelle Trachtenberg)



Dawn, former spiritual energy and key to an evil realm, were introduced to the Buffyverse Season Five as the sister of the Slayer. After being redeemed of her destiny by Buffy, Dawn stays in the earthly realm as a normal and somehow annoying teenager.

Mr. Rupert Giles (Anthony Stewart Head)



Mr. Giles, former Buffy appointed Watcher, remained in Sunnydale as Buffy's friend and advisor after quitting the Council in Season Three. He returned to England after Buffy death, but makes repeatedly visits after her rebirth. For the most part of Seasons 6 and 7 Giles is known to be "in England", and makes only "special appearances" at key moments in the narrative.

Willow Rosenberg (Alyson Hannigan)



Willow is Buffy's best friend and ally from the very beginning. She uses her skills in computer technology and on *magicks* to help Buffy in her fight against evil. In Season Six her eagerness to help drives her to a dependency on *magick* and the resulted crossing into evilness. In Season 7 she must come to term with her abuse of *magicks*.

Xander Harris (Nicholas Brendon)



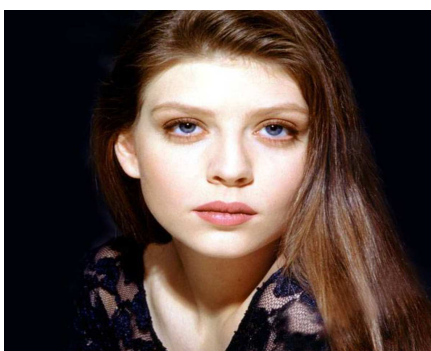
Xander, Willow's and Buffy's best friend, takes his share of the fight even if he is only an "ordinary" guy most of the time, and a right-down dork on occasions. His lack of "special" skills is balanced by his human qualities, being he the one who holds the group together in times of need.

Spike, aka William the Bloody (William Platt) (James Masters)



Spike, born William Pratt, is a vampire formally known as "William the Bloody" who, due to a chip implanted in his brain in Season Four, is not capable to hurt humans anymore and unwillingly becomes a member of the *Scoobies*. Spike tries to maintain his bad reputation at all costs, even after falling in love with the Slayer.

Tara Maclay (Amber Benson)



Tara was first introduced in Season Four as Willow's romantic interest. With the pass of time she becomes involved with the Gang and takes on motherly duties with Dawn after Buffy's death. In Season Six Tara and Willow get separated due to Willow's addiction to *magick*. After their reconciliation Tara dies at Warren's hands.

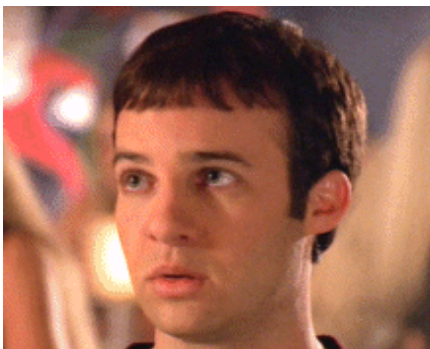
Anya Jenkins (Emma Caulfield)



Anya, a former vengeance demon, who lost her demonic power *The Wish* [3009], is Xander's girlfriend and helps the Gang on the fight. After being abandoned at the altar in *Hell's Bells* [6016] Anya returns to his former demon self and must pay a high price to become human again.

The Trio (of Villains)

Jonathan Levinson (Danny Strong)



Jonathan went to school with Buffy and the *Scoobies*. From Season Two on he appears as a recurring constantly bullied character. Jonathan uses his experience in *magicks* to fight against the *Scoobies*. Jonathan is being depicted from the very beginning as a "loser", who joints "*The Trio*" out of alternatives to fight against his lack of social acceptance.

Warren Mears (Adam Busch)



Warren character is introduced in *I was made to love you* [5015] as the selfish college guy, who builds himself a robot-girlfriend only to abandon her at the best next opportunity. Warren is merely driven by hunger for power and greed. He appears as the "evil brain" of the group and his leader.

Andrew Wells (Tom Lenk)



Although his character has been never seen before, for the sake of continuity Andrew is introduced in the series as a brother of Tucker Wells, who was responsible for the disaster in *The Prom* [3020]. He has some skills in controlling animals, which he places at the service of the Trio. Andrew occupies the middle segment between Warren's evilness and Jonathan's boredom and success in gathering a place into the Scooby Gang at the end of Season Seven.

Potentials



Season seven confronts Buffy with the "First Evil", a timeless evil that targets the "Potentials" in order to ride the world of the next generation of slayers. This "next generation" finds shelter in Buffy's house, where will be trained for the final battle. The girls appear as an abstract whole with barely personality of their own. Potentials are rarely show as individuals, they interact only as a group, with the exception of Amanda, Rona, Vi and Kennedy. This later becomes Willow's paramour in the course of Season Seven and survives the final battle to live on in the graphic novels as Willow's partner.

Principal Robin Wood (D.B. Woodside)



Robin Wood appears in Season Seven as the first Principal of the just rebuilt Sunnydale High, which was completely destroyed in the Season Three final episode. Wood guards a secret of his own: he is the son of a previous slayer and has his own agenda for coming to Sunnydale.

Faith Lehane (Eliza Dushku)



Faith is also a Slayer. Buffy's death at the end of Season One *Prophecy Girl* [1012] activated Kendra (played by Bianca Lawson), who died herself after only three appearances in *Becoming – Part 1* [2021] at the end of Season Two. Kendra's death activated Faith. Since her first appearance on screen, Faith is depicted as wild and without respect for boundaries. Her character drove her to the bad side, she eventually repented and after having expended some time in jail she arrives to Sunnydale towards the end of Season Seven to help in the battle against the First Evil. Faith represents the dark-side of the Slayer call. Her darkness is the counterpoint to Buffy's light.

PART III - FAN REPRESENTATION IN BTVS

5. METHODS OF REPRESENTATION

This paper attempts a new reading of the series, taking the counterparts in the series as a metaphor for the fans. This reading has been, to my knowledge, never attempted before. Nevertheless, discussions with crew and fans have proven its validity. We will analyze the Villains (Season 6) and Potentials (Season 7) as metaphor for the destructive and constructive nature of fandom respectively.

Joss Whedon is broadly known for his interaction with the fans, "*Whedon and his fellow writers are intentional about their use of subtext. He even jokes that the 'watchword' at the show is 'BYOSubtext (Bring Your Own Subtext)'*" (Stevenson 2003:5). This interaction has also been shown through the series, through repeatedly homage to the fan community. In the *Watcher's Guide* **2**, 228, Nancy Holder notes that "*the Polgara demon mentioned in 'The I in Team' [4013] was writer David Fury's tribute to a Buffy fan who frequently posted online and named [...] herself Polgara the Sorceress*" (quoted after Wilcox, 2005:48). Holder is herself acknowledged in the character of the psychology student "Holder" in *Conversations with Death People* [7007]. Anya (Jenkins) is obviously a tribute to Henry Jenkins.

The interaction of the show with the fans and fandom in general can be observed from the very beginning of the series on. In that time the use of fandom related speech was reserved for the character of Xander, who could be enjoyed blurting hilarious phrases such as

"I'm sorry, calm may work for Locutus of the Borg here, but I'm freaked out and I intend to stay that way." Prophecy Girl [1012]

Another quotation from Star Trek appeared in *The Replacement* [5003] with Xander shouting out "*Kill us both, Spock*" a reference to *The Enemy*

Within [Star Trek 1005, original airdate 06.10.1966]. In both series the character (Xander/Kirk) had been split into two beings. The episode itself is a tribute of three episodes the original series of Star Trek in which there is two Capitan Kirk. The plot, development and solution are repeatedly pointed out and linked by fans of numerous forums on both series. Xander is depicted as a Trekkie in numerous occasions, right down to the key episode *Seeing Red* [6019], where as Willow and Tara explain that they have been able to decipher all documents gained from the Trio with exception on one, Xander recognizes it as Klingon love poem.

Further on, in Season Seven, Andrew takes on Xander's role as nerd and group clown. In *Storyteller* [7016] Andrew clarifies the Potentials about Faith, but he confounds a volcanologist Faith killed in Season Two with a Vulcan. This slip of the tongue becomes reality on screen (Fig. 5).



Fig.5. Faith killing Spock [7016].

On Seasons Six and Seven *BtVS* makes the fan subject of the action in a multiple way. For once the *Trio (of Villains)*, formed by Jonathan, Andrew and Warren, is the spitting image of "the fans". Their actions, personalities and aspirations match the prejudice the broad public have when confronted with fan and fandom. Season Seven can be read as Whedon's intention to acknowledge the fans and offer them a "piece of the cake". Unfortunately as we will see in Section 7, this intent have not been read by the fans in the very same way.

In *BtVS* the fans have not only been acknowledged by quotations of personifications of fans, *BtVS* acknowledges also the productive work of fans by using fan-fiction (fanfic) techniques into the scripts of the show. Whedon claims to be interested in fanfic

"I obviously can't read [fan fiction], but the fact is there seems to be a great deal of it, and that's terrific. I wished I'd had that outlet as a youngster, or had the time to do it now." (Lee 2011:16)

and very far ahead from Shatner's opinion on fandom

"Lee: Do you share William Shatner's opinion of the most ardent fans that they need to get a life?

Whedon: I have never had any particular life of my own, so I don't see any particular reason why anyone else should run out to get one. Of course, if they're dressing up like Willow and staying in their basement for nine months at a time, that's not good. But the show's designed to foster slavish devotion; it has it from me, and I entirely respect it in others." (Lee 2011.16)

In the following two sections both the use of fanfic techniques and the characterization of the fans in the show will be dealt with. The use of fanfic techniques in primetime television deserves special mention. As Tushnet pointy remarks, *"fans tend to see their legal status as similar to their social status: marginal and, at best, tolerated rather than accepted as legitimate part of the universe of creators"* (2007:60), thus the use of these techniques in *BtVS* helped to reinforce the status of the fandom (cf. Shuttleworth 2002:227)

As research field for this thesis I have taken the 44 episodes of Seasons Six and Seven. Each of these episodes have been exhaustively screened, their scripts studied, and the pertinent correlations made.

6. FANFIC TECHNIQUES IN THE SHOW

As stated in Section 4.1 fanfics are characterized by the use of a great variety of genres at the same time, it is most infrequent to come across

a story that can be classified as belonging to just one variety. The TV-show *BtVS* behaves not different in this aspect, which makes it the most difficult to choose examples to highlight the use of a determinate technique in a given plot. Nevertheless, and for the sake of simplicity, this section will analyze examples from the show with a single point of view, arraying each discussed piece in one of the aforementioned genres (s. 3.1. Fan Fiction Genres). The given examples are arbitrary and not exhaustive, serving only to illustrate the way in which the show recurs to fanfic techniques to interact with the fans.

recontextualization

The conventional way of providing background information on a story is the insertion of “missing scenes” into the narration. In *Selfless* [7005] Anya, reverting to her Revenge-Demon nature, releases a giant spider in a fraternity house killing about a dozen boys in the process. As Willow finds out, she informs Buffy, who decides to kill Anya. After a short battle, Anya is injured by a sword, at this moment she remembers a key moment in her life: her joy at the prospect of marrying Xander. This memory is inserted as a “missing scene” from *Once More with Feeling* [6007], a common technique to contextualize the original text. The scene was written and shot specially for *Selfless* [7005] and did not appear in the original Season Six episode. With this scene the writers intended to throw light on Anya’s suffering, after being abandoned at the altar by Xander in *Hell’s Bells* [6016]. After the break-up Anya has been portrayed as a sullen female, intended on revenge. The Gang sided with Xander and comforted him. Anya was depicted as greedy and selfish, her situation somehow ignored. The recontextualization scene shows Anya as a happy bride, with expectations for her future, joyfully stating “*I am the mistress, I will be his mistress, Mrs. Xander Harris*” [*Selfless* [7005]]. Through her happiness at the moment the viewer is able to have a glimpse of Anya’s truly self and the pain she has been dealing with. The whole extension of her suffering becomes painfully apparent as the “missing scene” ends and we are confronted with the reality of today’s

situation. Anya has been injured by Buffy with a sword, which protrudes from her torso as metaphor for her broken heart. Instead of the arrow of love that once pierced her heart, now a weapon cuts into her being and ends all hope for happiness. At this moment Anya also becomes aware of the monster she has turned into and asks for redemption. D'Hoffryn, master of revenge and Anya's boss release her from the duties as a vengeance demon. Anya acknowledges to pay the price, thinking her life will be enough, but the D'Hoffryn kills her oldest friend instead, a revenge demon named Halfrek, giving her a new lesson in revenge

D'HOFFRYN *Haven't I taught you anything, Anya? Never go for the kill when you can go for the pain.*" *Selfless* [7005]



Fig. 6. Anya remembers in *Selfless* a "missing scene" from *OMwF*.

expanding the series timeline

BtVS has repeatedly made use of this technique. From the very beginning the series was designed as an expansion of the 1992 Motion Picture. After the Series Whedon has succeeded in expanding the series throughout Season Eight and Season Nine, in the form of a graphic novel. For our research is also important to point out that the concept of the whole Season Six and Seven is an expansion of the *WB* storyline.

After Buffy's death, she is brought to life once more to continue the storyline, which is a basic concept of fanfic in itself.

Hell's Bells [6016] uses this kind of plot to give Xander a look of his future marriage with Anya. According to the plot the "Xander of the Future" visits the "Xander of the Present" in order to give him the necessary information to avoid a life in misery. The script uses "time travel" as a method to expand the series timeline into the far away future, into a time, in which the series will surely not exist anymore. The sexagenarian Xander reiterates that this marriage will make them both profoundly unhappy and to prove the fact offers the younger Xander an artifact, that will enable the twenty-odd Xander to travel into his own future (Fig. 7 a-c). Once there Xander learns that his marriage is doomed to failure. In the meantime Anya finds out that sexagenarian Xander does not exist, he is impersonated by a victim of Anya, that was converted into a demon and send to a demon dimension to suffer. He has found a way to escape in uses Xander travel to hurt Anya (Fig. 7. d-e). As Xander comes back from the "future", Anya explains to him that all his visions have only been the machinations of the demon (Fig.7 e). But the confrontation with this possible future has open Xander's eyes to the possibility of really becoming the man of his vision, and, acting in consequence, he leaves Anya (Fig. 7 g-i).

By expanding the timeline, the writers are able to show facets of Xander and his family and finally alter the course of Anya and Xander relationship in the series. The technique, that is broadly used in fanfic to overcome difficulties between the characters, becomes here the tool to tear apart one of the functioning couple in the series





Fig. 7. Xander's time-travel changes his mind.

refocalization

Especially in Season Six the focus of the Series rest not on Buffy herself, but on the struggle of the whole Gang during the process of growing up. Dawn's struggle with adolescent also highlights Buffy's own inability to take on the responsibilities of adulthood. Tara and Willow fill in the blank of Buffy's death and take over Dawn as parent-surrogate. Behind the façade of the loving couple the pair is breaking down under the pressure of such responsibility. Willow falls into the dependency on *magicks*, used here as metaphor for drugs and alcohol. Finally the Trio plays an important role in the unfolding of the action. Some members of the Trio, namely Jonathan and Warren, had made appearances before, but now they get to really be part of the action. This technique corresponds to the classical reuse of ephemeral characters in a leading role to give the main action a new focus. At the end of their narrative, both Willow and the Trio confront each other as main characters, becoming the Big Bad for Season Six, while Buffy's character is relegated to the role of a mere bystander.



Fig. 8. Willow fights **a)** Warren, **b)** Jonathan and Andrew.

moral alignment

The best example of moral alignment is given in *Lies my Parents told me* [7017] in which both Spike and Robin Wood throw new light into the slayer/vampire relationship and the real nature of both, slayer and vampire. In the course of the series the audience has learn the lore behind Spike story. Spike, who was sired in the late 19th century, was in her human life already known by the epithet "William the Bloody" due to his "*bloody awful poetry*" [7017]. After his conversion into a Vampire, the somehow young and hot-blooded William, decided to live by this epithet and make himself a name as fear-mongering vampire "*earned his nickname [Spike] by torturing his victims with railroad spikes*" [School Hard 2003]. Always searching for new challenges he came across a Slayer at the turn of the century and succeeded in killing her. Later on, in 1977, she killed a second slayer and made himself a reputation as "slayer-killer", being the only known vampire to have killed two slayers. Fortunately for the viewer this second Slayer (Nikki Wood) happens to be Principal Wood death mother. In *Lies my Parents told me* [7017], Wood convinces Giles of the necessity of killing Spike, to avoid having him overtaken by the First Evil. While Giles helps in distracting Buffy, Wood succeeds in ambushing Spike in this garage, prepared for the occasion with a myriad of crosses on the walls. Once there, he activates the trigger to provoke Spike into a fight to death. In the course of the fight, the viewer is privy to Spike memories and learns that he was forced to kill his own mother, who he converted into a vampire to save her from

death by consumption. Likewise the audience learns about the true nature of the Slayers, their inability to back off from the fight, and their priorities, *"the mission is what matters"* [7017], as Nikki Wood reiterates, when boy-Robin implores her to choose him instead the fight with Spike.

"Through Buffy [...] these two characters [Spike & Wood] come together as she serves as a substitute mother for both" (Linsley 2009, 135)

After the fight a new layer in the Buffy/Giles relationship is also revealed. Giles discloses himself as untrustworthy, Buffy dissociates herself from him and his advice. All moral beliefs about Slayers, Vampires (in particular Spike), and Watchers appear in a new light, and must be "realigned" to match the truth, according to the new information gained from the episode. The meaning of the fight against evil rest untouched, but the motivation of the combatants is to be revised. Giles, as a Watcher, will do all possibly necessary to guaranty the mission (that is what matters to him) is successful, and would stop at nothing short of murder to achieve victory. Wood enrolled the fight only to have his revenge for the death of his mother. Spike is revealed as multidimensional being, with more humanity and understanding as could be expected from the "evil-vampire" image he likes to display. Good and Evil, are not black and white anymore, they become nuances of grey and must be taken into consideration when addressing the unknown future. As Buffy aligns herself with Spike, her choice follows the Slayer code: to her also the mission is what matters. Her decision is based on the warrior qualities of Spike not his nature

BUFFY Spike is the strongest warrior we have. We are gonna need him if we're gonna come out of this thing alive. (Robin sighs) You try anything again, he'll kill you. (Robin laughs) More importantly, I'll let him. (Robin looks at Buffy) I have a mission to win this war, to save the world. I don't have time for vendettas. (walks away) The mission is what matters. Lies my Parentsr told me [7017]



Fig. 9. Spike and Wood fight in *Lies my Parents told Me*.

genre shifting

BtVS is known as a show that uses elements of most genres to convey the story. Even so *Once More with Feeling* [OMwF 6007] overtops the rest. This episode can only be described as “Joss Whedon filking his own text”. Through a musical make-up Whedon inserts into the storyline all hidden information that the characters are being keeping from each other after Buffy’s death and posterior return. The episode manages to reach the necessary continuity in the series as well as to exist as a “stand alone” episode, which is in itself the very core intention of fanfic. The episode has successfully sold as stand-alone DVD and Music-CD version. The cover of both, a conscious reminder of the Hollywood musicals of the 1960s and 1970s, and the “intro” contrast with the “common” episodes and situate *OMwF* as an accessory yet incorporated text in the whole Buffy narrative. This key episode can be watched alone without further background information on the series, some fans have stated that this was indeed their entrance to the series, but is fundamental to the comprehension of the events that give shape to Season Six, in particular the course of Willow/Tara relationship and their subsequent break-up.



Fig. 10. Once More with Feeling **a)** DVD-Cover and **b)** Intro.

The plot of the episode serves as test tube in which all lies come to light. A dancing demon named Sweet, who feed on human emotions, has been summoned to Sunnydale. He forces the Sunnydale residents to burst into song and give away their most guarded secrets, without retaining any memory of doing so. Buffy and Spike expose their feelings for each other during their nightly patrol at the cemetery. Further on Anya and Xander, while being most kind and in love to each other, attest their incompatibilities. Willow and Tara's relationship is uncovered, and Tara learns that she has been deafened into oblivion by Willow's *magicks*. Finally Giles express his concerns of being in the way of Buffy's maturity and self-sufficiency. The singers are not aware of their text, but the hearers discover the truth under these most hidden secrets. Only Buffy remains unconscious of Giles fears, which also shows her total relay in him and the truth under Giles statements. As Dawn is kidnapped by Sweet, Giles prompts Buffy to fight by herself, without the help of the Gang, only to later change his mind and hasten to the rescue. In the final scene, Buffy is forced by Sweet to sing, revealing her belief in having been in heaven, a truth she kept from their friends, who torn her

from there and brought her back to life, which she experiences as a "living hell". The Gang is taken aback and remains idly, with only Spike coming to her rescue.

True to filking Whedon uses music to expand the possibilities of the text. *OMwF* is a very condensed text, with takes elements as well from Hollywood musical classics as from modern Bollywood films.

"Whedon's won commentaries suggest that 'Once More with Feeling' functions as a critique of the genre and its history on both small and large screen. In this it reflects the fears and desires of 'genre fans' everywhere, as it conflates the utopian fantasy of the musical with the dystopian fantasy of the Buffyverse." (Bauer 2010:210)

The score itself is not uniform, but uses melodies from different timelines. The introduction is kept in 1950s style, while Anya/Xander outing is made to a 1930s theme. Spike remains loyal to his rock image as he accuses Buffy of just being using him

*You know
You've got a willing slave
And you just love to play the thought
That you might misbehave.
But till you do I'm telling you, Stop visiting my grave
And let me rest in peace (SPIKE)*

Anya addresses her fears, "*it could be bunnies*", in an opera rock song, while Tara and Willow sing their love for each in a fitting new wave folk. And Tara and Giles join in a romantic pop duet, when expressing their fears and deception in their relationships with Willow and Buffy respectively

*Believe me, I don't wanna go (GILES)
And it'll grieve me 'cause I love you so (GILES /TARA)
But we both know (GILES /TARA)*

(GILES)

*Wish I could say the right
words*

To lead you through this land

Wish I could play the father

And take you by the hand

Wish I could stay, Wish I could stay, Wish I could stay (GILES/TARA)

(TARA)

*Wish I could trust that it was
just this once*

But I must do what I must

I can't adjust to this disgust

We're done and I just

Unsurprisingly the final number takes the form of a hymn, but contrary to canon, where hymns praise the future as a happy and known path to salvation, this number expresses the uncertainty of the way that lies ahead

Where do we go ... from here? (Dawn)

Where do we go ... from here? (BUFFY/SPIKE)

The battle's done... and we kind of won (GILES)

So we sound our victory cheer...

Where do we go from here? (GILES/TARA)

Why is the path unclear... When we know home is near? (ANYA/XANDER)

Understand we'll go hand in hand... But we'll walk alone in fear (ALL)

Tell me! (GILES)

Where do we go from here?...When does the end appear? (ALL)

When do the trumpets cheer? (ALL)

The curtains close on a kiss, god knows...

we can tell the end is near...(ALL)

Where do we go from here? (ALL)

After this collective final hymn, Spike is the first to break the formation, a sign that he is also the only one, who really understands the situation Buffy is brought to and also the one able to take some action, while the rest of the Gang choose to remain in oblivion.



Fig. 11. *Once More with Feeling.*

Music always plays a important role in the series, which has successfully released two CD-compilations featuring music played on the Series: *Buffy - The Album* (1999) and *Radio Sunnydale* (2004). Bach (2008) and Attinello (2010) address the importance of music in the show and its relations with the fan community.

CROSSTOVERS

Since the establishment of *Angel* (1999-2004) as a spin-off, crossovers between both series were issued twice a year. With the relocation of *BtVS* at *UPN* the possibility for these crossovers seemed to be banned, as *WB* prohibited their realization. Even with this interdiction, the show succeeds in installing two of them. The first one a verbal crossover in *Flooded* [6002]

[...] The phone rings.

BUFFY (gets up) Who's calling me? Everybody I know lives here. (walks toward kitchen) I'll be back.

[...] Buffy returns, walking quickly and purposefully toward the front.

GILES Buffy, what is it?

She turns back to face them, pauses for a moment before speaking
BUFFY Angel.

GILES Is he in trouble?

BUFFY He knows that I'm ... (trails off. Shot of Dawn watching with concern) He, he needs to see me. I have to see him.

GILES Yes, of course. You'll leave for L.A. tomorrow.

BUFFY (shakes her head) **Not L.A. And not here. Somewhere in the middle. There's a, a place.**

"Somewhere" refers to the storyline and situates the crossover in the range of "missing scenes" as well as reminding the fans that there is a space in between, the fandom, where the two series can and do interact.

The second and final one occurs in the double episode Series Finale *End of Days* [2021] & *Chosen* [2022] as Angel visits Buffy in order to let her have the amulet that should allow her to defeat the First. One of the particular features of crossovers is that the reader should be privy to both texts in order to understand the action. The properties of the amulet are not further specified in *BtVS* but explaining in a previous episode of *Angel*. Thus Whedon assumes that *BtVS*-readers are simultaneously *Angel*-readers



Fig. 12. Angel presents Buffy with amulet.

character dislocation

As consequence of one of Willow's forgetting spells gone wrong the Gang lose their memories in *Tabula Rasa* [6008]. When confronted with another they try to find clues of their identities by checking on IDs and behavior. This tool enables the unfolding of a new story in which the characters and their environment are new to themselves. At the beginning of the episode the characters interact with each other in their habitual environment. The Gang is about to leave the house, when Willow, who has promised to abstain from *magick* for a week, fakes the

need of some additional time and remains behind to do a new spell in order to make Tara forget their last night quarrel. In her eagerness, she left the rest of the components behind by the fire and eventually they are taken into the main spell, which becomes much more stronger as intended. As Willow arrives at the Magic Shop the spell fires and the whole Gang passes out. The first to regain consciousness is Buffy, following by Willow and Xander, Giles and Anya, and finally Spike, Tara and Dawn, all of them not knowing who they are. From this point the episode constructs a new narrative based on the insights of the characters. Due to their position by the awakening, they come to think that Willow and Xander are a love pair, while Giles and Anya are husband and wife, with Spike as Giles son, a fact based in both being English. They check their IDs to gain some clues and stated that Tara and Willow are both university students. Spike checks his clothes and finds a label saying "*Made with care for Randy*", which let him to believe his name is indeed Randy.

Buffy and Dawn do not have any IDs and are unable to find their names. Buffy discovers Dawn's necklace and correctly guess Dawn name, while Dawn, not so sure points out it could be "*Umad*", letting Buffy as the only one without identity. Buffy decides to name herself and chose the name "Joan", to Dawn's disapproval. As they quarrel over the adequacy of the name they discover they must be sisters. Until the breaking of the spell at the end of the episode, the Gang lives by their new identities. They confront a group of demons, meekly hide out of sight, crouching on the floor (Fig. 13), until Buffy decides to fight back, showing that even if the memories are gone, the character remains. The whole episode serves to explore the characters and their attributes without the burden of the Buffylore, revealing the true nature of the personages. When they finally regain their memories, the viewer is able to discern, which patterns are intrinsic to each personages and which are a result of the role they must play into the *BtVS* related action. True to fanfic the episode also explores relationships that have already hinted in fanfic, but not followed in the official narrative, such as "what if Giles and Spike

where related?" or "what if Willow and Xander have come together". The loop goes on in fanfic forums with Giles/Spike stories that explore a possible mentor (father-son-like) relationship between both characters.

Even if some authors, such as Resnick insist that *"the season-six twist of Willow becoming 'addicted' to magic was just weak writing [...] at the expense of the meaningful conflict with had already been well established for Willow - which was the abuse of power."* Willow had been show in numerous episodes *"using magic as a shortcut to the ordinary troubles of life"* (Resnick 2003: 56-57). Tabula Rasa [6008] is the logical consequence of her lost of control.



Fig. 13. The Gang lose their memories.

personalization and Mary Sues

Xander is broadly known to be Whedon's alter ego throughout the show. Whedon affirmed to have written Xander's character with himself in his mind, using Xander's funniness to get the attention of the audience. *"there were times when I didn't feel as though I was getting attention I deserved, and I learned that if you said something funny, people would stop and listen. [...] At least for a little while."* (Havens 2003:5)

From Season Six on, this personalization is somehow translated to the Trio, who become the geeks in the program. Already in the *WB* years Jonathan appeared as "Mary Sue" in *Superstar* [4017], where he changed the perception of the world and put himself in Buffy's place as superhero.

"Buffy's Mary Sue, Jonathan, is unable to control this text - literalized as the monster version of himself. [...] Not only is he pathetic, but everyone knows that he is pathetic. The object of desire, the show, and its actual central character, Buffy, is punishing the fan who desires it: the fan. [...] [Jonathan] comes dangerously close to caricaturing the relationship of fans to the show" (Larbalestier, 2002:234)

Throughout Season Six the Trio *"teams up to take over Sunnydale"* [Flooded 6004] and fails. Finally in Season Seven Andrew becomes a non-acknowledged marginal figure of the Gang. Nevertheless Andrew twists the facts in his mind to become the protagonist of the action. *Storyteller* [7016] shows both Andrew's reality and his imagined leadership. In his fantasy Andrew becomes the main protagonist of the action, and put himself in scene as a Sherlock-Holmes-like narrator, that attempts to explain the *BtVS*-lore to the audience. In his vision, he sits in a leather armchair in a Victorian library, a setting that indicates knowledge, power and wealth, while in the show's reality he is sitting on the toilet lid balancing his video camera (Fig. 14).



Fig. 14. Andrew's fantasy (left) vs. reality (right).

As the episode goes on Andrew writes himself into the action as indispensable actor. His stories relay in his own distortion of reality. Even when he is prompted by Anya or Willow on his uselessness, he keeps on instructing the Potentials. Nevertheless, by the end of the episode Andrew has successfully inscribed itself in the show as a fully accepted character of the Scooby Gang.

emotional intensification

Emotional intensification is usually reached through hurt/comfort stories, most of them flowing into sexual context, although that is not imperative. As an example of hurt/comfort that does not flow into sexual innuendo *BtVS* offers the encounter between Buffy and Spike in *Touched* [7020]. Buffy has been kicked out from both leadership and her own house by the Potentials and looks for shelter in an abandoned house. Spike, who was away during the fight, comes back to Sunnydale only to learn of this new situation. He searches for her and as he finally finds her is faced by an emotionally wounded Buffy, who does not resemble the cool and hard slayer he is used to endure. This fact enables him to offer her solace reversing their balance of power. Spike takes the leading hand in the relationship and gives Buffy the support she needs, prompting her to ask for Spike's comfort and company for the very first time in the whole series and they pass the night embraced without any sexual innuendo whatsoever.

BUFFY: [...] I'm still making excuses. I've always cut myself off, I've always... being the Slayer made me different but it's my fault I stayed that way. People are always trying to connect to me but I just... slip away. You should know.

SPIKE: I seem to recall a certain amount of connecting.

BUFFY: Oh, please. We were never close. You just wanted me because I was unattainable.

[...]

SPIKE: You listen to me. I've been alive a bit longer than you and dead a lot longer than that. I've seen things you couldn't imagine and done

things I'd prefer you didn't. I don't exactly have a reputation for being a thinker. I follow my blood which doesn't exactly rush in the direction of my brain so I make a lot of mistakes. A lot of wrong bloody calls. A hundred plus years and there's only one thing I've ever been sure of. You....[...] Hey, look at me. I'm not asking you for anything. When I say I love you, it's not because I want you, or because I can't have you. It has nothing to do with me. I love what you are, what you do, how you try. I've seen your kindness and your strength. I've seen the best and the worst of you and I understand with perfect clarity exactly what you are. You are a hell of a woman. You're the one, Buffy.

BUFFY: I don't want to be the one.

[...]

BUFFY: Spike? ... Could you stay here?

SPIKE: Sure... That diabolical torture device, the comfy chair. Do me fine.

BUFFY: No. I mean... here. (she points to bed) Will you just hold me?



Fig. 15. Spike offers comfort to a "wounded" Buffy.

Death scenes are often used to put the main character over the edge and force him to actions he otherwise would not commit in ordinary circumstances. Killing main characters in fanfics is a taboo issue, and it is always considered an etiquette break. *BtVS* refrains of the subterfuge of dismissing the death as some kind of dream or vision, the usual fanfic plot to avoid critique. Tara is killed by Warren the morning after finally returning to Willow [*Seeing Red* 6019 & *Villains* 6020]. Tara's death throws Willow into a path of destruction that influences the rest of the series, right into Season Seven. The fan community response to this development was very negative, insisting in the link between the gay relationship and the death of the character

"While writers and producers of the show have argued that it was not homophobia that shaped this story line but the necessities of the season's story arc of moving Willow into a villainous position of a girl in maniacal possession of magical power, many fans see this as an irresponsible repetitions of the lesbian cliché [...] Many fans online lament stereotypical connections between lesbians, death and evil in the final episodes of season six." (Driver 2007:82)

"The Willow/Tara plot drew broader interest as well, tapping into gay right discourse and the responsibilities inherent in representing gay characters and themes, particularly when Tara was killed just after having sex with Willow. Fans who had been thrilled to see a sensitive portrayal of a long-term lesbian relationship were angered by the association between lesbian sex and violent death." (Levine, Parks 2007:10)

The discontent went as far as considering the scene as an *"act of betrayal to those viewers who saw Willow and Tara as lesbian role models"* (Aloi, 2003:45-46).

Willow's character development follows a pattern that is carefully settled along the previous seasons and constitutes *"a compelling study of the issue of irrationality, and forces us to confront the possibility that*

irrationality can be unintelligible, not just a mistake." (South 2003:113). Willow's lost of control is thus both, justified by the events and in tune with her trajectory in the series. The use of Tara's death as trigger follows the internal logic of the narrative, even if deprives the fans of most loved character. Nevertheless the Tara/Willow hard-core fans boycott all episodes after *Tabula Rasa* [6008] and admit only fanfic that ignore developments after this episode.



Fig. 16. Willow's grief-stricken by Tara's death.

erotization

Willow and Tara's relationship is carried on as subtext for the most part of the series. On occasion *magick* allusions work as metaphor for the sexual activity of the couple. Finally in *Seeing Red* [6019] Willow and Tara are shown on screen as kissing and as a sexual active couple. The scene in itself is no indication of fanfic, the fanfic character is given by the fact that this scene marks the end of Tara, who is killed next morning by Warren. Thus the scene erotizes a relationship that otherwise is not shown in this light. Tara and Willow emotional relationship, which began as a subtext of their use of *magick*, was avidly chosen by the fans to develop slash fics. As the series disclosed the emotional relationship of the characters the fanfics on the issue diminished as the subtext to work

from disappeared (cf. Busse 2002:207). As a logical consequence the show remove the relationship (killing Tara) after its potential for subtext became non-existent.



Fig. 17. Willow and Tara in *Seeing Red*.

slash

BtVS was originally conceived as a tween series, thus to be apt for viewing by teens and preteens alike. The major criticism of the *WB* audience was the harsh use of violence and sexual innuendo. The classification of the series as tween-television, made it difficult to depict slash on screen. Difficult yes, impossible no, back in Season Four the series became the target of the *FFPF* (Family Friendly Programming Forum) and the Parents Council for its depiction of sex in *Where the wild Things are* [4018], an episode that Buffy and Riley spend literally in bed. That episode, which was intended as a critical view of the relationship and the importance of sex, in fact depicted sex but cannot be considered slash as it lacks all other markers of the genre.

However, in the two final seasons all subgenres of slash are indeed present. For some authors *BtVS* the relation of the show to slash is evident

"Buffy not only condones slash, to some extent it is slash [...] overtly through the sado-masochistic sexual relationship of Buffy and Spike, but heavily alluded in the case of other characters. [...] Buffy complicates [these] gender identifications by overtly slashing Buffy and Spike, and in doing so the show extends the repertoire of slash because slash writers attempt to move on from the series. In the TV pairing of Buffy/Spike,

the sympathy resides with the abused male monster, not the female abuser.” (Williamson 2005:170-171)

first time

After over two season of innuendo, Buffy and Spike (known as *Spuffy* in fanfic) finally consume their relationship in a harsh scene that begins with a violent fight between them and ends under the ruins of a demolished house [*Smashed* 6009]. The demolition works as metaphor for the hardness of the encounter. According to Saxey (2002)

“Marti Noxon, an executive producer on Buffy the Vampire Slayer, says staffers on Buffy and Angel know better ‘than to disrespect the creative process of any of these people... It’s flattering because something you’re creating - a universe you’re part of - has inspired people to go off and continue imagining’.” (Saxey 2002:209)

Stafford (2007) notes out that

“many viewers were shocked by the graphic nature of the final scene of Smashed, but according to Marti Noxon [Smashed’s writer, N.A.], it could have been a lot racier. ‘You should have seen the shot at the end before UPN cautioned us’, she says, ‘it was much, much longer [...] we needed to obscure the action for the network’” (Stafford 2007:335-336)

In fanfic, first time stories narrate the step up into romance grow up from friendship, and are used to add a sexual layer to relationships between close-friends. In *BtVS*, first time plots have had always a by-taste of disaster right back to *Innocence* [2014], the episode in which Buffy lost her virginity to Angel, only to discover that it cost him his soul and turned him once more into the evil Angelus. Thus is not surprising, when the first time plot on *Smashed*, does not mark the beginning of a “wonderful” relationship, but for the contrary the initial step into self-destruction for both characters.



Fig. 18. Spuffy's first time.

virtual marriage

The much expected wedding of Xander and Anya should have taken place in *Hell Bell's* [6016], but just before the wedding Xander is visited by a demon, who persuades him to be his "future self" and show him glimpses of his marriage with Anya. According to the demon Xander and Anya marriage is doom to unhappiness. In Xander's visions Anya and Xander appear as ageing couple, dealing with their bitterness and their hate for each other. They have two children, one of which shows obviously demons features, a fact that makes Xander hateful and triggers Anya's anger. At the end of the vision, Xander sees himself attempting to murder Anya to escape his fate. Xander finally convinced that the visions could become a reality, decides to not marry Anya and abandons her at the altar, believing that this is the only way to spare her all the suffering. Unfortunately the abandon of Anya at the altar, forces her to return to her former demon-self.



Fig. 19. Xander and Anya virtual marriage.

hurt/comfort

In *Touched* [2010] the First appears to Faith in the guise of Mayor Wilkins, Big Bad from Season Three and Faith mentor at that time, to who she developed a kind of parental relationship, being he in fact the only person ever to have taken care of her, even if in some wicked way. As Faith rejects the vision, she turns back to face Wood, whom she does not expect to find in her room. In this situation Faith is depicted as shaken and hurt and Wood offers sympathy

WOOD: Listen, nobody wants to be alone, Faith. We all want someone who cares, to be touched that way. I mean, the First may deal in figments but that wanting is real. [Touched 2010]

In the scene the roles are inverted, the self-composed Wood masters the situation, while the strong Slayer depends on his comfort. In their daily relationship howsoever, has always been Faith the one with power over Wood, she self remaining inaccessible and in control. The scene provides a glimpse of Faith's true nature and her fears, a theme that have been broadly explored in fanfic.



Fig. 20. Faith finds comfort with Wood.

sex scenes

After her abandonment at the altar Anya wishes revenge, faithful to her nature, she tries to move one of his friends to make a wish, in order to be able to act and exact revenge on Xander [*Entropy* 6018]. As Xander's friends do not react adequately, she turns to Spike and tries to manipulate him into a wish. Spike self is deeply wounded by Buffy's decision to terminate their relationship, and seems to be a suitable candidate as Anya and Spike relate to each other through their common experiences of breaking up. They ended up in the Magic Shop. In these surroundings, and with the "help" of a great amount of alcohol they sleep together. Unfortunately from them, the Trio, who has been observing the Magic Shop by video surveillance, are just been found out by the Gang, that now have access to the encounter via stream video. Gang and audience became united in voyeurism.



Fig. 21. Anya and Spike sexual encounter.

noncon

Nonconsensual sex fanfic are most controversial, for some fans they are only fantasies that allows the author to explore interactions between characters that could not otherwise interact in such a intimate way. For others these kinds of fanfics are just the mirror of the "sick" mind of their authors. Rape scenes could be accepted if they are used as indoctrination against the action.

In *Seeing Red* [6019] Spike attempts to confront Buffy with their situation and explain his "one night stand" (as he sees it) with Anya in *Entropy* [6018]. Buffy rejects any explanations, Spike lose control and tries to rape Buffy. As he becomes aware of his doing, flees the house and Sunnydale, only to return in the next Season with a soul of his own. This noncon text enables the further development of Spike character in the series, and thereto his relationship to Buffy. This rape scene is the core of Spike redemption, as it constitutes the cause of his pilgrimage to Africa in search for his soul.

This rape is a metaphor for the narcissistic pathology Buffy brought back for the grave, then "*Spike [is] not simple an unhealthy boyfriend choice*

for Buffy; but an image of her own shadow, a reminder of every greedy, primal need she has disowned for the sake of being a hero." (Poole 2007:21). The rape becomes a request to the "viewers to empathize as Buffy, the heroine, struggled with her own narcissistic issues." (ib. 26)

The Spuffy fans felt betrayed by such depiction of Spike's character and repeatedly underlined that this scene is totally out of character. The Forum William the Bloody (<http://wtb.buffy-cazavampiros.com/>) mentions under his beliefs "*Spike nunca ha violado a Buffy*" (Spike never raped Buffy). In the same forum Moonlight5 elaborates

"Pero se equivoca una sola vez...en Seeing Red... (me disgustó no sabéis cuanto la escena...) y trataron de cargarse un personaje perfecto....mostrandolo como un cruel violador cuando ni siquiera llegó a perpetuarse el acto...mostrando una Buffy indefensa?? sin fuerza?? (que yo sepa no estaba bajo ningún conjuro y era más que capaz de defenderse...) pero la pusieron como victima...y los scoobies no le perdonaron.." (Moonligh5, June 23, 2010)

"he mistakes only once.... in Seeing Red (you cannot imagine how disgusted I was by the scene) and they tried to dismantle a perfect character... showing him as a cruel rapist, even if he did not consumed the act... they show an exposed Buffy?? Without power?? (in my opinion she was under no spell and was able to defend herself...) but they set her as the victim... and the Scoobies never forgive him" (my own translation)

Even as Spike reiterates his love for Buffy, his very first action after (erroneously) discovering in *Smashed* [6009] that his chip has stop working, is to attack and suck dry a human, proving his predator-nature, his seemingly "domesticated-self" being only a result of the Initiative's chip. Only with the returning of his soul at the end of Season Six [*Grave* 6022], will he be able to recover a part of his humanity and reject his predatory traits. Thus his attempted rape of Buffy is, if disturbing, still coherently from a narrative point of view and offers a scopophilic reading of Buffy's desires (cf. Mulvey 1990:30-38). Nevertheless *Seeing Red* [6019] provoked a critical reception wave among the fans, from those

who condemned Spike to those who feel sympathy for his action. This episode surely "*hit a nerve within viewers and fans. It hit a nerve with the series creator and the series writers too.*" (Cox 2008:24). Espenson and Fury expressed their concern about the damage inflicted into Spike's character, one of the favorites of the fans.



Fig. 22. Spike attacks Buffy.

SM & bondage

This genre of fanfic uses sadomasochist elements and bondage as visual incentive for the development of sex-scenes, or to hurt a character in order to develop a hurt/comfort story. In *Bring on the Night* [7010] Spike is kidnapped by the First to be used as a sacrifice to open the seal to the demon dimension. In the next episode [*Showtime* 7011] we are witness to the actual sacrifice. The scene rejoices in a wounded Spike, bonded to a wheel and suspended over the seal, his blood slowly falling into the seal, and opening it. The sexual undertone here is full intended.



Fig. 23. Spike is abducted by the First.

7. THE IMAGE OF THE FANS IN THE SHOW

The fans have always had a special place in the plot, the writers developed a relationship with the audience through fansites (i.e. the Bronze) and discussed the show with them from the very beginning. Nevertheless Season Six and Seven take this relationship to the next level, depicting the fans, as such, in the plot. Two major images of the fandom can be discerned: the negative and the positive one. For illustration *BtVS* creates respectively the characters of the Trio and the Potentials.

7.1 The Trio of Villains

The Trio is the epithet of the “fan” as seeing by the broad public. The three individuals form a group, whose cohesion relays just on their fandom activities. They are nerds, without social skills, who have not acquired yet a minimum level of maturity. In despite of their age, they behave as children playing with their favorite tools and dreaming of an existence as “Supervillains”. They borrow their plans from comic books and action figures, and seem to be more interested in this paraphernalia as in actual human beings. As citizens of Sunnydale all three have come across Buffy in one way or another, and aspire to overtake her in order

to proclaim "their own reign of evil".

The Trio acts as the brainless mass that come together to shield themselves from the obligations of modern society, "*attempt[ing] to compensate for a perceived personal lack of autonomy, absence of community, incomplete identity, lack of power and lack of recognition*" (Jensen 2002:348).

Each member of the group displays characteristics that are traditionally associated with pernicious fandom. Warren's socially ineptitude became clear by his need to build a girlfriend in *I was made to love you* [5015]. Jonathan and Andrew appear as socially isolated, timid and rejected. Jonathan tried to end his life in *Earshot* [3018] as consequence of his rejection in High School. Andrew, from whom we know little, beside the fact of his brother being a bully, tries to fit in, and subordinates his wishes to Warren in order to be "accepted". Later on in Season Seven he is reluctantly accepted in the Scooby Gang and this "attitude" changes. Warren who shows dictatorial traits fulfills the needs of belonging of both Jonathan and Andrew. Warren is already "in too deep", his behavior becomes pathologic, to the point that he recurs to violence to impose his will, this path heads ultimately to his death (at Willow's hands). Jonathan and Andrew lacking his guidance scatter away, to return again in Season Seven, where the differences between both characters are evident. Jonathan becomes the leader and is doomed; Andrew who is rather crowd member will survive and be eventually accepted in the Gang. In fact Andrew just changes one crowd (the Trio) for another (the Gang). All the way Andrew's character hangs in the edge of queerness for the benefit of the audience

"because Buffy was conceived with the specific purpose of targeting and underserved audience of girls, it centralizes and naturalizes non-normative gender positioning and roles [...] and thus makes queer dynamics part of the internal logic of the narrative itself." (McCracken, 2007:199)

Throughout Season Six all depictions of the Trio are engineering as

depictions of immature, social impaired, young males, who are still stuck into their fantasy world, in infancy. In their very first appearance of screen, *Flooded* [6003], they portrayed as kid playing role games. They sit in the basement, a big screen in their back shows a computer game (Fig. 24 a), when the demon they have hired pays a visit.

DEMON You hired me to create chaos and carnage for you. Told me you were powerful men, commanding machines, magicks, the demon realms below.

Under all the bravado, they are in fact just some little boys, who become easily afraid and turn to kneel before the demon they summoned themselves in order to placate his wrath (Fig. 24 b-c). But even in this situation they cannot asset the reality and Warren promptly returns to their fantasy world, using sci-fi quotations

*WARREN Whoa, whoa whoa whoa, big guy, hey, let's back things up a **parsec**, okay. You kill us ... everybody loses. You let us live, we give you...*

The reference to Star Trek fandom is reinforced by the use of the "Vulcan greeting" for voting (Fig. 24d). A flash-back informs the audience on their decision to "*team up and take over Sunnydale*" while playing Monopoly (Fig. 24e) and their bizarre "*mission statement*" (Fig. 24f), consisting of pointless things, such as conjure fake IDs or miniaturizing Fort Knox, the first easy doing without magical aid in US society and the second an example of their childlike minds: should they succeed in the deed, they will also miniaturize the gold, a whole senseless objective. But is in the second part of the "to do board", where their deficiencies become clear, the schedule of "*girls; girls; and the gorilla thing*" targets their sexual immaturity and their impossibility to have relations with the other sex by normal means.



Fig. 24. First Trio characterization.

At the end of the episode, after Buffy has killed the demon, they are convinced that “*they can do anything, [...] got all the stuff [they] ever wanted and they didn’t have to earn it.*” They live their fantasy and their conversation mirror they “immature fan views”

JONATHAN It's true, my friends. The way I see it ... life is like an interstellar journey. Some people go into hypersleep and travel at sub-light speeds... (Andrew and Warren nod in agreement) ...only to get where they're going after years of struggle, toil and hard, hard work. We, on the other hand ...

ANDREW Blast through the space-time continuum in a wormhole?

JONATHAN Gentlemen ... crime is our wormhole.

ANDREW But ... everyone knows... if the width of a wormhole cavity is a whole number of wavelengths, plus a fraction of that wavelength? The coinciding particle activity collapses the infrastructure.

WARREN Dude. Don't be a geek.

The text characterizes them as Trekkies, referring to events pertaining “*Star Trek Voyager*”, and show their incapacity to look at reality under standard society rules. Their language is anchored in their fantasies, they are not able to express their own thoughts, but rely in bits of script

that they molded to their needs, thinking they are somehow above society, not realizing they are in fact just standing outside it, and are being regarded as a bunch of geeks. Warren's statement is contradicted by his actions. He wears a virtual reality headset and aims with a toy weapon, which qualifies him as geek, but he is not able to see his own image, thus distances himself from the other two. In the following episodes Warren's representation as a lonely psychopath with Andrew and Jonathan as member of the crowd becomes more and more visible.



Fig. 25. Warren playing in a virtual reality environment.

"[Warren] is, like many other tough guys, associated with masculinized science and technology: while Jonathan uses magic and Andrew summons demons, Warren invents gadgets and uses a gun. He tries to valorize this as a masculine quality equal to physical power" (Jowett 2005:114)

The characterization of the Trio as a group of asocial nerds is continually offered throughout Season Six. In the Series next episode *Life Serial* [6005] they develop a game to rate the performance of the Slayer when altering her reality. Each of them issues a test for Buffy to master. The sole idea of "rating" the Slayer's performance links to the "rating" of episodes by fan communities, but is in special Jonathan's "quest" the one who raises the metaphor to a full new level. Buffy, while trying to get a job at the Magic Shop, is caught in a time loop until she succeeds in selling a "Mummy hand" to a customer. The whole sketch is a "living rerun" in which we see Buffy trying to accomplish the same task all over again.

The Trio is a place marker for the remote control “armed” fan, who plays his/her favorite scene endlessly. This fact is underlined by their conversation

WARREN Smart. She's figuring out the game. Satisfy the customer.

Well, she might just have you beat there, Stretch.

JONATHAN No way. It hasn't even started yet.

ANDREW I just hope she solves it faster than Data did on the ep of TNG where the Enterprise kept blowing up.

WARREN Or Mulder, in that X-Files where the bank kept exploding.

ANDREW Scully wants me so bad.

The Trio is incapable to discern between reality (in this case the Buffyverse) and TV-lore (represented here by *Star Trek- The Next Generation* and the *X-Files*). They watch the whole proceedings on screen, as fans enjoying their favorite show.



Fig. 26. Buffy tries to get hold of the “Mummy hand”.

The next appearance of the Trio occurs in *Smashed* [6009] where they rob a diamond from the Sunnydale Museum, which they will unwittingly use in *Gone* [6011] to render Buffy invisible. And it is precisely at the end of this episode that Buffy becomes finally aware of both the presence of the Trio and his intentions. From this point forward the Trio updates from "funny nerdy geeks" to "vile, hateful, misogynist males" who impose a danger for society. In *Dead Things* [6013] Warren proofs his new tool, a gadget that renders women will-less and converts them in sex-slaves, on Katrina, her former girlfriend. As the effect wears off and Katrina comes to her senses rejecting Warren, he kills her and put the blame on the Slayer. Stroud (2003) understands the Trio as the embodiment of human duality in *BtVS*,

"[Jonathan, Warren,] and Andrew, three intelligent and geeky human teenagers. They decide one day that they will rule Sunnydale and destroy the Slayer. [...] This element of BtVS illustrates that demons and human can both be harmful elements within a community if their external freedom is used in such a way as to limit the freedom of others." (Stroud 2003:193)

even so, it cannot be negated that the "ones" to commit murder, and get away with it, are precisely the elements in the (*BtVS*) society who are to be classified as socially inept, a view which is broadly spread.

"Fandom, however, is seen as risk, even dangerous, compensatory mechanism. The fan-as-pathology model implies that there is a thin line between 'normal' and excessive fandom. [...] The literature implies that 'normal' fans are constantly in danger of becoming 'obsessive loners' or 'frenzied crowd members'." (Jensen 2002:348)

In *Normal Again* [6017] the whole Buffyverse is put under scrutiny as Buffy is poisoned and hallucinates about been a teenager girl committed to an asylum. Her doctor characterizes the Trio as "*just three pathetic men, who like to play with toys*" [6017]. The image of the fan as a "deviance" from the norm and "*potential fanatic*" seem to be fulfilled (cf. Jensen 2002:343)

As a self-fulfilling prophecy the next direct encounter with the Trio ends in catastrophe [Seeing Red 6019]. Warren steals the “Orbs of Nezla’kban”, which should make him invincible. The artifact is shaped as two round orbs, which Warren carries in a bag attached to his belt: a metaphor for maleness

WARREN What's the matter baby? You never fight a real man before?

As Buffy finally destroys the orbs, Warren loses his power. This “castration” converts Warren in a homicidal maniac, who tries to exact revenge on Buffy with a fire weapon and incidentally shoots Tara to death.



Fig. 27. The Orbs of Nezla’kban

The image of the effeminate “fan”, whose lack of maleness makes him both a target for mockery and danger for his environs comes once more to mind.

“Buffy as a program, undermines the credibility of an abstract notion of the male soldier-hero through parody, self-deprecating humor, and ironic distancing from gender stereotypes.” (Early 2003:58)

The Trio’s narrative forms part of an embedded fabula, which explains and determines the primary fabula, even if they are not part of the narrative, their action influence the course of the primary fabula, the everyday life of Buffy & the Gang. The Trio’s exists on the border between narrative and non-narrative text, the audience get glimpses of their lives, but only as explanation for Buffy’s journey (cf. Bal, 1985:144). The Trio as such does not seem to have a life of their own.

The last three episodes of the Series are centered in the issue of

abnormal behavior. After Tara's death, Willow becomes instable, and drove by his hunger for revenge, pursuits Warren and kills him. Afterwards she tries to also kill Andrew and Jonathan, who, in absence of Warren ill influence, have returned to their normal "geek" character. The Gang confronts Willow, sparing thus the two nerds for the next Season.

Most authors assign the thematic change in Season Six to Marti Noxon's writing and producing style

"[Marti Noxon's] dark touch can be seen in everything from Spike and Buffy's raw and destructive sexual encounters to Willow's addiction to magic, from The Nerds of Doom murdering Warren's ex-girlfriend to the literal ripping to pieces of the Buffybot." (Perry 2009:18)

The Series change in "taste" also corresponds with Whedon's departure of day-to-day production in favor of his new project *Firefly*, "*the UPN era may be the post-Joss era as well*" (Lavery 2002:255).

Even an author such as Lint, who classify Season Six at the top of his favorites, lacks to make the connection to fan representation, and focuses on the metaphor for addition and darkness on the season

"My pet peeve was the sixth season, not only because of the silly and awkwardly handled premise of magic as a metaphor for addition, but also the show seemed to lose the ability to mix drama with humor. It's is possible to accept the dark turn when viewing the seven seasons as a whole, but that doesn't change the fact that for a lot of people the sixth season was no longer fun while it was airing. [...] without that darkness of the sixth season, the seventh and final one would have lost much of its impact." (2004:284)

7.2 Potentials

In Season Seven the "fan" characterization is splitted between Andrew's character and the so-called Potentials. Andrew cannot be strictly considered as a Potential: firstly he is a boy and all potentials are to be girls, secondly he is a former member of the Trio and thus counted in the

"evil side", an evil quality that will be accentuated in Season 7 until Andrew has the opportunity to redeem himself in *Storyteller* [7016]

Whereas Andrew is represented in Season Six as the "invisible queer", "clueless queer member of a tight homosocial unit", and "closeted gay man" in Seasons Seven the notion is sharpened as the "homosexual as killer" (Pender 2010:95)

However Andrew's character goes through a profoundly change in Season Seven: although Andrew kills Jonathan immediately after his return to Sunnydale [*Conversations with Dead People* 7007], he repents after Buffy confronts him with the act [*Storyteller* 7016] and becomes a full member (if even underestimated) of the Scooby Gang. Andrew's trajectory shows that the fan could become a full member only by attaching to the rules. Andrew loses his ambivalent sexuality thought Season Seven: from idolizing Spike at the beginning, even matching his wear style [*Never leave me* 7009], he develops a fancy for the Potentials and Faith, which will climax outside the Series timeline as he is rendered as a womanized in Angel [*The Girl in Question* 5020] and "Queen of the Slayers" (cf. Holder, 2005). Of course Andrew does not lose his "fanic" quality over night, he still constantly refers to fandom, even engaging Giles, Xander and Amanda to a game of *Dungeons and Dragons* the very night before Sunnydale is destroyed forever [*Chosen* 7022], to which they agree to pass the time. The scene shows that not only that Andrew has evolved, but he has also been able to approach the Gang to his own world. Giles comment (see below) shows this trajectory

ANDREW You go through the door and are confronted by Trogdor the Burninator.

GILES Oh, bugger it. Fight. (rolling a dice)

ANDREW Adios to 5 hit points. Trogdor has badly wounded you.

GILES Well, wait a minute. What about my... bag of illusions?

ANDREW Illusions against a Burninator? Silly, silly british man.

AMANDA I invoke a time flux on Trogdor.

ANDREW Step down, girlfriend, you can't just—

AMANDA Ninth level sorcerer, and I carry the emerald chalice. Trogdor is frozen in time. Deal with it.

XANDER Smackdown on Red Riding Hood. This could get ugly.

GILES Could it possibly get uglier? **I used to be a highly respected watcher, and now I'm a wounded dwarf with the mystical strength of a doily.** I just wish I could sleep.

AMANDA What kind of person could sleep on a night like this?

XANDER Only the crazy ones.(referring to Anya, who is in fact sleeping)

[Chosen 7022]

Season Seven offers also a new fan image, that of the annoying fan. The Potentials are introduced as those girls who have the power to become a slayer in the present generation. According to the Buffyllore, should Buffy die, another Slayer will be immediately "activated". Season Seven plays with the notion, that there is not such pre-chosen heiress to the post, but in the contrary a bunch of girls, with the necessary abilities to become a slayer, even if just one of them would be indeed become the real "Slayer".

"By demystifying the aura of the singular Slayer with finality, Whedon opens a path for every girl to confront - and ultimately conquer - her demons." (Ostow, 2004:355)

These girls are supposed to already have the capacity and the attributes that would point them out. After the first group is taken to Sunnydale by Giles [*Bring on the Night* 7010], they keep on coming at regular intervals. The Potentials' narrative can be in itself read as a fantastic storyline within the Buffyverse

"There are only two kinds of fantastic story: the Alternate World and the Trespass' [...] In 'Alternate World' sotries, the reader goes on a journey to another are, another planet, a world that follows different rules. In 'Trespass' stories, a stranger come to town" (Westerfield 2003:30-31)

The Potentials are, even if essential for the narrative development,

"strangers" to the Buffyverse and readily act as such, throughout the season.

According to the storyline, the First Evil has settled a complot to kill all Potentials, in order to be able to kill Buffy and Faith afterwards without risking the activation of a new Slayer. "*Buffy is certainly faced with existential choice of the most fundamental nature [...] having to choose to be the chosen one [...] and authentic existential choice.*" (Richardson & Rabb 2007:21). By relinquishing her birth-right in favor of all the remaining Potentials, Buffy makes a fundamental choice that distinguishes her from the traditional hero, which choice to suffer the burden all by himself.

By the end of the Series [*Chosen* 7022] Buffy has come forward with the plan to convert all Potentials in "real" Slayers by sharing her power with all of them. The image of the screen hero sharing her power with her fans is a powerful one, and speaks in favor of the fandom. Unfortunately the characters of the Potentials are two-dimensional drawn, and offer an image of the fan, that correlates with the broad opinion of fans as brainless, passive nerds.

With exception of Kennedy's character, which actively plays a role in Willow's romantic life, all Slayers take a negative critical side on the show. They are repeatedly shown as the ones who do absolutely nothing else as sit around and eat all groceries. When even Andrew plays an active role hosting strategy meetings [*Touched* 7020] or hunting the Sunnydale's Mall for groceries and supplies with Anya [*End of Days* 7021], the Potentials rest at home, whining about their situation. When asked by Buffy to take responsibility after the defeat in the vineyard, they opt to kick the Slayer out of her own house [*Empty Places* 7019]. Not able to take care of themselves they choose Faith as a new leader, only to put the blame on her when they lose the next fight.

Most members of the fandom agree to the fact that the Potentials seem to portray not the "real" fandom, but a kind of "forced"/"wish-to-be" fan

that do not know/observe that rules of the (Buffy)verse.

[TimeTravellingBunny](#)

Slayer

[..]

All I can see is that Andrew is very much a substitute for a fan of the show, he treats people as if they're characters in a TV show, he is a Spuffy and Xanya shipper, etc.

But the Potentials really aren't like fans of the show at all. For starters, they don't even know much about Buffy or any of the other characters, they're thrown into this and they're more like outside observers to whom it's all new... Actually, if you want to correlate, they're in a way like casual viewers.

<http://www.buffyforums.net/forums/showthread.php?t=17917&highlight=Fans>>

[Lyri](#)

Library Researcher

To me, the Potentials are like those friends you make sit and watch the show. You know, the ones who are like 'you actually watch this garbage?' and they make fun of you for loving the show so much. So you decide to sit them down and make them watch, and it doesn't matter what episode you start with, they're always gonna question everything Buffy does because they're determined that they'll hate the show.

The Trio remind me of RPG's, the nerds who always choose the over-the-top roles, like the warlock, or the Watcher or the Slayer. They're always trying to make it to the top, but they don't have the skills, so something always holds them back.

Andrew actually makes it into the inner circle, though, and he ends up a member of Buffy's closest team, and that's, like, the ultimate thing for a fan of anything, to actually mix with their heroes.

[Para Bellum](#)

Si vis pacem, para bellum

<http://www.buffyforums.net/forums/showthread.php?t=17917&highlight=Fans>>

[cheryl4ba](#)

Slayer

Yeah, what she said. The Potentials were determined to hate on Buffy and play the blame game every chance they got...which depending on the season, could have very well went along with a segment of the fanbase. Sadly.

<http://www.buffyforums.net/forums/showthread.php?t=17917&highlight=Fanss>>

cheryl4ba points out an important fact: in 2001 the members of "The Bronze" (the official website of the fandom) closed the site, which was situated inside the WB Network, and moved the content to a new site. Most members who were already disappointed by what they perceived as a two-level fandom, according to the individual access to information, make their frustration clear in blogs and fanzines. Most members of the fandom read "Whedon's answer" behind the characters of the Potentials, even if an official Whedon's view on this matter has not been yet published.

An interesting representation of the fan as "the awful feminine hysteric crown" can be found in the episode *Him* [7006], where all women develop a crush on RJ, the quarterback of the Sunnydale football team. This irrational reaction is explaining as due to the magical quality of R.J.'s football jacket, which present itself as an object of fan paraphernalia. In order to draw R.J.'s attention to themselves the women are willing to perform all kind of tasks: Anya attempts to rob a jeweler; Willow does some spell that will convert R.J. into a lesbian woman; Buffy decides to kill Principal Wood, who has grounded R.J. at school; Dawn overwhelming by them all decides to commit suicide (not seeing any possibility of winning R.J.'s attention, she wishes to "die for him"). In this episode the four women are used as an image of the fans as thread, violent, paranoiac, mental, superficial, who only see appearances (the jacket) and do not reflect on reality (R.J.'s real character). Even if Dawn's feelings seem to be real, she is criticized as immature girl too, who falls undyingly in love with a constructed image and not the real person.

The gender perspective in *BtVS* becomes blurry, as the equation female = hysteria takes place precisely in a text known for his avant-gardist point of view, thus generating a circular reasoning

"If gender hierarchy produces and consolidates gender, and if gender hierarchy presupposes an operative notion of gender, then gender is what causes gender, and the formulation culminates in tautology."
(Buttler 2006:xiii)

Papart in her study on *BtVS* male viewers concludes that the issue of feminism is of importance for heterosexual males, who find themselves attracted by the use of language, action and humor in the series, while gay viewers seem to point out the issue of feminism in the series as a reason to watch, even having *"a few serious objections to reading Buffy's character as gendered or the show itself as political"* (2003:83).

Nevertheless all three offered fan representations (Trio, Potentials, the awful feminine crowd) draw a negative image of fandom, which seems to collide with the expert's interpretation of the show

"The power of evil is depicted as being as much as part of human existence and goodness. Interestingly, however, throughout the season the First Evil takes on explicitly misogynistic configurations in its attempt to defeat Buffy and, in turn, overcome the powers of good." (Knowles 2007:148)

8. FAN-VIEWS ON CHARACTER DEVELOPMENT

As repeatedly stated *BtVS* fans are most involved and critical with the product. A great number of fans can be listed under the term "aca-fans" most of them working actively in the "Buffy-Studies" field.

"economy based on knowledge is also responsible for the driving of the consumerist economy in many ways, especially as this myriad of texts produces and reiterates what we 'know' about Buffy." (Hastie 2007:81)

Surprisingly the *BtVS*-academia seems not to have an overwhelming interest in the study of fandom regarding the Buffyverse. While papers on gender studies and philosophical aspects of the show are repeatedly published, the study of fan representation has not yet been launched. Most papers on the issue deal with the figure of Andrew from Season Seven onwards. Shull & Shull read the character as "*marketer's dream*", stating that he, as a fan, fulfills the image of "*the target audience [...] the 18-to-34-year-old male advertising demographic*" (2009:75). While Shull & Shull insist on the "*satirical commentary*" putting in the character by the writers to show "*how products are pitched to certain audiences, along with the dangers of critical thinking being ignored, under-developed, or dialed down*" (ib.), most of the non-academic fans on the blogs fail to see this satirical component and take Andrew at face value, i.e. as a nerd without social skills, who deserves to be bullied and abused, not only by his buddies in Season Six, but also by the Scoobies in the following Season.

This example shows the first difference between both fan pools. Aca-fans tend to see in *BtVS* a great deal of philosophical content, which the broad audience does not. From the very beginning *BtVS* has appealed to academia, which greeted the critical statements of the show on gender, society and youth. Back in the 1990s, series featuring female characters in an active leading role were sparse. Girl teenagers were systematically portrayed as light-heads, whose main live interests were cosmetic and the unreachable boys, who should be conquered in order to gain a happy life, the final price being marriage and the pleasures of housewifery. Such role models were a thorn in the side of feminist academia. The arrival of *BtVS* to the field was most appreciated news.

The Series offered a distinct fresh view of adolescence, contradicting, from the very first scene, the expectations of the audience, as the naïve blond girl becomes not the victim, but the aggressor [*Welcome to the Hellmouth* 1001]. Buffy became rapidly the best spot in academia-town. Whedon was delighted to share his views with the audience, mostly

through “*the Bronze*” blog and conferences. By the end of the *WB* years at the very latest, Buffy was fully established as a “study field” that displayed herself as a willingly model on high culture popular television. Non-academic fans, on the other side, complain on the dichotomy between the immense corpus of academic papers, and the scarcity of popular related fandom. This statement is not without fundament, while academia papers on Buffy keep on appearing at least in a quarterly basis in the *BtVS* related *Slayage – The Journal of Whedon Studies Association.*, new novelizations on the show ceased to be published in 2008 (*One Thing or your Mother*, by Kirsten Beyer). The impact of *Slayage* in the development of *BtVS*-fandom is paramount

“Slayage show us a new form of writing about television: the fan is the academic, in a site which is institutional (the editorial board of accredited academics) and yet outside of institutions (you do not have to enroll to study Buffy, there is not fee, no any gatekeepers, guarding entry to the association; you do not have to attend a university library to find these articles.” (McKee, 2005:69)

The research through the various blogs and websites showed that fans in these blogs do not read the magazine, while most academia (even not *BtVS* related) refer to the magazine most assiduously.

As we have seen, in the show itself, both Trio and Potentials represent the section of fandom that are been target as “groupies” by the broad public: some kind of brainless entities, who are unable to act as individuals and need the comfort of the group to function. This group should not been understand as a team but as a crowd, a horde humanoids that one given a specific direction move steadily towards it. The power behind the screen differs in both cases: the Trio is manipulated by Warren, while the Potentials seem to more of less willingly follow the rightful order issued by Buffy and Giles. However the process remains the same. Both groups react to the stimuli, without taken any responsibility on their part. The outcome of both is to be condemned to oblivion. As characters choose free will and begin to act,

as opposed to react, their faith changes. Andrew actively rejects his "evil ways" after weeping on the seal and repenting in *Storyteller* [7016]. From this point forward he becomes an accepted member of the Gang and plays a significant role in the destruction of evil at the end of the series and forward (as previously stated Andrew's character survived the series finale and still plays a substantial role in the sequel of the series as graphic novel).

In the case of the Potentials an analogous process can be observed. Only a couple of Potentials succeed in surviving the series finale, all of them distinguishable from the rest by their capacity to take their life in their own hands, such as Kennedy, Amanda, Rona and Vi. From the very beginning Kennedy separates herself from the group taking over sleep arrangements and positioning herself on Willow's sphere [*Bring on the Night* 7010]. In *Potential* [7012] Amanda is confronted with her destiny as Potential and accepts this responsibility consciously. Finally, in *Empty Places* [7019], Rona stands up against Buffy's leadership

RONA: You know what? I am sick of your deal with this Spike guy. This isn't about him. This is about you. You're being reckless.

BUFFY: What?

RONA: You are! I don't even know you, and I can tell! You are so obsessed with beating Caleb, you are willing to jump into any plan without thinking.

[...]

BUFFY: (commandingly) Which is why you have to fall in line! I'm still in charge here.

RONA: Why is that, exactly?

The validity of her decision is of no consequence here, just her determination to take responsibility for her own actions.

Vi, who begin to show some initiative towards the end of the series in *End of days* [7021] and *Chosen* [7022], shows her new achieved leader quality by instilling self-confidence after the final battle in an injured Rona

VI: (*grabs Rona's face*) *Look at me! This is nothing! Stay awake! This is nothing!* [7022]

Thus, we can conclude that, according to the series, under the layers of freakiness, there is a core of responsibility that does not show out in all "fans". The ones who reach this core and act in consequence taking responsibility, i.e. Andrew, Kennedy, Amanda and Rona, are accepted, all the others are condemned. The former become real "fans" and enrich the fandom, the later are relegated to the ranks of useless geekiness.

The problem with this view is that it is only readily available to academia, the greater bunch of non-academic fans are "blinded" by the appearances, and these, in the series, postulate fans "apparently" as a brainless crowd. While Daniel insists that "*Buffy takes the fears of teenagers (in particular teenage girls) and gives them a physical form for the characters to face and overcome*" (2010:150), the audience is confronted with a bunch of frightened Potentials, who confronted with their fears, do not overcome them, but in the contrary are bound to perish without chance in the final battle, even after having shared the slayer powers. Thus while Buffy is seen by academia as a "*symbol of female empowerment*" (Daugherty 2002:149) and in fact the fan community perceives Buffy as a such, the representation of this same fan community in the character of the Potentials shows a completely different image. Independently of the "Potential" narrative *BtVS* becomes a myth when it "*attempts to answer questions people would rarely think, or dare to think, of asking.*" (Drummond 1996:31), but do not succeed in providing a gratifying answer outside of academia.

AFTERWORD

In the process of analyzing the show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, from the point of view of anthropology of fandom, the directly relationship between the show and the fandom postulated by multiple authors, such as Tracy (2003), Wilcox (2002, 2005), Yeeffeth (2003) and Zweering & Gatson (2002) has been corroborated. The show's interaction with the fans can be found at two levels. On one level *BtVS* use the phenomena of fandom to draw specific characters in the show (i.e. Trio and Potentials), which are build both as flat characters at first side and as multilayered characters in some cases. These multilayered characters (Andrew, Kennedy, Amanda, Rona) form the counterpoint to the brainless fan and show that fandom can indeed become a fruitful field for asserting each own personalities. The fact that even the most responsible person can be biased sometimes and become a brainless brute is addressed in the show in the episode *Him* [7006], in which the feminine members of the gang act as stereotyped fans. The show offers a mirror for everyone to see his/her image. Unfortunately the evidence of this mirror is only grasped by aca-fans, while non-academic fans ignore its existence.

On other level the interaction of the show with fandom can be found in the scripts, or more accurately in the script technique used in the show. As the aforementioned examples have show (s. Chapter 6), *BtVS* uses fanfic techniques to build the story arc and get the message across. The given examples, which are not exhaustive, connect *BtVS* storylines directly with fanfic genres and verify that *BtVS* operates very closely to the realm of fanfic.

A continuously addressing to fandom in general (from Star Trek, through Harry Potter to Lord of the Rings) and in particular by acknowledging *BtVS* fans and authors (Pongara, Holden, amongst others) and fandom specialists as Henry Jenkins, shows the permanent interest of the writers with the phenomenon. (cf. Tjardes 2003; Waggoner 2010).

During the research stage for this thesis some insight on fandom was gained. The process showed that the *BtVS* community works in analogous form to any other researched fandom, the inclusion or exclusion in the group is paramount, researchers “from outside” are unwelcome and regarded as “stalkers”, an observation previously made by Baym (2000) and Bloustien (2002).

In the course of research the difference in reception between fans as general and aca-fans has also been verified. This difference do not consist in education level or class, but simply on the fact aca-fans are both fans and academia, and look into the fandom with a premeditated view, while other fans, immerse themselves into fandom, without the need to philosophize about it.

DEUTSCHE ZUSAMMENFASSUNG

Die vorliegende Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit den Phänomenen „Fans“ und „Fandom“ im Mainstream-Fernseher. Die Arbeit gliedert sich in drei Teile. Im ersten Teil wird, nach einer Einleitung über den Forschungsablauf, die an den Forscher gestellte Anforderungen und die Schwierigkeiten der Untersuchung eines Fernsehserienformates, ein Überblick des Phänomens Fandom aus verschiedenen Perspektiven gegeben. Hierzu werden sowohl akademische und medienwissenschaftliche als auch patho-psychologische Betrachtungsweisen angeboten. Einige grundsätzliche Aspekte der TV-Produktion-Techniken und ihren Interrelationen mit der Zielgruppe werden erörtert, sowie die Unterscheidung zwischen Publikum und Fandom, ein wesentliches Merkmal der Arbeit, verdeutlicht. Auch auf die Produktion von FanFiction wird näher eingegangen, da diese einer der Hauptforschungsgrundlagen darstellt.

Im zweiten Teil wird die Fernsehserie *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (dt. *Buffy - Im Bann der Dämonen*) vorgestellt. Die Serie wurde aufgrund ihrer hohen Rezeption, sowohl in akademischen Kreisen als auch durch die nichtakademische Fangemeinschaft, als Forschungsobjekt gewählt. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* ist einerseits eine beliebte Jugendserie über den alltäglichen Horror des Erwachsenwerdens, getarnt als Kampf gegen Vampire und andere Dämonen. Andererseits hat die Serie gleich vom Anfang an die Aufmerksamkeit der akademischen Welt dank ihrer Benutzung von Text und Subtext in ihren Inhalten erregt. Die Serie zeigt sich auch durch eine hohe Interaktion mit der Fangemeinschaft. Geradezu diese Interaktion ist Bestandteil dieser Forschung.

Der dritte Teil der Arbeit stellt Forschungsprozess und -ergebnis dar. Die Forschungsfrage lautet: „Inwiefern werden die Fans der US-Fernsehserie *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* in der Serie repräsentiert“. Die Untersuchung konzentriert sich auf zwei Aspekte. Erstens wird die Benutzung von FanFiction-Techniken in der Serie untersucht, was ihren

regen Kontakt mit der Fangemeinschaft beweist. Zweitens werden die Seriencharaktere untersucht, die die Rolle der Fans innerhalb der Serie übernehmen: "Trio" und "Potentials". Die Untersuchung beschränkt sich auf die letzten zwei Staffeln der Serie: Staffel 6 und Staffel 7 (Erstausstrahlung 2001-2003). Die Gründe die insgesamt 144 Episoden der Serie auf diese letzten 44 zu reduzieren sind vielseitig: erstens würde es den Rahmen einer Masterarbeit die ganzen 144 Episoden à 45 Minuten zu untersuchen sprengen; zweitens ergibt sich mittels eines Senderwechsels und die zugehörigen neuen Zielgruppen, selbst eine Zäsur zwischen die ersten fünf Staffeln und den restlichen zwei; drittens ermöglicht die Untersuchung 44 aneinander gereihter Episoden eine Kontinuität, die bei einer über dreifachen Menge von Inhalten nicht zu bewältigen gewesen wäre; und letztens bieten die Staffeln selbst zwei Charaktergruppen, die bereits erwähnten Trio und Potentials, die mit den gängigen Fanvorstellungen und -klischees perfekt zu korrelieren scheinen.

Im Nachwort werden die Ergebnisse zusammengefasst und die Forschungsfrage beantwortet. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* interagiert in höchsten Grad mit ihren Fans, denen eine starke Rolle innerhalb der Serie zukommt. Diese Rolle wird zweilei skizziert: durch die Verwendung von sowohl FanFiction Techniken in die Ausarbeitung der Drehbücher, als auch durch die Charaktere, die die Fans darstellen sollen. Die vorangegangene Untersuchung zeigt, dass während FanFiction-Techniken konsequent und durchgehend verwendet werden, die Rolle der Buffy-Fans durch die Seriencharaktere nur klischeeartig in der Serie wiedergegeben wird. Es zeigt sich darüber hinaus eine Dichotomie zwischen der Rezeption der Serieninhalte durch die akademischen Fans und durch die nicht-akademische Fangemeinschaft. Während die Akademiker einen großen Augenmerk auf den Subtext und seine bewusste Benutzung durch die Buffy-Autoren legen, wird die breite Buffy-Fangemeinschaft durch die Metapher des Erwachsenwerdens als Kampf gegen eine nichtendende Dämonenschar angesprochen. Aus den für die Forschung durchgeführten Gesprächen ergibt sich auch ein

dichotomisches Bild der zwei Fanlager: akademische Fans konzentrieren sich auf den Subtext, sind empfindlicher für das darin enthaltene historische und literarische Gedankengut, rezipieren eine gewisse Ironie und sind mittleren Alters. Nicht-akademischer Fans sind jünger, gehören der durch den Sender angepeilte Alterszielgruppe - tweens, zwischen 11 und 24 Jahre alt - an, und konzentrieren ihre Lesung des Produkts auf die Repräsentation ihres eigenen Erwachsenwerdens.

Ein Annex mit einer Kurzinhaltsübersicht jeder der 44 in der Forschung eingebundenen Episoden erleichtert das Verständnis der Ergebnisse. Das ausführliche Quellenverzeichnis schließt die Arbeit ab.

ANNEX - EPISODE SUMMARY

Season 6

[6001 & 6002] Bargaining, Part 1 & 2

Buffy has been death for five months. In the meantime the Scooby Gang uses the Buffybot to deceive the demon, and prevent them to take over Sunnydale and the Hellmouth. Giles returns to England and lets Anya to managing the Magic Box. Willow has not mourned Buffy's death and prepares a ritual for resuscitating her from the death. The Gang has been helping with the preparations. Anya has just found the last needed item: the urn of Osiris. In order to conduct the ritual Willow needs a sacrifice, the heart of a deer, for the first time she trespass the laws of Wicca, harming a living being. As Willow conducts the ritual the rest of the Gang realizes that it is in fact a "dark *magick*" ritual, but by the time it's too late to stop it. A demon biker-gang has learn of the death of the Slayer and invade Sunnydale, scare out the citizens, ruining the ritual in the pursuit of the Buffybot. The Gang scatters in all directions abandoning the grave. Nevertheless the ritual has been successful. Buffy must dig herself out off the grave fully traumatized wanders the streets of Sunnydale and comes across the dismantled Buffybot. Spike and Buffy flee the house, and found the Buffybot, which inform them about the "other" Buffy. Dawn runs away from Spike to search her. As the Gang finds her by chance, they wonder whether, "she came back wrong". Only Dawn follows her to the place of her death and reversing the scene convinces her to go home, with her. Only after Dawn has attended to Buffy's wounds, leans Spike about her resurrection, and confronts the Gang about the consequences.

[6003] After Life

In the first night back from the death, Buffy has visions of the photographs being skulls. The Gang is also been haunted, and they are moved to think that Buffy indeed "has come back wrong". After researching on the matter Willow finds out that the haunt is the price they must pay for getting Buffy back. The haunt is an incorporeal ghost that will disappear by itself, unless it success in killing Buffy, in which case it would remain forever. Tara and Willow join forces to render the ghost corporeal in order to Buffy to defeat it.

[6004] Flooded

Buffy's everyday life turns out to nightmare. During her death days money has been expend out. With a major plumbing disaster in the house and Dawn to take care of, she is forced to look for a job to pay the bills. As she tries to get a loan for the bank, she is not only rejected but must also fight the demon that Trio has conjured to gain riches in exchange for Buffy's death. Giles comes back from England to support Buffy.

[6005] Life Serial

Buffy enrolls again in College and tries to get a job to pay the bills. The Trio makes up some sick RPG of their own, in which the Slayer is to act as play character for their entertainment. Each of them prepares a "level" of the sick game and grade Buffy's performance. Warren alters Buffy's timeline while she is in college, as she jumps through time she loses great portions of the day. Andrew conjures a demon, as Buffy tries to get a construction job with Xander's contractor. And finally Jonathan traps her in a time loop that forces her to get an item for a Magic Shop customer over and over again. In the evening as she discusses with Spike the weirdness of the day, she discovers the Trio's van stalking her, but is deceived by Jonathan conjuring a demon image on himself. Back at the house Giles finally gives her a check to help out with the financial disaster she's into.

[6006] All the way

It's Halloween in Sunnydale. The Gang works at the Magic Shop all day long. In the evening they plan to pass a quiet evening at home Xander decide to announce his engagement to Anya and make a little celebration party. As Anya complains Willow uses *magick* to improve the party and Tara confront her about her abuse. Dawn deceives Buffy by pretending to pass the evening at her friend Janice's home, when they are indeed meeting some boys outside. Buffy goes on patrol and find some victims of vampire attacks. Dawn is found out when Janice mother phones asking for her. The Gang search for Dawn throughout the town. The "boys" are in fact vampires, and Dawn must stake his date with a pencil after their first kiss. Back at the house, Buffy chickens out and let Giles to lecture Dawn. Tara is angry at Willow for her abuse of *magick*, Willow casts a "forget" spell on Tara to appease her.

[6007] Once More with Feeling - OMWF

Sweet, a dancing demon summoned to Sunnydale, forces the residents to express the outmost dark secrets into songs or burn to death while dancing. All members of the Gang burst out into song and reveal their secrets. Along the episode, the cracks in Anya/Xander relationship, the deceiving of Willow and the afterthoughts of Giles about Buffy's maturity became apparent. Finally Sweet kidnaps Dawn, as responsible for the summoning, which she is not. Xander has summoned the demon, in the belief it would bring some happiness to their lives, but as Dawn has stolen the amulet from the shop (her kleptomania being thus revealed to the audience, but not yet to the Gang), Sweet hold her responsible. Buffy comes to the rescue and reveal her darkest secret: she believes to have been in heaven and tear apart from it by her friends to endure this life, which feels like hell to her. The Gang is horrified. Spike is the only one to comfort her.

[6008] Tabula Rasa

Willow continues to deceive Tara and cast a new forgetting spell. In her haste and carelessness, she let the rest of the ingredients near by the fire, as they burn the spell becomes over-powerful and the Scoobies fall unconscious and lose their memories. As they regain consciousness they try to find out who there are, reaching wrong conclusions. Giles and Anya believe to be a married couple with Spike as their son. Xander and Willow think they are a pair, with Tara as student buddy of Willow's. Dawn and Buffy eventually find out that they are in fact sisters, relaying in their interaction with another. They found out their names by checking ID or tagged items: Spike's coat is labeled "Randy", and Dawn wears her name in her collar. Only Buffy remains nameless, and decides to name herself Joan. They are attacked by a group of demons and must flee the shop. Buffy comes across her abilities by fighting the demons and Spike's vampire nature is revealed. They hide in the caves under the town, where the spell is finally broken, their identities restored and Willow deceit evident. Tara abandons Willow and the house. Giles leaves for England. Buffy and Spike kiss.

[6009] Smashed

Willow success in returning Amy to her former self, she is been a rat for the last three years, since *Gingerbread* [3011]. Spike and Buffy fight about their relationship. The hit another, Buffy starts the fight. The Trio has robbed a diamond in the museum. Willow uses *magick* to track them down; afterwards

she leaves to meet Amy. Amy and Willow go to the Bronze and use their *magick* to cause mayhem. Spike and Buffy go on patrol and engage in a fight with another, the fight takes them into an abandon house, where it turns into sexual game. They sleep together. Tara and Dawn, who had passed the day together, come back to a empty house; Tara agrees to stay until someone comes back to take care of Dawn.

[6010] Wrecked

It is the "morning after" nobody has come back to the house. Willow's addiction deepened. Amy shows Willow Rack's lair, where she get hold of dark *magick*. Buffy fight with Spike and denies her feelings. Willow tries to make it up to Dawn for abandoning her in the night, by going to the movies, in the way there she make a side trip to Rack's for *magicks*, she let Dawn waiting for hours on the antechamber. When she finally comes back she is high in *magicks*. They come into some demons, as they flight Willows endangers Dawn life by driving under influence and crashes the car. Back at the house, Willow repents and Buffy decides to get rid of all *magick* items to facilitate Willow's rehab.

[6011] Gone

As Willow fights the withdrawal, the Trio uses the stolen diamond to assembly an invisibility cannon, which should enable them to spy on girls. As they try to test it out on tanning salon, they engage into a fight regarding who should be first and accidentally target Buffy, who becomes invisible. Buffy enjoys the situation, feeling free for the first times since her awakening. She comes by the Magic Shop and informs them then visits Spike and sleeps with him. Meanwhile the Gang looks for a solution to the problem. With Willow "out of *magick*" the results are slowly. Eventually Willow solves the puzzle, and founds out that without a reverse shot Buffy will slowly disappear. She searches after the Trio, who kidnaps her and arrange an exchange with Buffy in a game hall. They intend to sent Buffy forever to oblivion, but Willow prevents it. The whole affair has a positive side, while being invisible Buffy is able to avoid the Children's Welfare Office attestation on their homely situation and save Dawn from Orphanage.

[6012] Doublemeat Palace

After been rejected everywhere else, Buffy get enrolled at the *Doublemeat Palace*, a burger restaurant, famous for their "special ingredient" in the double-

meat (a supposed mix of chicken and beef meat) burger. The work is dull and wears off on Buffy. At the same time co-workers keep on disappearing from the job. Eventually Buffy finds human remains in the grinder and come to think the "Palace" is using the workers as ingredient. Intended on closing the restaurant, she goes to work and must face a worm demon, which is in fact responsible for the death. The "special ingredient" happens to be "vegetable meat".

[6013] Dead Things

The Trio has built a new device that should allow them to make women slaves to their wishes. Warren decides to test the device with his former girlfriend, Katrina. At the beginning the item seems to work to perfection, and Katrina becomes the perfect woman-slave. Gradually the hold loses up and she is able to fight Warren, as he demands oral sex from her. She tries to flee but Warren catches up and kills her. As he decides to blame the death on the slayer, Andrew and Jonathan follow his instructions. They weave a spell on Buffy, convincing her, that she is the killer. After informing Dawn, Buffy goes to the police to surrender, against Spike recommendations, who had hidden the body. Once on the station, she hears the name of the victim and remembers her as Warren girlfriend. From now on, the Trio is on the open and Buffy decides to put them down.

[6014] Older and far away

Buffy's Birthday approaches and Dawn want to celebrate, while Buffy wishes to ignore it. Approached by a revenge demon Dawn inadvertently makes a wish, desiring that people stay with her and do not let her alone anymore. The wish comes to pass, as they gather in the house to celebrate the birthday, and people stay in without reason. In the morning still nobody is able to leave, as the time passes they figure out something is wrong. They unknowingly set free a demon, which injures one of them. After some struggle they success in summoning the revenge demon and lifting the spell. All leave the house at once, with exception of Buffy, who remains with Dawn.

[6015] As you were

Riley, Buffy's boyfriend from Season 4 and 5, comes back to Sunnydale asking her help to catch a demon. The encounter shows Buffy the difference between the person she was and who she has become. She even believes in a second chance, but Riley had married. After helping Riley and his wife with the demon,

and seeing them away, she decides to leave Spike. She confronts him and throws him out of her life.

[6016] Hell's Bells

It is Xander and Anya's wedding, and their families keep on crashing into each other. Xander is visited by a man who claims to be his future self. This sexagenarian Xander assures him, that he has come back from the future to warn him about the marriage, and offers him an artifact that should proven. This artifact is a magic orb that absorbs Xander and shows him visions of his supposes marriage with Anya. In this vision the marriage is most unhappy. As Xander is lost in the visions, Anya confronts his sexagenarian version and learns that he is in fact one of her victims, who she converted in a demon and sent to a demon dimension some seventy years ago. Somehow he has found a way to come back to her and assets revenge. Xander comes back and Anya explains the true to him, but Xander take a look at his own family and decides that he will make Anya unhappy by marrying her, thus cancels the weeding, and abandons her at the altar.

[6017] Normal again

The Trio wants revenge on Buffy. Andrew conjures a demon, which poisons Buffy. She hallucinates about being recluse in a mental institution for the last six years with a schizophrenic disorder that gets her to believe Sunnydale is real. In the course of the episode Buffy is trapped in both worlds, popping in and out of them. While in the "normal" world, she believes her friend are inventions of her imagination that she must destroy to become fully cured. While in the "Sunnydale" world she believes the mental institution is the result of the demon's poisoning. With the time she begins to doubt in her lucidity, and confess to Willow his former stay in such an institution. Staying in the "normal" world the doctor convinces her that she must destroy her friend to be free, she returns to the "Sunnydale" to catch them and let them be killed by the demon, as she returns to the "normal" world the words of her own mother, "*Believe in yourself*", help her to make the final decision: she comes back to Sunnydale and fights the demon.

[6018] Entropy

Anya returns to her revenge demon self and visits all members of the Gang to try to get them to make a wish to punish Xander. Finally she turns on Spike,

who relates to her situation, after the break-up with Buffy. As both pour their hearts to another, they converge somehow into having sex. As the same time the Gang has found surveillance cameras hidden in all their related places. As Willow success into tapping into the last one, the one in the Magic Box, they have a live feeding on Spike and Anya's one night stand. They go to the Magic Shop to confront them. Xander and Buffy accuse them of betrayal, ignoring the fact that they are the ones who dumped them out.

[6019] Seeing Red

Warren steals the Orbs of Nezla'Khan from a demons lair, using Jonathan as bait. Buffy tries to stop the Trio once and for all and confronts them after this last felony. With the power of the Orbs Warren becomes invincible and Buffy get hard beaten. Jonathan comes to her rescue telling her that she must destroy the Orbs. As she does, Warren fires a flight device and disappears. Andrew's devices misfires, Jonathan did not get one. Both ended up in prison. As Buffy comes back home Spikes assaults her, stopping short of raping her. Horrified by his acts, Spikes flees and leave town. Tara and Willow come together again. In the morning Warren seeks Buffy and tries to shot her, killing Tara by mistake.

[6020] Villains

After Tara's death, Willow demands from Osiris her resurrection. Osiris explains that Tara's death, being caused by human deeds, cannot be repaired. In the meantime Xander waits for the paramedics to save Buffy, who has been gravely injured. Willow goes to the Magic Shop and literally absorbs all dark *magick* from the secret book collection afterwards she enters the operation room in the hospital and commands the medical staff back, as she extracts the bullet from Buffy's chest. Willow forces Buffy and Xander to go on pursuit of Warren, who deceits her by sending a Warrenbot in a bus to Mexico. When Willow finds out, she goes alone after Warren in the woods, where she finally finds him and, after torturing and skinning him alive, eventually kills him by burning. Xander and Buffy ask for Anya's help to find Willow, all three arrive at the scene just seconds before Warren body burst into flames.

[6021] Two to go

After exacting revenge on Warren, Willow goes on pursuit of Jonathan and Andrew, who are in jail. Anya comes to their rescue and brings them to the Magic Shop, where Willow finally finds them. Willow uses their new acquired

dark *magick* knowledge to destroy them, but Anya fights her back. As she defeats Anya, and it seems to be nothing to stop her, Giles arrives back from England and engages in the fight.

[6022] Grave

Giles charges Willow with "human white *magick*" to fight Willow's dark. As Willow feels that she cannot prevail, she decides to wipe out the world by digging out an old buried satanic temple on Kingman's Bluff. Anya remains in the Magic Shop taking care of Giles, who is too weak to fight. Buffy and Dawn fall into a cave in the cemetery and must fight earth demons to survive, leaving only Xander able to pursue Willow. Xander does not fight Willow, but gives himself willingly in sacrifice to her, a fact that touches Willow's humanity and brings her back from the dark. Buffy and Dawn succeed in escaping the caves. In Africa Spike gets his soul back.

Season 7

[7001] Lessons

Giles has brought Willow to England to the Council to learn to control her abilities. In Sunnydale the new Sunnydale High opens her doors, with Dawn as one of students. The new school is built over the Hellmouth at the ruins of the old building destroyed at the end of Season Three (*Graduation Day, Part 2* [3022]). Buffy, who has accompanying Dawn to school, is convinced that the "school is evil" and is proved correct as the ghost of the death are trapped in the basement. As Dawn and her two new friends fall into the ground and are haunted by the ghost, Buffy comes to their rescue. Xander locates the talisman, which makes the ghost corporeal and destroys it, enabling Buffy to fight them back. At the end of the episode the audience learns that Spike is also hiding in the basement, being haunted himself by the ghost of all the Big Bad of the previous Seasons.

[7002] Beneath you

A young girl is killed by monks in Germany. In Sunnydale Buffy receives an offer to work as a counselor at the High School. Anya has returned to the vengeance demon business. Xander accidentally meets Nancy, whose boyfriend is turned into a giant worm as consequence of her wish to Anya. Spike comes out of the

basement and is instrumental in convincing Anya to leap the curse on Nancy's boyfriend. Anya is the first to find out about Spike's soul.

[7003] Same Time; Same Place

Willow comes back to Sunnydale, but the Gang is not able to see her. In the meantime a Gnarl demon, who paralyzed their victims and feeds on human skin is killing people. The Gang holds Willow responsible for the killings. Willow self tries to find the culprit and is attacked and immobilized by him, suffering a slowly torture that mirrors Warren death. Anya and Spike are the only ones who can see both Willow and the Gang and eventually inform them on Willow's return, allowing Buffy and Xander to save Willow.

[7004] Help

Buffy has taken a job as Sunnydale High counselor. She learns about Cassie a 15 year old girl, who is fully convinced she doom to die. Buffy mobilizes the Gang to look out for Cassie and save her life. The Gang success in saving Cassie from fraternity satanic ritual, but she dies nevertheless from heart failure immediately after, showing the value of premonition and that even the Chosen One cannot prevent death by natural causes.

[7005] Selfless

Anya's career as vengeance demon is not successful, D'Hoffryn is pressuring her and she begins to lose control. As she wipes out a whole fraternity, with a giant spider, she reaches the bottom. Willow finds out and tells Xander and Buffy, who react differently, while Xander insists on helping Anya, Buffy decides to kill her. They confront each other at the fraternity house, where Buffy eventually injures her badly. D'Hoffryn appears and agrees to release Anya from her duties as revenge demon, taking the life of Halfrek, her best friend as payment. Anya becomes human again.

[7006] Him

Dawn develops a crush on R.J., the quarterback of the Sunnydale football team. R.J. uses a spell to make himself irresistible to all females. Not only Dawn, but also Buffy, Willow and Anya fall desperately for him. All four are bound on proving her love for R.J. in different ways: Anya robbing a jeweler, Willow doing a spell that should turn R.J. into a woman, Buffy killing Principal Wood and Dawn committing suicide on the railroad tracks. Xander and Spike try to break

the spell, eventually learn that the power of his attraction lies in the jacket and destroy it. The spell is broken, but Dawn, whose feelings were real, is saved just at the last minute.

[7007] Conversations with Death People

Andrew and Jonathan in Mexico and urges them to come back to Sunnydale. The First decides to attack the Gang directly and pays a visit to Dawn and Willow. Dawn sees her mother, which cautions her about Buffy. Willow is visited by Cassie [*Help* 7004], who inform her that Tara cannot come to visit, because Willow has tainted herself by the use of dark *magick*, and tries to convince Willow to kill herself, assuring her, afterwards she will be able to be with Tara. In the meantime Buffy is on patrol in the cemetery, where she comes across the awakening of Holden, an old High School comrade, as vampire. Holden who has been a psychiatrist engages Buffy in a conversation. Buffy spill out her fear and feelings, after mentioned Spike, Holden states that he is the one who sired him. In the meanwhile the Trio makes a new appearance: the ghost of Warren haunts. Spike, who has went out with a girl, bites her and sucks her dry. After Andrew and Jonathan come back to Sunnydale, they approach the seal to open it. Andrew prompted by the ghost of Warren, sacrifices Jonathan to the seal, which opens a crack.

[7008] Sleeper

In England a Watcher is attacked by a hooded person. In Sunnydale the Gang suspects Spike of have been killing people and decides to spy on him. Spike does not to be aware of his action they conclude they must be been prompted to it the First by some kind of trigger. In order to save him from the influence of the First Buffy takes him out of the basement and accommodates him in Xander's home, were he should be watched by the Gang around the clock. Eventually Spike goes out and unconsciously kills another girl. Buffy follows Spike into his lair, once in the basement, where they find the bodies. The First embodies Spikes and fights Buffy, who eventually prevailed. At the end of the episode Giles finds the attacked Watcher from the beginning and is being attacked by the same hooded person.

[7009] Never leave me

Dawn is still shaken after the encounter with the First/her mother. Buffy has called on sick to help watching Spike. The Council calls from England and report

Giles missing. As Andrew tries to buy blood at the local butcher, he is spotted by Willow, who chases him and bring him into Buffy's home. Anya and Xander are successful in gathering information about the First and the seal. Eventually Wood finds the Jonathan's body and buries him. The First attacks Buffy's home and kidnaps Spike, who is to be used as sacrifice to fully open the seal. In England the Watchers have been attacked and the Council eventually wiped out by a bomb.

[7010] Bring on the Night

Buffy forces Andrew to the basement and threats to sacrifice him in order to close the seal. Andrew finally spills the whole truth and weeps over the seal, which, as Buffy suspected, closes it. They bury the seal and run into Wood, who also carries a shovel and looks suspicious. Giles comes back and bring some Potentials with him. Then he explains that the Council has been wiped out and Potentials are being killed all over the world, to prevent the rise of a new Slayer. He has gathered the survivors and brought them to Sunnydale to train them against the First. Buffy's home becomes "Slayer Central" as they all join forces against the First. Giles and Buffy look for clues to find the entrance to the First lair. As they come across a patch of earth, where all trees are death, they find it and Buffy goes underground to find an *übevamp*, which she cannot defeat, after fleeing from him, she only saved last minute by the sun. Next day at school Buffy is haunted by the ghost of her mother, who warns her about the sun going down. That night the Gang and the Potentials go onto fight against the *übevamps*. At the fight site, an abandon factory, Buffy is hard injured. Spikes who is remains captured First lair, still believes in Buffy rescuing him.

[7011] Showtime

After last fight disaster, Buffy is convinced that the Potentials need harder training should they wish to survive the final battle. Meanwhile Kennedy, who had been bossed all around from the very beginning, insinuates herself to Willow. Giles and Anya travel to an alternate dimension gather information from the Beljox about the First. Willow is contacted by the coven with some important information. In order to protect the house from a nightly attack, Willow comes back to *magicks*. As the *übevamps* invade the house they flee into the night to an abandon factory, where Buffy has set a trap to show the Potentials that the *übevamps* can be killed. Buffy frees Spike.

[7012] Potential

Willow finds out that there is still an unfound Potential already in Sunnydale and decides to do a spell to seek her out. Dawn goes into the way and all are convinced that Dawn is a Potential. Tear apart by her feelings, Dawn leaves the house and runs into Amanda, a girl from school, who is seeking Buffy's help with a vampire at school. Dawn, in her new gained Potential status, feels compelled to fight the vampire and accompanies Amanda to Sunnydale High. Once there, as they are chased by the vampire, Amanda confesses to have been at Buffy's door earlier in the evening, but leaving at the sight of "some weird light". Dawn realizes that Amanda is in fact the sought-after Potential and willingly left the fight to her.

[7013] The Killer in me

As Spike's chip misfires causing him to blackout, Buffy contact the Initiative to force them to repair it. When confronted with the choice to repair it or entirely remove it, she chooses the later, much to Giles disapproval. As Giles decides to go on a road trip to the desert for some Watcher ritual, the Gang thinking maybe he had been killed in England, begins to suspect, that he can be the First, as they do not remember him to have touched anything corporeal. They decide to drive into the desert and make sure; as they find him they fall over him stating that he is indeed human. After her first kiss to Kennedy, Willow turns into Warren and undergoes all the pain of Tara's death along with the guilt. The spell is a revenge act of Amy on Willow for abandoning *magick*. A new kiss breaks the spell, after Willow reconciliates herself with Tara's loss.

[7014] First Date

Principal Wood asks Buffy on a date. In their way to the restaurant they are attacked by a group of vamps and Buffy finds out that Wood knows how to fight and stake vampires. At the restaurant Wood discloses his secret: he is the son of a Slayer, who died when he was a little boy, and has been raised by a Watcher, who taught him how to fight. Buffy is enthralled to learn about another Slayer and accepts Wood as an ally. In the meanwhile Xander has meet a beautiful girl, who invites him out and turn to be the First wishing to sacrifice him to the seal. Spike collects Buffy and Wood at the restaurant and informs them on Xander's date. They rush to the High School to rescue Xander. As the battle evolves, Wood realizes that Spike is a vampire.

[7015] Get it done

Wood presents Buffy with the Slayer-Bag of her mother, which should supposedly be handled down from one Slayer to the next. Among other, the bag contains a shadow-caster, which tells the story of the creation of the First Slayer. Willow prepares a ritual and, with the shadow caster's help, sends Buffy to the First Slayer dimension to gather information to defeat the First. In the meantime the Gang must fight the demon, which has been sent to this dimension in exchange. In the First Slayer dimension, Buffy learns the hidden truth: three shamans, the original Watchers, created the First Slayer, but mixing the essence of a pure girl with the essence of a powerful demon. This means that the Slayer has demonic qualities that work as antidotes for demons. Buffy realizes the original shamans, have desecrated the First Slayer to make her a willing fighting toy for them and rejects further help from them, returning to her own dimension and sending the demon back.

[7016] Storyteller

Andrew, who by now has integrated himself in the Slayer household, decides to make a video documentary about Buffy and the Potentials for inform the broad public on the heroic deeds. He put together clips with interviews, fight moments and his own narration. The audience is privy to both, the real documentary and Andrew's own biased version, in which he envisions himself as a kind of Sherlock Holms look-alike, that indoctrinates the audience from this own library in a high elegant environment, while the "real" images show a nerd, who lack every layer of elegance. After Buffy confronts Andrew with Jonathan death at the seal, Andrew repents and gains a post in the Gang. The episode also offers a new insight into Xander and Anya's relationship and the reasons for their splitting.

[7017] Lies my Parents told me

Willow and Giles attempt a ritual to finally free Spike from his trigger. During the "de-triggering" Spike transforms into a violent vampire. After the ritual Giles advises Buffy to keep Spike on chains as they don't know for sure if the ritual has fully succeeded, but Buffy rejects it. Wood approaches Giles to seek his help in bring Spike down. During the conversation Giles learns that Wood is in fact Nikki Wood's child, the Slayer who Spike killed back in 1977. Wood seeks revenge for the death of his mother, Giles believes that Spike is a liability in

their fight against the First, thus both agree to a plan to kill him. Giles would delay the Slayer during this night patrol, while Wood lures him into a "sanctuary", where he can kill him. Spike goes willingly with Wood only to find himself enclosed in a room, which walls are clustered with crucifixes. Once there Wood uses the trigger, a song called "Early One Morning", to transform Spike into a monster and been able to kill him without regrets. As Spike hears the song, he's rendered will-less and been projected back into the past, at the time of his own awakening, and remembers, how she tried to help his mother from consumption by bitten her. As vampire, Spike's mother evolved into a monster, that Spike was forced to kill. The realization that, in fact, he did not kill his own mother, but just the monster she became, frees Spike from the trigger and enables him to fight back Wood. Short of killing him, spares his life as compensation for killing his mother that long ago, making clear in the future they are even.

[7018] Dirty Girls

Caleb, a priest, comes to Sunnydale to help the First. In his way there he wounds a Potential, who he founds on the road, and show his misogynic attitude to the audience. Once in Sunnydale he installs his headquarters in the vineyard, where he attempts to free the *übevamps*. Willow, who left Sunnydale, on the previous episode, returns to Sunnydale, bringing Faith with her. On their way they find the injured Potential, who has a message for Buffy and bring her to the hospital. Buffy and Spike train the Slayers during patrol in the cemetery, with Spike acting as willing demonstration item. Buffy addresses the Slayer with the information about Caleb and decides to confront Caleb in his own ground. They spy on his acolytes and found out where he is hidden. The battle does not go well, Buffy and the Potentials are badly hurt, some Potentials even die and Xander loses his left eye.

[7019] Empty Places

After the debacle in the vineyard the Potentials direct their frustration and anger at Buffy, who keeps on planning to come back to the fight. Eventually all the Gang turn their backs on her; she loses her leadership and leaves the house. The citizens of Sunnydale, afraid of the approaching apocalypse are leaving town, Buffy finds an empty house to pass the night. In the meantime Andrew and Spike are in a quest to the former church of the priest to gather information to fight him.

[7020] Touched

With Buffy out of the picture, the Potentials chose Faith as their new leader, and demand from her a plan of action. Faith reverts to Buffy role and decides to capture an acolyte to extract information on the priest. As they use a spell on him, he discloses that the plan of the priest is to kill all girls and unearth something that is buried on the dirt, thus Faith decides to make a new incursion into the vineyard. The First visits Faith posing as the Mayor, the encounter shatters her, and she finds solace with Wood. Spike returns to Sunnydale to find Buffy gone, he looks all over town until finally finding her in the abandoned house, where she has sought refuge. He comforts her and reminds her that she is the Slayer, and it is in her where the responsibility for this fight lays. Both seem finally find their peace with each other, and Buffy goes to the vineyard to fight. Faith and the Potentials enter the vineyard and walk into a trap, a bomb explodes, some of them die, others, among them Faith, are badly hurt.

[7021] End of Days

After the explosion the Potentials must flee. Buffy has entered the vineyard and finding a scythe, which she uses to fight Caleb. She succeeds to outrun him and help the wounded back home. Giles and Willow figure out the scythe is the mythological weapon, where the power of the Slayer lies stored. Andrew and Anya hunt for groceries and first aid items in the deserted town, while Buffy prepares for the final battle. Buffy visit a mausoleum in the cemetery, where she meets the last guardian of the scythe, who tells her of the power of the weapon. In the meantime Xander, at Buffy's orders, lures Dawn into the car and dose her with chloroform to get her out of Sunnydale. She wakes up on the road, and forces him to take her back. In the crypt Caleb kills the Guardian and attacks Buffy, Angel knocks Caleb out. Spike is hidden in the shadows.

[7022] Chosen

Caleb regains and attacks Buffy and Angel, Buffy kills him with the scythe. Angel explains that he has come to help with an amulet "for an ensouled champion", that he plans to wear himself in battle. Buffy urges him to return to L.A., to form a second front in case she loses the battle, and explains about Spike's soul, stating that he will wear the amulet in battle. At the house Dawn confronts Buffy with sending her out. It is the last night before the battle, each one seeking comfort differently. Giles, Amanda, Xander and Andrew play *Dungeons*

& *Dragons*. Anya falls asleep. Wood/Faith, as well as Willow/Kennedy sleep with each other. Spike and Buffy pass the night in the basement, enjoying their new found friendship. The Potentials search comfort in groups preparing for their first great battle. In the morning the "Plan" is revealed, Willow will use the power of the scythe to give all Potentials around the world the power of the Slayer, overcoming the Watcher's law of just "one Slayer in each generation". They all join in battle. Willow performs the ritual. The Potentials fight back the *übevamps*. Spike wears the amulet, which cast in the power of the sun and closes the Hellmouth forever, destroying Sunnydale. At the end Anya dies. The sole survivors are Buffy, Dawn, Giles, Willow, Xander, Andrew, Wood, Faith, Rona, Vi and Kennedy.

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