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## **Buffy/Faith Adult Femslash: Queer Porn With a Plot**



“Isn’t it crazy how slaying always makes you hungry and horny?”

(“Faith, Hope and Trick,” *BtVS* 3.3)

[1] The Buffyverse fandom is thriving, judging from the amount of fan fiction about the characters from both *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Angel* continually posted on different internet sites. Fan fiction predominantly focuses on relationships, either elaborating new stories about existing couples or pairing characters who are not couples in the canon (the source text), thus creating *het* (*shippers*) about heterosexual relationships, *slash* fan fiction about male same-sex couples or *femslash* (or *f/f slash*) about female couplings. The Buffyverse inspires an exceptionally “large number of female/female pairings” of the canon’s “abundance of strong female characters,” Linda Rust notes. The female pairing *par excellence* is Buffy/Faith. In Buffy/Faith fiction, fan writers explore the “reading possibilities” of “queering” the “Slayer text,” to paraphrase the title of Rebecca Beirne’s analysis of the representation of lesbian love in *BtVS*. As Beirne notes, the “subtextual, sexual-taboo-breaking queer-possibilities” are not realized within the framework of the show. They are on the other hand amply explored in the Buffy/Faith fan fictions I focus on, especially through the thematization of lesbian BDSM sex. [1] Favorite starting points for Buffy/Faith slashers include Faith’s remark on the arousing effects of slaying that I use as an epigraph, a scene displaying Buffy and Faith on the dance floor of the Bronze (“Bad Girls,” 3.14), the body switch between Buffy and Faith in the episode “Who Are You?” (4.16), [2] and Faith’s two returns to Sunnydale, first as the rogue Slayer after having emerged from the coma Buffy sent her into (“This Year’s Girl,” 4.15), then as the reformed Faith who stands by Buffy’s side in the final battle against the First Evil (“Dirty Girls,” 7.18). The intertextual nature of fan fiction—always already situated within a canon—places fan fictions in a dialogic relation to the canon, rather than in a hierarchically inferior position of poachers texts, as early fan fiction scholar Henry Jenkins suggested. [3] In other words, Buffy/Faith femslash writers do not only use elements from *BtVS* canon but also add aspects to it, such as a different gaze. Elaborating the queering possibilities in the story arc, the femslash authors studied in this essay combine themes, tropes and modes of description borrowed from romance, erotica and hard-core pornography, thus creating what I call queer, adult femslash.

[2] The pairing of the two Slayers in romantic and sexual relationships provides contexts for the re-negotiation of generic conventions of the romance, as well as of gender (role) conventions linked to this genre. [4] Since love stories are central in Buffy/Faith

femslash, they draw on features from the romance genre, which is based on heterosexual patterns such as the hero's virile pursuit and seduction of the sexually inexperienced heroine (Modleski 28). This pattern is structured along the lines of binary oppositions such as active/passive which in turn rely on the underlying male/female couple. The lesbian romance novel follows the same patterns, only translated into a same-sex context (Juhasz "Lesbian" 277-8). Although the protagonists in lesbian romance are women, they tend to be modeled on a heterosexual couple, Julie Abraham claims: the virile, real lesbian pursues a woman who has no experience of love between women (4-6). Fan fiction may be a creative and free text-type, open to possibilities of developing a story in directions not foreseen by the canon's creators and for pairing characters who do not form couples in the canon, for example in creating femslash. However, the general rule in fan fiction is that writers respect the logic of that canon regarding plot, style and the characters' personalities. Femslash describing Buffy and Faith as engaged in a love story thus situates these "hot chicks with superpowers" ("End of Days," 7.21) in a romance frame which, in its conventional form, is fundamentally heteronormative, implying stereotyped gender-role patterns. What happens to these stereotypes when the love story stages not a blushing heroine and a virile suitor, but rather two tough girls with Slayer powers who engage in sexual relationships?

[3] In the adult Buffy/Faith femslash I focus on, pornographic or erotic features are combined with traits borrowed from traditional and lesbian romance. This is perhaps not surprising, given that porn/erotica and romance are related (e.g. when it comes to plot and narrative patterns) and that this interrelation is especially clear in slash fan fiction (Driscoll 79). The male gaze of conventional pornography is challenged in these female-authored Buffy/Faith fictions, [\[5\]](#) which is especially clear in that lesbian sex scenes are not simply treated as one of the compulsory "numbers" that constitute traditional, heterosexual porn (Williams 140) but as the main act. Female-authored male/male slash has been the focus of a number of fan fiction studies, including analyses of so-called kink-fic. However, "the explicitly pornographic imagination of slash fandom" such as "slash with themes of BDSM" needs further scholarly attention, as Keft-Kennedy points out in her analysis of Buffyverse male/male slash: "The slash fan fictions surrounding Whedon's Buffyverse represent a conspicuous example of how female fans have radically reworked and recoded the existing metatexts to create new works that add to the cultural production of ideas surrounding gender, and that explore the complexity of female representations of male sexuality" (74). My study is an attempt to expand these discussions to include female, explicitly pornographic representations of female sexuality.

[4] The fan fictions I have chosen are labeled femslash and rated NC-17 or NC-21, which clearly announces their focus on female homoerotic stories as well as their adult content. Rating fan fiction in categories such as R, NC-13, NC-17, NC-21 or classifications like PWP (*Porn Without Plot or Plot? What Plot?*), indicates resemblances with pornography, which is a genre "defined through legal prohibitions and restrictions" signaled for instance by ratings (Arthurs 38). In fan fiction on the internet, however, such ratings serve primarily as notifications for readers, in a similar manner as the label femslash. These notifications can be considered both as warnings and as recommendations, depending on reader preferences. I will discuss seven femslash texts, some of which are composed of two or more chapters, and published on three different sites: WickednDivine.com, BuffynFaith.net and Slayerstime.com. The texts are: *Alike* and its sequel *The Choice* by Elegy, *Faith's Fantasies* by Rebelrsr, *Fear* by RavenWhite, *Slayers Do*

*It Better* by SweetFaithy and Jemie, [6] *Switched* by Tania, *Walkabout* by Zulu, and *Want-Take-Have* by Lizardmm. Like slash fan fiction in general, these femslash texts abound with “sexually explicit material that is primarily designed to produce sexual arousal” which is one of the current and rather wide definitions applicable to both pornography and erotica (“Pornography and Censorship”). Representing female sexuality in ways that allow for intersections between gender and sexuality, these femslash texts queer the generic conventions of both romance and erotica/pornography. Furthermore, they challenge assumptions about female readers’ and writers’ alleged preferences for soft-core erotic/pornographic texts.

### **It’s a Slayer Thing: Extraordinary Bonds and Naturalized Desire**

[5] Buffy/Faith femslash texts often explain the romantic and sexual attraction between the two female characters by a special connection between Slayers rather than a specifically lesbian desire or identity. In this respect, the Buffy/Faith femslash can be distinguished from the lesbian novel. According to Julie Abraham, the subject of the lesbian novel is always “lesbianism, which is to say lesbianism as problem [...] because, in terms of the heterosexual plot’s structuring of fiction about women, lesbianism is a problem” (3). Although the canon’s heterosexual plot is transformed into a lesbian one in Buffy/Faith femslash, their love and attraction is described as a matter of destiny, not of one woman’s attraction to another. This special bond which is unfathomable to others is thematized in the canon: “It’s a Slayer thing” as Buffy dismissingly says to her friends in order to describe the experiences she shares with Faith and Faith only (“Bad Girls” 3.14).

[6] Fan writers draw on this bond in descriptions evoking the trope of a love surpassing all others typical of the romance. In *Alike*, Elegy mentions “the unique impression of sharing something that nobody else but another Slayer could understand” as an explanation for the attraction between Buffy and Faith. In this text, it is explicitly stated that the special connection between Buffy and Faith comes, “according to Giles, from their common status as Slayers,” a fact that is, however, contested by Buffy: “But Buffy knew that explanation was not sufficient, because she had never shared dreams or felt such a symbiosis with Kendra” (*Alike*). This comparison refers to canon depictions of the very professional and rather distant relationship Buffy has with the Slayer Kendra on the one hand and, on the other, her close relationship with Faith which includes sharing dreams and specific Slayer experiences. [7] In *Alike*, these canonical elements serve to emphasize the special nature of Buffy and Faith’s tight connection, described as “symbiosis,” which exists prior to any sexual encounters between the two.

[7] In several femslash texts, lesbian sex is described as unhealthy from Buffy’s point of view, at least until she experiences the new kinds of sexual practices that Faith initiates her to. In *Switched*, a fan fiction reworking the consequences of Buffy and Faith’s body switch in “Who Are You?” (4.16), Buffy hesitates when Faith suggests they spend the night together, wondering what exactly that means: “What do you want Faith? [...] Cause I don’t know how this gonna work [*sic*]...” (*Switched*). It is clear that the idea of having sex with a woman is shocking and slightly disgusting to Buffy, who wonders “why [*she*] wasn’t completely ew-ing out at the thought?” (*Switched*). Normally, then, Buffy would ‘ew out’ at the thought of making love with a woman. However, letting Faith lead, she manages to pass the barrier of potentially disgusting, new experiences; in this case cunnilingus: “She took a deep breath. It can’t be that bad [...], she thought to herself before plunging her tongue in” (*Switched*). In this text, Faith guides Buffy in a rather hands-on fashion,

showing her where and how to caress a female partner. In a similar manner, Zulu stresses that in Faith's eyes, there is nothing strange or wrong with desiring Buffy, whereas "the girl thing really freaks her [Buffy] out" (*Walkabout*). Drawing on the heteronormative good girl attitude ascribed to Buffy in the canon, these femslash authors depict her as hesitant towards lesbian sex which she initially perceives as unnatural. The special bond between Buffy and Faith however provides a naturalization of such sexual experiences, since it serves to emphasize that sex with Faith is a Slayer thing rather than a lesbian thing.

[8] The connection between the Slayers resembles the "oneness" typically experienced by the characters in male/male slash texts that are situated in what Elizabeth Woledge terms "intimatopia." Intimatopic fiction, according to her definition, centers on male homoerotic relationships where graphic, violent sex is inextricably linked to emotional intimacy between the characters who share a special bond and experience adventures together. In intimatopic texts, depictions of graphic sex are "used as a tool to enhance intimacy" and "psychic oneness" between the two male lovers (103). In Buffy/Faith femslash texts, such as *Alike*, graphic and violent sex functions as such a "tool to enhance intimacy" between the two lovers who already share a special Slayer connection as well as experiences of vampire-killing adventures. In this fan fiction, the violent features of Faith's seduction seem to come as less of a surprise to Buffy than their lesbian nature, which is explained by an allusion to the fact that fighting and arousal are intimately linked for Slayers. As Faith uses her Slayer strength to kiss Buffy "violently," Buffy "could feel the arousal caused by their fight growing [...]" (*Alike*). Buffy's response is, in a sense, a result both of the fight with Faith and of her kisses. Again, the specific Slayer thing explains and naturalizes the sexual encounter with Faith. This special bond is further emphasized by the "silent and immediate comprehension" Buffy shares with Faith, who is connected to Buffy in an almost telepathic way during patrol (*Alike*). Their mutual and silent understanding is even more significant in this text's seduction scene. Although the sexual experiences are new and somewhat shocking to Buffy, she shows an intuitive knowledge of the motives behind Faith's sexual domination: "Buffy knew her submissive position aroused the other woman's desires of power. In Faith's eyes was shining the same understanding." The emotional aspects of this mutual understanding are described as crucial to Buffy, whose point of view the readers share in this seduction scene: "Buffy realized she craved the sight of the same look of surrender in Faith's eyes [...]" Whereas characters in romantic fiction achieve unity through sexual encounters, the reciprocity of emotional "surrender" emphasized here mirrors the narrative patterns of intimatopia where oneness precedes sexual encounters (Woledge 106).

[9] Even as they follow the narrative pattern of traditional as well as lesbian romance, where boy/girl meets girl, boy/girl gets girl, the femslash texts challenge central conventions of both genres, namely the heteronorm of the former and the soft-core (allegedly women friendly) sexual representations of the latter. In adult femslash, the female protagonists engage in explicit sexual activities which are graphically described. Through these descriptions, it is established that Buffy and Faith share something extraordinary, in comparison with Buffy's previous, exclusively heterosexual, experiences. The specifically lesbian nature of the sexual practices is highlighted by the focus on their novelty for Buffy, who needs "courage to open her mouth and caress Faith's cunt with her tongue. She had never done it before [...]" (*Alike*). Furthermore, this description makes it clear that sex with another woman is perceived by Buffy as somewhat repugnant, at least initially. In spite of this, and although Faith's seduction is rather brutal, evoking the near-

rape scenario of the romantic hero vigorously seducing the heroine, Buffy finds it "so intense, stronger than with Riley or even with Angel. She had never come like this..." (*Alike*). The comparison with Angel is especially significant, since he is Buffy's great love and also her first lover in the canon. The two Slayers' relationship thus "surpasses the love of men," to paraphrase the title of Lilian Faderman's seminal work on the lesbian novel. Since their love and attraction are related to the special, supernatural connection between the chosen two it is a bond that only Buffy and Faith can share; they are in a sense destined for each other. This representation echoes the trope of a destined couple, recurrent in popular romance. Yet, the femslash texts clearly distinguish themselves from the romance genre by their abundance of explicit sex scenes which is a trait that is rather to be found in erotica or pornography.

[10] In contrast to fan fictions situated within the story arc of the canon, such as *Alike*, femslash texts set in a post-season seven universe present the attraction or love between Faith and Buffy as a simple fact deserving little or no further explanation. This is the case in *Faith's Fantasies* and *Fear*. These femslash texts thus resemble the intimatopic male/male slash examined by Woledge which she characterizes as "homoindifferent," since "intimatopia is simply not about modern homosexual identities, and thus, although it often depicts homosexual acts, it retains a distance from homosexual politics" (103).<sup>[8]</sup> Setting their fan fictions in a post-*BtVS* universe gives the authors more freedom to develop alternative stories. Rather than thematizing what Esther Saxey describes as the "grim future" that is recurrent in Buffyworld slash fiction "projecting forwards" in time (203), the femslash authors discussed here choose to explore Buffy and Faith's relationship, as they live as established lovers. Addressing the lesbian question, for instance in coming-out scenes, would in these cases of course be superfluous. The fan fictions thus differ from Abraham's conception of the lesbian novel, since they do not address "lesbianism as a problem" (3) but approximate intimatopic texts in their focus on love and desire between two female characters who are drawn to each other.

[11] In the post-season seven fiction *Fear*, it is established in the opening lines that the sexual attraction between Buffy and Faith was present from the outset; "even Angel knew what we were doing back then," as Faith says. The obstacles to the Slayers' love story are not related to this desire between women, then, but rather to their antagonism (i.e., the fierce animosity between Buffy the good Slayer and Faith the rogue Slayer introduced by the end of season three) and their quite different personalities and worldviews, frequently displayed within the world of the series. The mutual animosity clearly present in the canon which often triggers Buffyverse male/male slash (Saxey 202, Keft-Kennedy 69) becomes a catalyst for sexual attraction in femslash as well. The staging of obstacles to the protagonists' relationship is of course a feature of the romance genre, which also includes the eventual resolution of the obstacles at hand, in order to unite the two lovers at the end. This happy ending is however strikingly absent in lesbian high-brow novels (Abraham 6), as well as in lesbian pulp fiction (Stenson). In *Fear*, the relationship between Buffy and Faith is described as complicated because they adopt different attitudes towards sex, love and commitment. Following the canon characterizations, Faith wants sex but not necessarily love, and certainly no commitment, which is described in this fan fiction as her "Want, Take and Have attitude," whereas Buffy wishes for a more conventional relationship including both love and sex (*Fear*, ch. 2, "Fear of Love"). The want, take and have attitude in question is an intertextual reference to the episode "Bad Girls" (3.14), in which Faith tries to teach Buffy to take whatever she wants, in this case

cool weapons. In spite of their differences, described as irreconcilable, Buffy states that Faith is “the only one that truly gets [her]” (“Fear of Love”). Eventually, they overcome this obstacle, and some others, in the final chapter of *Fear*, “Fear of Jealousy.” This narrative pattern echoes the traditional romance, but in contrast to lesbian novels and lesbian popular romance, this femslash provides a happy ending for the female same-sex couple.

[12] “Maybe it’s the slayer connection or maybe it’s just us,” Buffy ponders (“Fear of Love”). This remark aptly summarizes the ways in which Slayer love is thematized in the femslash texts analyzed here: the attraction between them springs from a special Slayer connection concerning specifically Buffy and Faith, not any other Slayers. Their Slayer relation is by definition homosexual, even if it is not described as lesbian, since only women can be Slayers. The insistence, especially from Buffy’s point of view, on the novelty of their extraordinary experiences of closeness and sexual intensity, which are in some texts initially perceived as repugnant by Buffy, does however highlight the fact that they are not heterosexual. Rather than addressing the lesbian question, which in other lesbian texts (novels, pulp) means representing lesbianism as a problem, these femslash authors depict two female characters who are drawn to each other, or even mystically connected, without dealing with (or having to deal with) the fact that they are a same-sex couple in a heteronormative world. The specifically lesbian nature of their love is on the other hand emphasized in sex scenes.

#### **“Kinks or Vanilla?” Sexual Power Play and Gender/Power Relationships**

[13] In the femslash texts, Faith is often described as Buffy’s guide to love between women, an experience presented as unknown to Buffy, and also as deviant from her perspective. This echoes Faith’s role in the canon, where she serves as Buffy’s guide to the erotic, but also the ethically unsound sides of slaying (Call par. 53). Faith is also depicted as Xander’s erotic guide in a seduction scene where she displays sexually aggressive behavior, pushing him onto the bed and asking whether he prefers “kinks or vanilla” (“Consequences,” 3.15). This question implies that she has experience of both sexual practices, and her behavior suggests that she prefers the kinky version. As Sue Tjardes points out, “Faith’s willingness to conflate violence and sexuality [...] is rejected, marginalized, and ultimately disciplined within the created world of the show” (71). The conflation is however a feature readily explored by Buffy/Faith femslash authors who also expand another aspect of Faith’s character that is marginalized within the heteronormative world of the show, namely her desire for Buffy. In thematizing kinky and/or violent (lesbian) sex, these writers “articulate a much broader—and perhaps, less acceptably ‘feminine’—range of narratives which include explicit sexual practices, including the graphic representation of rape, bondage” (Keft-Kennedy 54) and other forms of radical sex.[\[9\]](#)

[14] The fan fiction descriptions of Faith as guide and Buffy as the guided evoke the stereotypical couple both of heterosexual and lesbian romance; a virile, sexually experienced protagonist seducing or initiating a timid, less experienced heroine. This allocation of roles is clear in *Alike*, as is the intertextual reference to the canon, a flashback evoking Faith’s success “in the end in making Buffy feel the unhealthy joy she found in the fights and the power of slaying” (*Alike*). This reference to the past in the canon also points forward to the seduction scene in this fan fiction where Faith makes Buffy experience other unhealthy joys, like lesbian BDSM sex. In *Alike*, Faith seduces Buffy in a violent way on their way back from a night at the Bronze, where Faith has made Buffy drink too much. Elegy plays on the canon description of Buffy as a good girl who is not used to drinking, whereas Faith seems familiar with tequila shot races. Furthermore, the

author clearly refers to the canon scene showing Buffy and Faith engaged in asensual dance at the Bronze ("Bad Girls," 3.14). In Elegy's rewriting of Buffy and Faith's story, Faith takes advantage of Buffy who is described as not being her usual self when leaving the Bronze because of the drinks. As Faith brutally pushes Buffy to the wall, pinning her hands over her head, Buffy catches a frightening glimpse in her eyes:

Buffy saw once again what had frightened her in Faith's eyes: a secret and animal desire. She could feel Faith's muscular body against hers, warm and keeping her from moving. She also felt a leather-clad leg pushing into her crotch. The contact made her sigh. A carnivorous grin appeared on Faith's lips, a smile coming from very far, from her dark and savage side, from the side which scared and attracted Buffy all at once. (*Alike*)

This description of Faith resembles the literary stereotype of the voracious and vicious mannish lesbian who seduces heterosexual women, a recurrent trope in nineteenth-century literature (Newton 558) which is visible even in lesbian pulp novels of the 1950s (Stenson 51). The stereotypical seductress in these earlier texts is represented not only as mannish but also as a real lesbian while her victims are heterosexual girls whom she lures away from the, pardon the pun, straight and narrow path. In Elegy's fan fiction, Faith's sexual behavior and vocabulary are almost parodically masculine: she makes Buffy drink in order to get into her pants and, as she smokes a post-coital cigarette she thinks about "the woman she had possessed" (*Alike*). Furthermore, her sexual partners in this fan fiction, and its sequel *The Choice*, are exclusively female, which posits her as a real lesbian. In the quotation above, the success of her seduction scheme is indicated as the "contact" of her "leather-clad leg pushing into [Buffy's] crotch" makes Buffy "sigh" with pleasure. Much like the seduction scene in formulaic romance novels, only a small detail distinguishes the seduction from rape, namely the insertion of the seduced heroine's perspective, signaling that she actually enjoys what is happening.

[15] On superficial levels, kinky and violent sex is marked as unhealthy in the canon. At the same time, there is an insistence on portraying attire and scenes associated with kinks in visually pleasurable or, at least, ambiguous ways. As Saxey (203-4) points out, sexy leather clothes are frequently on display in *BtVS*, as are half-naked, injured or tortured characters (especially Angel and Spike). There are chains next to beds (e.g., Spike's bed in the Summers' basement, "Dirty Girls," 7.18), sexual scenes in cages (Oz and werewolf Veruca in "Wild at Heart," 4.6; vamp Willow and her puppy Angel in "The Wish," 3.9) as well as chained up characters in erotically charged scenes (rogue Faith chained up by Angel after her near-strangulation of Xander in "The Zeppo," 3.13; Buffy in chains in fake Angelus' mansion in "Enemies," 3.17). Such "moments of kink," as Saxey calls them, "function for a gleeful audience in similar ways to the queer recognition moments" (203). In other words, kink-positive readings of *BtVS* are quite possible, although in my view this means reading against the vanilla grain of the canon. [x] I thus concur with Vivien Burr who states that, although "*Buffy* goes some way towards endorsing forms of sexual expression that are commonly seen as lying beyond the pale of the normal and healthy, ultimately it chooses to align these with evil rather than good," for instance in associating BDSM with evil and sadistic sexuality in a manner that confounds the two (47-9). However, as Burr underscores, "*Buffy's* characters are never wholly good or evil, and are constantly in flux" (46). In a similar manner, Buffy and Spike's BDSM relationship in season six is described as "morally wrong yet illicitly delicious" (Alexander par. 8).

[16] The canon's ambivalence regarding certain, non-normative sexual practices is visible in femslash as well, but with a twist, given their focus on same-sex relations. The canon characterization of Buffy as the good girl translates into reluctance towards lesbian sex in some femslash texts. In the post-*BtVS* context of *Faith's Fantasies* on the other hand, it is BDSM that is queer from Buffy's point of view. In this fan fiction, Buffy and Faith are an established couple living together, which of course means that lesbian sex is not perceived as a problem. Here, it is the sexual practices related to "leatherdykes, femme tops, and Daddies" that are presented as exotic variants (*Faith's Fantasies*, ch. 1 "Valentine's Surprise"). As Faith "finally" declares her love for Buffy, she also explains these specific sexual preferences, and notes that Buffy does not "get it" ("Valentine's Surprise"). In this fan fiction, both lesbian and straight BDSM are, then, perceived as if not deviant, at least unusual enough to need specific elucidation. Furthermore, *Faith's Fantasies* echoes the canon's tension between "condemnation" and "celebration" of BDSM sex (Alexander par. 8) already in its paratextual disclaimer, where the author warns all presumptive readers that this fan fiction contains "mild but consensual BDSM." This suggests that descriptions even of mild BDSM are potentially offensive but less so if the sex in question is consensual, in which case the sex scenes are prone to be "illicitly delicious," to use Alexander's expression.

### **Who's on Top?**

[17] The femslash authors elaborate the sexual relations between the two Slayers mainly along the lines of the canon dynamic, describing Faith as a more violent and openly sexual character than Buffy. Faith's predilection for being the top in heterosexual relationships is overtly stated in the sexual banter scene with Spike in the Summers' basement ("Dirty Girls," 7.18) and her "unequivocal familiarity with BDSM etiquette" (Alexander par. 13) is present throughout the series. Buffy is depicted as more conventional and less expressive when it comes to sexuality. The aggressive sexuality Faith represents can be seen as masculine, while Buffy rather represents characteristics traditionally associated with feminine sexual behavior. In femslash texts, these differences are exaggerated and elaborated in scenes that are sexually explicit and graphic in a manner impossible for a prime-time TV series. After the body switch in *Switched*, Buffy in Faith's body experiences a kind of arousal unknown to her, explosive and strong. After a few kisses, she cannot restrain herself: "[Buffy] broke off the eye contact by lunging at Faith, knocking her to the ground and retaining her position on top of her. "'Whoa... B.. never picked you as a top' Faith joked [...]. 'Things change, Faith. Since I'm running on your hormones now,'" Buffy replies. This dialogue shows that the normal allocation of roles would have Faith as a top. It also indicates that this hierarchy is biological, since it stems from Faith's "hormones" which lead to a sexually aggressive behavior, not unlike masculine sexuality. This is further underscored by Buffy's comment after an orgasm: "'Ugh... that's never happened before... well it has, but not that... quickly [...]. You're like a teenage boy!'" (*Switched*). Her slight embarrassment at her body's—actually, Faith's—reactions and the reference to the responses of "a teenage boy" allude to male sexuality, more specifically to premature ejaculation. Conversely, through Faith's experiences in Buffy's body, it is clear that Buffy's reactions correspond to what is traditionally associated with feminine sexuality, which manifests itself as "a slow burn" and "an ache, a longing for something," not readily identified as "arousal," especially not by Faith (*Switched*). Furthermore, the aggressive sexuality Buffy experiences as she inhabits Faith's body is what makes the sex scene possible, since Buffy in her normal state would not be driven by her libido but try to



“contain herself” (*Switched*).

[18] In the canon in general Faith certainly displays a more openly sexual behavior than Buffy. However, Buffy is not always portrayed as vanilla. In season six, Buffy is the one who initiates sex with Spike in what will become a clearly BDSM-influenced relationship. Furthermore, Buffy often assumes the role of Spike’s top, although these roles are reversible and shifting. [11] *Slayers Do It Better* is a season seven femslash where Buffy’s newfound predilection for domination is used to rework the plot from the point of Faith’s return to Sunnydale after her incarceration (“Dirty Girls,” 7.18). The thematization of kinky sex in this text turns away from the canon since it is presented as something Buffy is more than comfortable with, whereas she feels undecided about her BDSM relationship with Spike in *BtVS*. On the one hand, their passionate and rough encounters [12] are satisfying for Buffy, both sexually and psychologically; indeed, her relationship with Spike helps her deal with the traumatic experiences relating to being brought back to life (after sacrificing herself in the last episode of season 5). On the other hand, she seems to think that she is doing something wrong, since she is “apparently ashamed of herself” (Burr 52), asking her confidante Tara and herself: “Why do I let Spike do those things to me?” (“Dead Things” 6.13). In *Slayers Do It Better*, Buffy’s preference for kinky sex and domination are unproblematic. In this text, she is also described as much more authoritative than in the canon episode, which also points forward to her sexually dominating role. Once Buffy and Faith find themselves in bed, kissing, they both struggle to be on top, which surprises Faith who is quite clearly used to this position being hers. In response to her surprise, Buffy, straddling Faith, laconically states: “I’ve changed...”. [13] It seems clear that in the *fanon*, Faith is expected to be the top. This is further stressed by the authors, SweetFaithy and Jemie, who point out in their authors’ note that they treat “new themes” in this fan fiction. [9] In this text, Buffy is the dominating partner both in relation to Faith and to Spike; this seems to be her fixed role. Sexual orientation, on the other hand, is represented as fluid rather than stable, since Buffy’s sex partners in *Slayers Do It Better* are both male (Spike) and female (Faith).

[19] Fan writers’ creative and queer readings of the canon allow for elaborations of BDSM-scenarios with Buffy as a top even before she engages in that kind of relationship with Spike. In “Getting Some Answers” (chapter five of *Faiths Fantasies*), Rebelsrs reworks the signification of a sexually charged scene in the season three episode “Enemies” (3.17). In this femslash, Rebelsrs suggests that Buffy’s desire for Faith—and preferably some chains—already existed when Buffy was in love with Angel and Faith was the rogue Slayer. Referring to the night at Angel’s mansion where she is chained to the wall by Angel pretending to be evil Angelus, Buffy explains that Faith kissing Angel made her jealous, but not in the way suggested by the canon where she is depicted as tormented by jealousy because her boyfriend is kissing Faith instead of her. In Rebelsrs’ reading, the jealousy is instead caused by Faith’s choice of kissing partner: “All I could think about, all I wanted, was your lips caressing my skin.” Rebelsrs also adds the chains from the *BtVS* scene to her re-writing, where the episode’s erotic triangle shifts focus from hetero to homosexual desire, underscoring that Buffy “was all tied up, with no where [sic] to go.” This line explicitly connects Buffy’s desire for Faith with her tied-up state, which provides an extra dimension to her willingness to explore radical sex with Faith; given her secret thoughts at Angel’s mansion, Buffy is not entirely vanilla after all. Furthermore, Buffy’s reflection echoes the episode’s playful references to bondage, explicitly expressed by Angel in a remark to Buffy: “You know what I just can’t believe? All of our time together and we

never tried chains" ("Enemies," 3.17). In the eroticized setting of "Getting Some Answers," Buffy and Faith, rid of the male third wheel, finally get to combine chains and desire.

[20] Buffy/Faith femslash provides room for the negotiation of the characters' internal hierarchy, which is most salient in BDSM scenes, where their power relations are depicted as performative and flexible rather than stable. This fluidity concerns role reversals in relation to the canon as well as representations of power roles as flexible. As Jenny Alexander points out in her discussion of heterosexual fan fiction involving the character Buffy, "[t]he Buffyverse provides an ultimately 'female positive' space for the safe expression of female subjection as well as female dominance, in the associated BDSM fan-fiction [sic]" (par. 23). In other words, fan fiction writers describe Buffy as top as well as bottom in relation to Spike. The thematization of BDSM in the femslash texts analyzed here shows that the Buffyverse canon also provides space for the expression of alternating "subjection" and "dominance" roles in the same-sex pairing of Buffy and Faith. In "Valentine's Surprise," the first chapter of *Faith's Fantasies*, it is stated that Faith and Buffy live in "domestic bliss." Since Faith's sexual fantasies include a partner who "[l]ikes to be called Sir or Ma'am," her vanilla partner Buffy decides to give her precisely that as a Valentine's Day gift. In a sense, Faith serves as Buffy's erotic guide once again, here initiating her to kinky sex. However, the dominating role is reserved for Buffy in *Faith's Fantasies*. More than a simple role reversal, this representation stresses the flexibility of sexual roles.

[21] The stress on the kink/vanilla allocation of roles between Faith and Buffy evokes the heteronormative gender roles underpinning conventional popular romance, although the BDSM scenes have more to do with hard-core pornography in their graphic depictions of explicitly sexual scenes. However, reading the roles of top and bottom in these power play descriptions as masculine/feminine is inadequate. Certain femslash texts, like Elegy's *Alike* and *The Choice*, may portray the two lovers along the lines of a heterosexual or a butch/femme couple, describing Faith's actions and vocabulary as almost parodically masculine. Yet, these masculine characteristics are parts of Faith's personality as constructed in the Buffyverse canon; her predilection for fighting, drinking and having casual sex is well known to *BtVS* and *Angel* viewers, as well as the potentially (self-)tormenting consequences of her lifestyle. In the canon, they are ascribed to a female character whose femininity is at the same time underscored, e.g. by clothing revealing a doubtlessly female body. The canon furthermore allows for interpretations of Buffy as "stereotypically 'male,'" as Kathryn Hill's study of *BtVS* fan video makers, vidders, shows (186). Buffy/Faith femslash writers thus have ample possibilities to create flexible and shifting roles, building on canon depictions of the two characters. Like in the male/male BDSM slash Kustritz addresses, "the extensive shared knowledge of fan readers" is crucial "for rethinking erotic uses of power" ("Painful," par. 1.2). Moreover, the kink/vanilla or dominance/submission roles are described as performative, and therefore as subject to change. This fluidity distinguishes them from representations of heterosexual gender roles in conventional romance.

### **Intimatopic BDSM?**

[22] The sexual pleasures of violence and pain are frequently thematized in femslash featuring the two Slayers, which challenges the gender coding of violent sexuality in the canon as well as in Buffyverse kink-fic. Keft-Kennedy notes that "[t]he erotics of physical pain" tend to be coded as masculine in the Buffyverse "while emotional/psychic pain is

feminised," a pattern which is perpetuated in the Spike/Angel(us) fictions she analyzes (62). Thus, she concludes, "much fanfic's treatment of BDSM and sexual violence allow the continuing reclamation and consolidation of masculine hegemony" (62). In Buffy/Faith femslash, on the other hand, the fan writers elaborate "the erotics of physical pain" from female perspectives, exploring the pleasures of BDSM within a female same-sex couple. In this way, they challenge stereotypical ways of coding feminine (sexual) behavior and capacities. After all, Buffy and Faith are women with Slayer powers, which means, among other things, that they are "matched in strength" and have a "relatively indestructible body," which are features fuelling the creativity not only of the male/male "Buffyverse kink slash" Keft-Kennedy (64-65) discusses, but also Buffy/Faith kink femslash. Not only vampires' but also Slayers' bodies offer "preternatural resilience," which is one reason why the Buffyverse lends itself especially well to kink-fic, as Alexander (par. 5) points out. The importance of the Slayer body's supernatural endurance is found in the third chapter of *Fear*, "Fear of Human Bondage," where the Mistress, whipping her "pet," reflects on the fact that "[s]ome would not be able to take ten [strokes]," while the "beautiful slayer before her counting each stroke of the tail against her back [says] 'Eighty, thank you, Mistress'." At the same time, emotional intimacy is combined with sexually violent features including pain, much like in the intimatopic male/male slash texts Woledge discusses. It is open to debate, then, whether the erotics of physical pain in these femslash fictions should be considered coded feminine or masculine.

[23] Besides its sexually pleasurable side, BDSM also serves a therapeutic function, which stresses its emotional character. The combination of hard-core porn features and the focus on emotional intimacy seems to situate these femslash texts at least on the outskirts of "intimatopia" (Woledge). In the fifth chapter of *Faith's Fantasies*, "Getting Some Answers," Faith seeks to reassure Buffy, who suddenly seems ambivalent about their BDSM games: "B? You know we don't have to keep playing, right? We were going along just fine without it. [...] I don't ever want you to feel freaked by what we do together." These worried lines show that Faith cares more about Buffy's feelings and their romantic relationship than the kinds of sexual practices Buffy initiated as a Valentine's Day gift to her; after all, they were "going along just fine without it." The opening lines of "Valentine's Surprise," the first chapter of *Faith's Fantasies* clearly show that Faith desires to be physically punished for, as she says, "all the things I have done (and continue to do) to hurt you." BDSM is described as a kind of healing experience which would do both Faith and Buffy good on a psychological level: "we—I—needed to get rid of some of the guilt. And, maybe, you'd be able to let go of that lingering anger" (*Faith's Fantasies*, "Let's Start At the Beginning," original emphasis). [\[15\]](#) The initial "we" in Faith's statement suggests that this way of dealing with their past would help them both and thus improve their relationship by bringing them closer to each other.

[24] Buffy/Faith femslash writers translate into BDSM sex scenes the canon depictions of Buffy's and Faith's need for physical punishment in order to deal with their personal, psychological problems. The femslash descriptions of deviant sexual practices as mainly therapeutic thus echo the canon depiction of Buffy and Spike's sexual relations, which are presented as a way for Buffy to grapple with her problems, including her "need to forgive" (Wilcox par. 14) which Rebelrsr alludes to as Faith thinks that Buffy needs to "let go of that lingering anger" (*Faith's Fantasies*, "Let's Start At the Beginning"). The therapeutic function of Buffy and Spike's relationship is what makes it acceptable within the world of the series, as Terry Spaise's reading shows: after Buffy's traumatic experiences of dying,

going to heaven and being brought back to life on the Hellmouth, "the SM games [...], as a therapeutic exercise [...] constituted a necessary element of Buffy's emotional restoration and ability to re-embrace life" (761). In a similar manner, then, Rebelrsr describes the need for extreme sexual practices as a way of dealing with a previous trauma, but chooses Faith rather than Buffy as the traumatized character. This is also in line with the Buffyverse canon's depiction of Faith as a psychically unstable character in need of redemption. In the canon, it is Angel who serves as her "Vergilian guide through hell in her search for atonement" as Wilcox points out (par. 3). Faith's way to redemption is closely linked to physical punishment, which is especially salient in the *Angel* episode "Five By Five" (1.18) where she arrives in Los Angeles, sadistically tortures Wesley and begs Angel to kill her in order to end her suffering. Angelus refers to these events as he attempts to destabilize Faith mentally during their fight in the episode "Release" (*Angel* 4.14), asking her: "Still looking for someone to help beat the bad out of you?" This canon description of Faith's way of handling psychic trauma is mirrored in *Faith's Fantasies*, where Buffy, acting as the dominating Mistress helps Faith struggle against her "evil twin" by "beat[ing] the bad out of [her]," only in a sexually pleasurable manner.

[25] Both submission and dominance are acts of commitment and emotional intimacy, while simultaneously being sexually gratifying. The therapeutic aspect of BDSM is described from Faith's submissive point of view in the final chapter of *Faith's Fantasies*, "Making It Clear," where she wants to act out her secret fantasy of being totally submissive, Buffy's "pet". Faith declares: "Part of the scene was giving up control, letting you lead. [...] 'I want to show you I'm yours, Buffy. Heart, soul, the whole scarred package. I was yours that first night behind the Bronze, you know.'" By "giving up control" and letting "Mistress" Buffy "lead," which includes providing sexually stimulating corporal punishment, Faith initiates a BDSM "scene" which enhances their psychological intimacy. In this femslash, BDSM is both about "sexual exploration and empowerment" and "therapy," which are also characteristic of the Spike/Angel(us) slash Alexander analyses (par. 23). The description of Buffy/Faith BDSM in *Faith's Fantasies* is also in line with Alexander's statement that the Buffyverse allows for "expression of female subjection as well as female dominance, in the associated BDSM fan-fiction [*sic*]" (par. 23). There are however limits to how queer the Slayers, especially Buffy, are allowed to be in this text. As a matter of fact, Buffy does her job as a full-fledged Mistress only once and rather reluctantly in *Faith's Fantasies*, explaining afterwards that this sexual practice is too extreme for her and that she prefers their softer power play games.

[26] In certain respects, these femslash texts correspond to Woledge's definition of intimatopic texts; they combine violent and graphic sex scenes with emotional intimacy between the characters who share a special bond and experience adventures together. Still, the term intimatopia seems inadequate, partly because the intimacy between Faith and Buffy is first and foremost "established by sexual interaction and is frequently transitory," which is a feature linked to romance rather than intimatopia (Woledge 106). As Woledge is careful to emphasize, all kinds of slash texts do not inscribe themselves within the realm of intimatopia (99), which this analysis of femslash then corroborates. Furthermore, the definition of intimatopia implies that it is applicable to male/male slash and not to femslash, since its prominent characteristic, which is also its "dissidence," is not its graphic and sexually explicit passages but the highlighting of "images of love and intimacy that in our culture are not typically associated with interpersonal relationships between men" (100). A corresponding "dissidence" in femslash texts would then be

features that subvert current assumptions about female desire, sexuality and same-sex relationships. Such features could be traditionally masculine adventure/action, sexually aggressive behavior and emotionally detached sexual encounters depicted in hard-core pornographic style, which are clearly present in the Buffy/Faith femslash fictions, and highlighted over purportedly feminine themes of love and caring. Since they do not seem to completely fit the definitions of either romance or intimatopia, are these texts rather to be labeled pornography?

### **Porn? What Porn?**

[27] It has already been established that the label *Porn Without Plot* is not to be taken literally, not only because such fan fiction “usually does have a basic plot, and much attention is also paid to characterization” (Rust) but, more importantly, because fan fiction always inscribes itself in the existing plot(s) of the canon (Driscoll 86, Kustritz, “Slashing” 378). As Keft-Kennedy (52) points out, the label PWP seems to mean that the main focus in the fan fiction in question is on sexually explicit scenes, not that it is an example of what is commonly referred to as porn. A brief analysis of a PWP fiction shows how the plot, i.e., Faith and Buffy’s complex relationship and potential attraction to each other, can be introduced through a few, rather discreet references to the canon.

[28] *Want-take-have* is a short PWP-labeled fan fiction inscribing itself in the story line of season four which centers on a vengeful Faith’s return to Sunnydale after awakening from her coma. Focus in this text is clearly on the sexually explicit scenes—and, importantly, on the overt intertextual play with pornographic and romantic conventions which are exaggerated in a manner that somewhat echoes Whedon’s ludic use of genres in *BtVS*. Inner monologues stress the improbability of what is happening: “*What the hell?! Buffy Summers is kissing me. This can’t be real; I must still be in a coma,*” Faith thinks (*Want-take-have*, original italics). Just as characters in a porn movie are inexplicably drawn to each other in a way that makes them immediately get physical, Buffy is described as irresistibly drawn to Faith – not exactly against her own will, but for reasons she cannot explain to herself. It is as if she were “possessed by a demon,” as if her acts were guided by somebody else. “Why aren’t we fighting? Why hasn’t she stabbed me?” Buffy asks herself. These questions all refer to Buffy and Faith’s brutal knife fight that sent Faith into a coma, which posits this porn fiction in the plot of season four. They are also playful allusions to pornographic conventions: what is motivating the characters’ sexual attraction is unclear, sometimes even to the characters themselves.

[29] However, the reasons behind the former enemies’ transformation into passionate lovers are exposed a few lines later, where the reader learns that Faith has been dreaming about Buffy for a long time. Although subtle, this reference to dreams evokes the dreams Buffy and Faith share in the canon, and which are explained by their Slayer connection. In addition, Buffy reveals that she has not been oblivious to “all the sexual innuendoes” Faith used to “toss [her] way” in the past, smiling as she remembers “Faith’s old post-slayage line of ‘hungry and horny’” (*Want-take-have*). The intertextual reference to the arousal induced by slaying is frequently used and explored by femslash writers. It provides all the context, or plot, that is necessary for a sexual/romantic scene between Buffy and Faith, as do allusions to the Slayer thing or the want-take-have attitude, the latter indicating that a Slayer can take and have any partner she wants just as she can take any weapon she wants (“Bad Girls,” 3.14).

[30] Fan fiction writers themselves choose the terms porn or smut, not erotica, to classify their adult texts. Pornography and erotica are notoriously difficult to define in precise terms and, arguably, even more difficult to clearly distinguish from one another. In her discussion of hard-core versus soft-core pornography, Jane Arthurs states that “[h]ard core is the ‘real thing’ as judged against the ersatz ‘second best’ of soft core, with its endless fondling of breasts and simulated intercourse, which has been tamed for the ‘feminized’ mass market” (49). Furthermore, hard core “emphasizes deviant practices and sex for sex’s sake in a series of decontextualized sexual encounters that get straight to the action” (49). Jane Juffer, on the other hand, stresses that “texts sold under the rubric ‘erotica’ may be just as explicit as some pornography” (“There’s” 46), thus suggesting that the distinction between the two is less important in a text-centered analysis of sexually explicit material such as this essay. The Buffy/Faith femslash texts discussed here all contain graphic descriptions of the “real thing” and explore “deviant practices” such as lesbian BDSM and thus resemble hard-core porn in those respects. However, fan fiction conventions exclude decontextualized sexual encounters, since fan fiction is always situated, more or less firmly, within the context of the canon, as my analysis of *Want-take-have* shows.

[31] As Juffer points out in her discussion of commercial texts, the label erotica facilitates women’s access to sexually explicit texts (“There’s” 46, 53). Femslash on the internet, on the other hand, are non-commercial fan fictions that are subject neither to marketing strategies nor censorship restrictions. They are accessible to all women – and men – with internet access, who can easily stay “at home with pornography,” to use Juffer’s titular phrase. Fan fiction writers and readers have not only access but also agency, two important notions in Juffer’s discussions. Referring to Lawrence Grossberg, she states that agency has to do with “relations of participation and access, the possibilities of moving into particular sites of activity and power, and of belonging to them in such a way as to be able to actually enact their powers” (“There’s” 47). On internet sites “of activity and power,” fan fiction writers and readers enjoy the agency to publish, read and comment on, for instance, sexually explicit femslash texts. There is no threshold for “belonging to them” although certain sites, discussion groups or communities demand membership and a more or less active participation.[16]

### **Queer, Post-Phallographic Pornography**

[32] The Buffy/Faith femslash texts analyzed here challenge stereotypes about female sexuality, especially in their focus on graphic, hard-core descriptions of BDSM—sexual practice favoured by the Slayers—rather than on the purportedly feminine themes of love and caring. Such representations subvert stereotypical ideas about female desire and sexual behavior as passive or vanilla and necessarily connected to romantic love. These ideas remain pervasive in our culture, including within academic scholarship, as Clarissa Smith states in her reader-response study of women’s pornography (47), even as representations of strong women as well as of alternative sexualities are no longer unusual. Although not intimate, these femslash texts are therefore dissident in a way that corresponds to the dissidence Woledge finds in intimate male/male slash (which questions wide-spread assumptions about male sexuality through its emphasis on emotional and psychic oneness). Sexual power play scenes in Buffy/Faith femslash depict gender roles as performative and flexible rather than stable, although the Buffyverse canon seems to place Faith rather than Buffy as top. Thus Buffyverse femslash, as well as Buffyverse male slash, “can be seen as a medium through which women have explored gender—to use Judith Butler’s (1990) terms—as a performative category” (Keft-Kennedy 72). However, whereas the male/male non-con fan fiction texts analyzed by Keft-Kennedy

“leave unquestioned cultural stereotypes and assumptions about hegemonic masculinity as necessarily aggressive” (Keft-Kennedy 73), adult Buffy/Faith femslash questions stereotypes about female sexuality as non-aggressive. The pairing of two extremely tough and strong female characters in fan fiction, where a general rule is to stay true to the canon’s descriptions of characters, is a particularly interesting point of departure for such non-stereotypical representations.

[33] Rescripting and queering romantic, pornographic, gender and sexual conventions, the femslash texts addressed in this essay provide what I choose to call, drawing on Jenny Alexander (pars. 1, 28), queer, post-phallographic pornography. In contrast to traditional pornography, especially hard-core porn, Buffy/Faith femslash texts are not directed towards a male audience nor controlled by a male gaze in the way the compulsory “lesbian’ number” is in heterosexual hard-core feature films made primarily for male viewers (Williams 140). In a sense, these fan texts thus seem to corroborate the idea that “pornography for women is different,” as Snitow titles her article on Harlequin romance as female-targeted pornography. However, the hard-core texts about two super powered female characters distinguish themselves from conventional porn in other ways than the romantic, soft-core novels included in Snitow’s study. Instead of confirming the alleged differences between male and female reader expectations, the Buffy/Faith fictions question such cultural assumptions about what women want from sexually explicit material designed to produce sexual arousal. Moreover, they contribute to a queering of the gaze and its gendered viewer/reader positions. As Sue-Ellen Case states: “Not all men are Gazing erotically at women; some women are Gazing erotically at women, some women who are Gazed upon by women look like men, and some men Gazed upon by men look like men” (70).

[34] The female-authored femslash texts analyzed here feature a lesbian or queer gaze, challenging stable and stereotypical “positions of desire,” to borrow a term from Suzanne Juhasz (*A Desire* 145). Thus illustrating how femslash writers transform traditional scripts of romance and pornography, these texts suggest modifications to current definitions of pornography. Rather than de-contextualized (hetero)sexual encounters for the sole purpose of sex, adult femslash provides explicit, graphic representations of sex between familiar female characters whose background and previous relationship(s) are known to the readers. Since even subtle references to the canon suffice to anchor the Buffy/Faith stories quite firmly within the story arc of *BtVS* and *Angel*, it is questionable whether purely pornographic fan fiction such as *PWP* can be solely about sex for sex’s sake or porn without plot. As Kelly Boyd states in her analysis of male/male slash, the writing of slash authors “works to resist, and reconceptualize popular notions of sex, sexuality, pornography and romance” (102), a conclusion which is in line with male/male slash analyses such as Andrea Wood’s. This statement is valid for adult Buffy/Faith femslash as well, and probably also for a wider range of femslash which needs further scholarly attention. Since they allow for intersections between gender and sexuality expressed in non-normative ways, the Buffy/Faith femslash texts addressed here queer the stereotypical assumptions that readers’ or viewers’ sexual identifications and fantasies are stable, hetero or homosexual, and gender-coded when it comes to preferences for soft vs. hard-core pornographic representations. If people shape their sexual desire, persona, and fantasies through interactions with representations, as Teresa de Lauretis claims in *The Practice of Love*, then femslash writers’ interactions with Joss Whedon’s Buffyverse hold the potential, ultimately, of influencing their readers’ ways of imagining sexual desires and fantasies

along the lines of non-normative, less stereotypical—and therefore less reductive—sexual expressions.

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"Bad Girls," 3.14

"Enemies" 3.17

"Consequences," 3.15

"This Year's Girl" 4.15

"Who Are You?" 4.16

"Dirty Girls" 7.18

"End of Days" 7.21

"Chosen" 7.22

"No Future For You" 8.6

### **Angel Episodes Cited**

"Five By Five," 1.18

"Release," 4.14

### **Notes**

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[1] BDSM is a shortened acronym, "the full form of which is BD DS SM; Bondage and Discipline; Domination and Submission; Sadism and Masochism" (Rambukkana 77).

[2] Esther Saxey explains fan writers' fascination with this particular episode by its "interest in the subject of Buffy's body and her sexual persona" and, more particularly, Faith's interest in "sex using Buffy's body" (205).

[3] The dialogue between Joss Whedon and *BtVS* fans and its effects on the series is a case in point. See e.g., Rust, Kociemba, Lavery.

[4] As Keft-Kennedy points out, there has been an "academic tendency to read slash fanfic as largely coextensive with the conventions of the traditional romance genre" (51). See also Kustritz ("Slashing") and Driscoll.

[5] Camille Bacon-Smith's study of fan fiction writers in fanzines shows that 90 percent of the writers were women. Although recent scholarship reveals that some men participate in slash fandom, women are still considered to be in vast majority among fan fiction writers (Pugh, Mendelsohn).

[6] Despite its English title, this fan fiction is written in French. All quotes from *Slayers Do It Better* are translated by me. I will provide the original quotes in French in footnotes in order to make them locatable in the original text.

[7] As Chris Richards pertinently states in his discussion of sex and intimacy in *BtVS*, "Kendra doesn't do sex; Faith doesn't do intimacy. Buffy tries to do both" (126).

[8] In season 8, the comic book sequel to the TV series, Buffy both performs lesbian acts and becomes involved in lesbian politics (although unwittingly). The eighth season is however not overtly referred to by the fan writers examined here; 'post-season 7' is the label they choose for their fictions (rather than 'season 8'). It could however be argued that *Faith's Fantasies* inserts itself in season 8 since the author situates the story in Cleveland, Faith's home town in season 8 (see e.g. "No Future For You" 8.6).

[9] I would like to emphasize that the BDSM sex described in the femslash texts analyzed here are representations and, as such, probably have little, if anything, to do

with real people's BDSM practices. As Burr (49) points out, Beckman demonstrates that popular representations of SM and BDSM are misleading, e.g., in their focus on violence. Essays on BDSM discourse and actual practitioners' experiences instead draw attention to the importance of the ethics of care and to the key words 'safe, sane and consensual' (Taylor and Ussher, Califia, Rambukkana).

[10] Among Buffyverse scholars there is an on-going debate concerning interpretations of the 'kinky' sex depicted in *BtVS*, especially Buffy and Spike's season 6 relationship (see e.g. Crusie).

[11] See Burr for a detailed analysis of Buffy and Spike's relationship, and Heinecken for discussions about viewers' divergent reactions to it.

[12] During the scene displaying Buffy and Spike's first sexual encounter, they knock a whole building down ("Smashed," 6.9).

[13] "J'ai changé..."

[14] "Cette histoire aborde un nouveau style, de nouveaux thèmes...". SweetFaithy (alone or co-writing with Jemie) mostly depicts Faith as 'top' in her many Buffy/Faith femslash texts, which I discuss elsewhere.

[15] The guilt and the anger are related to the harm Faith caused Buffy after turning to the dark side ("Enemies," 3.17; "Graduation Day," 3.21-22; "This Year's Girl," 4.15; "Who Are You?" 4.16).

[xvi] The bilingual (French/English) site for Buffy/Faith femslash, Slayerstime.com, provides an interesting example of these constraints. In order to get the password granting access to the NC-21 fanfics, readers need to contribute 'substantial participation' in the member forum discussions, e.g. offer their own interpretations of specific episodes of *BtVS* with special attention to the two Slayers.