

“[I]s it dangerous?”

Alternative readings of “drugs” and “addiction” in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

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Giles: Do you have any idea what you’ve done? The forces you’ve harnessed, the lines you’ve crossed? [...]

Willow: No, Giles, I did what I had to do, what nobody else could do.

Giles: Oh there are others [...]

Willow: [...] but they’re the bad guys, I’m not a bad guy.

(*Flooded* B6004)

[1] *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* presents a complex and considered text for analysis, largely because it follows the post-modern trend of developing narrative sequences (or arcs) over an entire season, the series or across connected series. This allows for difficult concepts and situations to be worked through in significant detail, rather than what may have been previously covered as a “problem” complete with “resolution” in a single episode (Cover 86).ⁱ Using such a format allowed *Buffy* to depict the development of the character Willow, especially in seasons six and seven, through circumstances that have been read (both diegetically and critically) as “drug addiction.”ⁱⁱ What is meant by the terms “drugs” and “addiction” is complex, culturally and historically specific, and unstable. This complexity, however, is not shied away from within the world of the text. *Buffy* provides a comprehensive study of an experience of drug use that comments intricately and sometimes contradictorily on ideas about use, abuse, addiction and recovery. As Rob Cover suggests,

What is considerably different about *Buffy* [...] is that drug representation is more nuanced, treated in a more complex way, weaved through both explicit representation and metaphor, and works to ‘show up’ the relationship between the signifiers ‘drug’ and ‘addiction’ and the complex discursive framework in which they are both encountered and given meaning (87).

[2] Willow’s character and arc differ from popular understandings of drug use and users by challenging stereotypical images of the drug user as irrational, weak, dependent and deviant. Instead, Willow is (and remains) the epitome of responsibility, rationality and strength. The consequences and “danger” of use make up an integral part of her subjectivity, rather than an “external problem.” Indeed, the show draws attention to her social position in relation to her use, which makes the neo-liberal values that posit the individual as wholly responsible for her own destruction problematic. *Buffy* also relies on these stereotypes, however, in order to render Willow’s situation recognisable as “addiction.” In this way, *Buffy* can be seen to both reinforce and undermine neo-liberal

ideas on subjectivity, individualism and “addiction.”

[3] One of the founding themes driving the basic narrative of the show is dealing with the conflicts and responsibilities that come with power (and of being powerful). As Tanya Krzywinska notes, in American television narratives “magic has a direct relationship with the acquisition of power” (179). Magic is power made tangible. In this way, the association of magic with power and responsibility works to complicate popular understandings of drug use as selfish, self-indulgent and inherently “dangerous.” As is implied in the epigraphic exchange, *Buffy* disrupts this dichotomy of good (abstinence)/evil (or “bad” use). Instead, the diegesis of the series continually suggests that the potential danger of magic (“drugs”) correlates with quantity, intention and the emotional capacity of the user.

[4] Throughout its seven seasons, *Buffy* constructs Willow as an intelligent student with high-level computer skills, a powerful witch and a loyal friend, who is repeatedly considered to be the “best of the Scooby Gang” (South 133). Willow’s involvement with magic is ever-present: beginning with curiosity at Giles’ “secret” books, she begins to “tinker” with magic—enticed by the literal power of (book-)learning. Willow often uses magic to support Buffy (such as in *Passion* B2017; *Choices* B3019; *The Gift* B5022), or save members of the gang (as in *Becoming Part 2* B2022; *Who Are You?* B4016; *Weight of the World* B5021). Willow’s access to magical powers grows along with her own maturity and academic excellence. She continues to perform more powerful spells, invoking greater powers, under the ever-watchful and suspicious notice of the adult voice of the show, Giles (see especially his warning to her in *The Zeppo* (B3013): “Don’t argue. I want you safe.”). Indeed, it is no coincidence that the intoxicating effects of magic are first explored through his character (in *The Dark Age* B2008). Here, we first see magic used for frivolous pleasure-seeking, rather than protection, and to devastating consequences. (All of his old friends are killed, and his current friends endangered.) Thus, Giles’ incessant rebuking of Willow’s use is positioned as coming from an experienced user, not (merely) a concerned “adult.” Giles’ persistent solicitude is compounded by the physically damaging effects of use (first seen in *Becoming Part 2*); the potential for danger is constant. As Willow’s knowledge of magic develops, we learn too that her capacity to control her use and its consequences is rooted in emotional control (*Doppelgangland* B3016). In this way, *Buffy* binds Willow’s personality and subjectivity to her ability to use without endangering those around her (which is first explored in *Something Blue* B4009, in which Willow’s distress has worrying consequences for those around her).

[5] In the beginning of the sixth season, Willow performs a spell in order to resurrect Buffy (*Bargaining Part One* B6001; *Bargaining Part Two* B6002). The magic is so powerful (and, equally, dangerous) that she lies to her friends about the spell’s necessary ingredients (the blood of a freshly slaughtered foal) and composition (her arms are subjected to deep cuts which are reminiscent of track marks, not

coincidentally) and the regurgitation of a snake. Soon after the “success” of such a powerful spell,ⁱⁱⁱ Willow comes to use magic in a way subsequently commented on by herself and other characters as “addiction.”

“Addiction”

[6] Although Willow’s magic use is portrayed by the show and critics alike as “addiction,” it is necessary to draw attention to the historicity of “addiction” as a concept which has only recently come to be understood as a “medical fact.” At the end of the eighteenth century, ideas about compulsion shifted the source of addiction from being a weakness of the individual to an inherent property of the substance itself (Levine 144). Harry Levine has documented the medicalisation of addiction as a “disease” which corresponded historically with the temperance movement, thus pointing to the interdependence of addiction and prohibition. Robin Room builds on this formulation by drawing attention to the cultural framing of addiction, where bad behaviour is seen as a result of the intoxicating effect of the substance:

The addiction concept emerges as a way of understanding this failure: the failure of the drinker or drug user to behave rationally (from the perspective of the observer), the failure to stop a recurrent pattern of use despite the harm it is seen as causing (224).

Willow’s relationship to magic is constructed using this understanding of addiction. As I will argue, *Buffy* attempts to critique popular narratives of “addiction” and “recovery”; however, the show also relies upon them in order to depict Willow’s situation recognisably as “addiction.” Willow’s “failure to stop” despite the mushrooming harm her use engenders (to herself and others) first culminates in the episodes *Smashed* (B6009) and *Wrecked* (B6010), where she binge-uses, gets in a car crash endangering Dawn (who breaks her arm), and is thus forced to admit that she “has a problem” and begins her (short-lived) abstinence. Willow’s propensity for destructive use is foreshadowed through her magical vengeance mission against the god Glory (*Tough Love* B5019) and the previous episode (*Tabula Rasa* B6008), in which she uses magic (and lies about it) immediately after promising Tara, her girlfriend, that she would “go a week without magic.” As Cover notes, this is clearly a reference to the challenge made to users claiming they are not dependent or “addicted” (90-91).

[7] Here, the idea of Willow’s use as “compulsive” points directly at the neo-liberal conception of “addiction,” which has been outlined by the World Health Organisation:

Drug addiction is a state of periodic or chronic intoxication produced by repeated consumption of a drug (natural or synthetic). Its characteristics include: (1) an overpowering desire or need (compulsion) to continue taking the drug and to obtain it by any means; (2) a tendency to increase

the dose; (3) a psychic (psychological) and generally a physical dependence on the effects of the drug; (4) detrimental effect on the individual and society (WHO in Levine 167).

Such a definition relies, falsely, on the stability of the category “drugs.” This is problematised by the fact that the term “drugs” is used to collapse a range of substances with a range of effects into a category more or less defined by social approval. Such a definition assumes that substances named “drugs” can have universal, stable effects, rendering inconsequential the social context of use. This aspect of “addiction” and “drugs” is both reinforced and undermined by Willow’s narrative arc: Willow’s behaviour is framed as “addiction” in ways that suggest there are inherent properties of magic, which not only have universal effects but universally result in addiction (and death, see *As You Were* B6015).^{iv} Willow’s social predicament and conditions, however, are considered by her friends to have influenced, if not caused, her use (or “overuse”) of magic.

[8] That Willow’s interaction with magic is an “addiction” is explicitly stated by herself and other characters in subsequent episodes, like *Dead Things* (B6013), *Older and Far Away* (B6014) and this exchange from *As You Were* (B6015):

Willow: I got addicted. The way addicts do. [...]

Sam: Back in the jungle, we had not one but two hardcore shamans working for us. They were working the dark magicks and got addicted, and now they’re gone. Gone, as in, there’s nothing left. I’ve never met anyone with enough strength to quit before.

Here, the narrative relies on ideas of addiction as an inevitable consequence of the (inherent) properties of “magic.” It is conversations like these which have led many critics to also name Willow’s situation as “addiction” (South 141; Lawler 114; Forster 9). Earlier in the season, however, Willow’s use was set up as specific to her social predicament, as is discussed by her friends (in her absence):

Buffy: Willow’s a grown-up. You know, maybe she doesn’t need to be monitored. She’s going through something, but we’re not her. I mean, maybe she has reasons for acting this way. And so what if she crossed a line? You know we all do stuff. Stupid stuff. But then we learn and we learn and we don’t do it again. Ok, so who are we to be all judgey?

Xander: Not judgey, just observey.

Anya: Yeah all we’re saying is she’s acting different, she’s not herself (*Wrecked*).^v

Use and Social Context

[9] That Willow is “not herself” can be understood as a recognition of Jacques Derrida’s (de)construction of the concepts “drugs” and “addiction.” Derrida theorises that society’s problems with drug use stem from an objection to pleasure taken “without truth.” Derrida critiques the idea that there is a stable, “natural” self in the first place from which any “change” can be substantiated as a result of “drugs,” rather this conception is a result of the reductive dichotomy: natural/invasive. As Derrida describes: “As soon as one utters the word ‘drugs,’ even before any ‘addiction,’ a prescriptive or normative ‘diction’ is already at work, performatively, whether one likes it or not” (2). Anya’s declaration that Willow is “not herself” relies on there to be a stable self for her not to be, which, as Derrida has noted, is false. It also presupposes that Anya can know who that self is, when it is evident from the narrative that Willow does not. (On the contrary, subjectivity is constantly unstable and changing.) Magic is not (and cannot be) external, but rather forms a part of Willow herself (which is made explicit by Giles in *Lessons* B7001).

[10] In the wider context of the series, Willow’s situation is conveyed as a result of *the combination* of the magic she uses, her social context and subjectivity (especially her emotional state). This is because other characters are shown as able to use magic without the negative consequences it causes Willow. For example, Anya, Tara, Giles and Dawn all use magic at various times for the purpose of “helping others.” In this way, the depiction of magic use in *Buffy* problematises understandings of “drugs” as possessing stable, universal effects. *Buffy* works to construct a kind of productive/destructive dualism in relation to magic use. While Anya, Tara and Dawn use magic selflessly and to help others (productively), Willow’s use becomes increasingly frivolous (*All The Way* B6006; *Smashed*) or for personal gain (*Flooded*; *Tabula Rasa*; arguably *Bargaining Part One*), and thus (becomes) destructive. As Cover argues, this is likely to refer to the ethics of Witchcraft which are discussed earlier in the series:

Tara: witches can’t be allowed to alter the fabric of life for selfish reasons. Wiccans took an oath a long time ago to honor that.
(*Forever* B5017)

We are taught to read magic through the lens of “drug addiction,” however, and so this discussion can be seen as referring to an ethics of drug use. The formulation of drug use as productive/destructive can be understood as a reflection of the logic of the “pharmakon” as highlighted by Derrida. Derrida draws attention to the ambiguity of the Greek word “pharmakon”, which can mean poison and cure, and thus cannot be fixed into dichotomies of good/evil, normal/deviant or internal/external, but disrupts these terms (Keane 14). Magic, then, provides an ideal example of “drugs” as pharmakon; it can be both poison and cure, good and evil.

“Freedom” and Failure

[11] As was alluded to above, contemporary understandings of addiction rely on the neo-liberal values of rationality and individual freedom; that is, addiction is constituted in opposition to freedom. That latter term, however, is a discursive construct as well, used in neo-liberal regimes of control to posit subjectification as voluntary:

subjects are not merely ‘free to choose’ but ‘obliged to be free’, to understand and enact their lives in terms of choice under conditions that systematically limit the capacities of so many to shape their own destinies (Rose 17).

In this way, the individual is held responsible for their own success or failure, judged by their ability to become and remain a proper, productive social subject who can be recognised by the state and their peers as normal and legitimate. Yet, the very idea of “choice” is dubious, as Nikolas Rose argues. Here it becomes clear that “addiction” and neo-liberal society construct each other. Both rely on and construct the dualism of free will/compulsion in which “addicts” are stigmatised for lacking agency and rationality, and yet are required to produce rationality and independence in order to overcome their addiction (Sedgewick). *Buffy* both reinforces and attempts to undermine neo-liberal ideas of rationality and freedom; Willow’s situation is held at once to be her fault and a product of her social conditions (about which I will return to).

[12] In order to frame Willow’s use as “addiction” the show depicts her in a way which can be read as the failure of a proper, productive subject, thus reinforcing ideas of neo-liberal subjectivity. This is illustrated best in the following excerpt:

Anya: What about Willow? Can’t she do something?

Buffy: Maybe. But she’s home sleeping.

Xander: Sleeping? Is she sick?

Buffy: No, she was out late. With Amy.

Anya: And I’m bizarre. At least I didn’t dump you to hang out with an ex-rat.

Buffy: No, it’s not like that. She’s just helping Amy through a transition.

Xander: And making herself a playmate to do magic with. Someone who won’t monitor her. Like Tara did. (*Wrecked*)

Xander and Anya’s assertions that Willow is not “pulling her weight” plays directly into neo-liberal ideas; Willow is sleeping when she should be working, thus failing in her responsibility to be a productive subject. Furthermore, the construction of magic use within the binary productive/destructive, selfless/selfish, also reinforces the neo-liberal emphasis on productivity. The show (and this passage) also attempts to critique these ideas by emphasising the conditions in which her use takes place: Willow was *with*

Amy, a “magically-inclined friend” (*Smashed*). That this narrative takes place during a time when Willow is increasingly isolated from the rest of the group is not insignificant, rather it suggests a correlation between social isolation (or marginalisation) and drug use. Buffy draws attention to this specifically:

Willow: I deserve the wrath of Dawn, but why is she taking it out on you?

Buffy: Because I let it happen.

Willow: Buffy, I was the one who was-

Buffy: Who was drowning, my best friend, I was too wrapped up in my own dumb life to even notice (*Gone B6011*).

Here, *Buffy* works to undermine the neo-liberal idea that individual failure is solely responsible for negative outcomes of drug use by suggesting that Willow’s social situation is an integral part of her use.

[13] Willow is constantly re-asserted as a strong (and in the end, the strongest) member of the group (Xander names her “boss” in *Bargaining Part One*; Buffy affirms her as the strongest in *The Gift* and *Chosen B7022*). Her physical presence in the opening of season six reinforces this role and the individual strength of her character. Willow is first shown with a sweeping low-angle shot atop a tombstone, staring down at the cemetery as we gaze up at her (*Bargaining Part One*). Willow is considered not only the most powerful, but, importantly, as the most responsible (*Doppelgangland*; *Flooded*; *Smashed*). In this way, *Buffy* subverts the stigmatisation of drug users as irrational and irresponsible by writing this experience into the strongest character in the show. Willow’s narrative tears apart neo-liberal understandings of drug users as “weak” and individually to blame for the consequential damages of their interactions with “drugs.” Rather, *Buffy* considers the effect of social structures and conditions as constitutive of problems associated with drug use.

Power “Out Of Place”

[14] Cover argues that Willow’s character arc in seasons six and seven reflects an instability of identity, empowerment and subjectivity, rather than an experience of drug addiction. Cover goes on to suggest that this oversimplification reflects society’s general tendency to oversimplify matters of drug use (90). However, as “drug addiction” provides the framework through which Willow and the other characters understand her situation, it can be read as commenting on the contemporary way in which diverse experiences are reduced to singular categories and given a specific trajectory. Furthermore, Cover’s ideas on Willow’s situation as a crisis of identity and empowerment does not exclude a “drug use” reading. On the contrary, it reveals the complexity of issues of drug use, identity and disempowerment, which can be read as directly relating to Willow’s position as a queer woman.

[15] That Willow’s friends do not (and cannot) know what she is going through, as

Buffy reminds them “She’s going through something, but we’re not her” (*Wrecked*), refers not just to more general issues of selfhood but also to the fact that Willow is queer and her friends are not. Willow is increasingly socially isolated from her friends, and it makes no sense to assume that her differing sexuality is merely coincidental. Magic and witchcraft are continually linked with lesbian inclinations and magic has previously been used as a metaphor for lesbian sex (*Who Are You?*; a link which is returned to in *Touched B7020* and Willow’s final spell in *Chosen*). Thus it does ideological work to reinscribe magic into the discourse of “drug addiction.” This correlation between magic and sexuality and magic and “addiction” alludes to drug use as resistance to marginalisation. Women’s drug use in itself can be understood as rebellion to expectations of gender (Friedman and Alicea). This is especially poignant as magic provides Willow with access to power (access which is denied in a society which discriminates against women and homosexuals, and thus queer women such as Willow are doubly marginalised). Even though Willow is the strongest in the group, she would have little access to social privileges outside of their tight knit community. *Buffy* makes reference to this fact in the following conversation:

Buffy: I just don’t understand. [...]

Willow: I don’t know. The magic, I, I thought I had it under control, and then, I didn’t. [...] I mean, if you could be plain old Willow or super-Willow, who would you be? [...]

Buffy: Will, there’s nothing wrong with you. You don’t need magic to be special.

Willow: Don’t I? I mean, Buffy, who was I? Just some girl. [...] I just, it took me away from myself, I was, free.

Buffy: I get that, more than you—But it’s wrong. People get hurt.
(*Wrecked*)

Here, *Buffy* works to justify Willow’s desire for magic by conveying her frustration at her social position. The show highlights the impossibility of living up to expectations of femininity and compulsory heterosexuality; Willow fails to be a properly feminine subject (as she is rational, independent, strong and queer). Furthermore, the destructive consequences of Willow’s use suggest she is a woman “out of place”—“too empowered”—and thus reflects social anxieties about powerful women and lesbians. (For discussions of the Willow/Tara narrative as “Evil/Dead Lesbian Cliché” see Wilts, Tabron and Ryan.)

“Recovery”

[16] Willow’s strength of character is reinforced when she “overcomes” the problems associated with her use by learning about herself and the magic power she possesses. In this way, *Buffy* makes a strong statement against abstinence as a treatment method or goal, suggesting that education is the means to achieving controlled and minimised

(productive rather than destructive) use. This can be seen as a direct response to the “boom” in treatment facilities (both faith-based and “medical”), which generally are not successful. As Frank Owen outlines:

Relapse rates are high for all forms of treatment, no matter what the approach and what the drug. The dirty little secret of the drug-treatment industry is that for the majority of people recovery programs don’t work, at least if the goal of treatment is long-term and complete abstinence (49).

After her attempt to end the world, Willow is sent to England with Giles in order to learn about magic and where it comes from. Giles resumes the role of teacher and again we are reminded of his position as a “reformed user” who understands the allure of the intoxicating effects of magic but who now understands its “proper place” (*Lessons*). Willow’s heightened ability to understand magical power is a “recovery” tool which aims at increasing her control (of magic and herself):

Giles: This isn’t a hobby or an addiction. It’s inside you now, this magic. You’re responsible for it. (*Lessons*)

[17] Giles’ emphasis on “responsibility” furthers *Buffy*’s critique of addiction as disease in which the “afflicted” has no control. The framing of “recovery” as involving use rather than complete abstinence complicates not only abstinence as treatment, but also addiction as compulsive. By showing Willow as (subsequently) able to use magic without a compulsion to “overuse,” *Buffy* suggests that “addiction” as a problem results more from context than any inherent properties or effects of “drugs.” This is highlighted by Willow’s removal to England: she must be taken away from the social conditions in which her use became a problem. Furthermore, the responsibility for healing is shouldered not by Willow alone, but by the entire group (*Same Time, Same Place* B7003). Indeed, responsibility of the collective is the central theme of the show. This is demonstrated by persistent undermining of the premise of “the chosen *one*” by Buffy’s reliance on the support of her friends (Wilcox 2002). What needs to be healed is not (just) Willow but the group dynamics and social conditions which resulted in her destructive use.

[18] By sharing the responsibility for Willow’s “recovery” among her friends, *Buffy* argues against the social isolation of the afflicted. Instead, *Buffy* highlights the importance of social context in “recovery” as well as “addiction” in the first place. Indeed, the challenges of fighting evil without Willow’s magic is made the subject of the episode *Older And Far Away* (and again in *As You Were*), in which the pressures of this shared responsibility are shown to be potentially hostile. Throughout the seventh season, Willow’s ability to use magic in ways that are productive (and not destructive) is repeatedly tested as she (and the group) slowly overcome their fears of use as

inherently and inevitably harmful. The possibilities for danger and disappointment at her inability to perform are hinted at (*Selfless* B7005; *Bring On The Night* B7010) and she subsequently shows herself (and her friends) that she can still use magic (*Showtime* B7011; *Potential* B7012). This arc of moderate (productive) use peaks in *Get It Done* (B7015), where Buffy forces Willow into a position where she must use magic in order to rescue Buffy. The value of Willow's use is considered in a complex way: the group needs her to use magic and there are risks. (Willow's relationship with Kennedy is put in jeopardy when Kennedy sees the potential for Willow's use to be harmful.) But with the support of her friends, and the emotional control she has developed, Willow is able to succeed. The way this narrative plays out serves to reinforce the dichotomy of productive/destructive use, which culminates in the final episode of the series in which Willow is able to use (incredibly powerful and intoxicating) magic "for good" (*Chosen*).

Conclusion: "I'm not a bad guy"

[19] The narrative of Willow's experience in *Buffy* offers a new paradigm for considering "addiction" and "treatment." Willow's character arc is bound to magic from almost the beginning of the series: magic which for the most part is used "for good." Willow uses magic to recover Angel's soul (twice), helps Buffy defeat the god Glory by wearing her out with magic, brings Buffy back from the dead and heals her from a mortal bullet wound, kills the murderer of Tara and hopes to destroy all the pain in the world. As a "reformed" user, Willow continues to use magic to protect, assist and save her friends; in the end, she accesses Buffy's power as the Slayer through the Scythe to re-distribute it among all the potential Slayers in the world, thereby literally breaking the premise of the chosen one and saving the world from the First Evil. Without Willow's magic, Buffy surely would not have survived as long as she did, and this is the show's central theme: Buffy's power is reliant upon the support of her friends.

[20] *Buffy*, then, offers an understanding of drug use as dependent on (and often the result of) social context. *Buffy* by no means offers a "positive" reading of drug use: Willow physically and emotionally damages all of her friends in the process. Yet the show does offer a reading of addiction and recovery that de-stabilises the category "drugs" and the concept "addiction". The show succeeds in depicting drug use and its consequences as a complex web of dynamic intra-action between personal agency and structural forms of social restraints. Magic is pharmakon: poison and cure, and the distinction arises from how it is used: for good or evil, productively or destructively. In this way, *Buffy* allows for the possibility that what society disapprovingly names "drugs" are not necessarily "wholly bad," but have the potential to be used in constructive and productive ways.

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ⁱ Indeed, creator Joss Whedon critiqued the oversimplifications of social issues which arose in these types of "special episodes" (Rochlin 19 in Wilcox 2001).

ⁱⁱ Within the world of the text, magic is framed as a kind of drug: something

external to the body which produces intoxicating effects seen as responsible for subsequent harmful behaviour and (therefore) socially disapproved of. Derrida, rightly, critiques this idea of “externality”, but nevertheless this is the way in which “drugs” are conceptualised.

iii Resurrection has been commented on previously as the most powerful and dangerous magic, to the extent that it is “probably impossible” to achieve (Tara in *Forever* B5017).

iv It is important to note that within the world of the text “magic” is divided into white (“good”) and black (if not “evil” at least “negative”) – a racialising distinction I find highly problematic. Furthermore, “magic” is disambiguated into the categories “chemistry with newt”, blood sacrifice, ritual incantations drawn from texts and willed witchcrafts (as described by Kociemba). Magic, however, is not wholly divisible as either selfish, harmful and intoxicating (black), or selfless, harmless and non-intoxicating (white) (Willow often experiences negative side effects of use regardless of whether the magic is “for good” or self-centred reasons). In this way, the show sets up and disrupts a dichotomy of helpful/selfish, undermining the notion that “drugs” have universal, stable effects.

v Here, as well as throughout the episodes *Smashed* B6009 and *Gone* B6011, it is made clear to the viewer that Buffy is rationalising her own (newly sexual) relationship with Spike, a relationship which she concludes is destructive and damaging (to both of them, *Dead Things* B6013; *As You Were* B6015; *Never Leave Me* B7009). In paralleling Buffy’s relationship with Spike and Willow’s relationship with magic, *Buffy* complicates understandings of drug use by acknowledging the complexity of desire, particularly for pleasure which is harmful (for further discussion on the allure of harm to “drug” users, see Klein).