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Play, Identity, and Aesthetics in "Restless"

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The sight of the masked figure, as a purely esthetic experience, carries us beyond "ordinary life" into a world where something other than daylight reigns; it carries us back to the world of the savage, the child and the poet, which is the world of play.—Huizinga (26)

[1] The beginning of the episode "Restless" (4.22) sees Buffy and her friends, Willow, Xander, and Giles, gather at her house for a relaxing evening of watching videos. They eventually fall asleep, and what follows is a set of four dreams that do not have any structured narrative but instead rely on "free association combining the totally surreal with the totally mundane" (Whedon, DVD commentary). As stated by Joss Whedon, writer and director of that episode, the result is a "tone poem" filled with symbols and metaphors, and as stated by Nikki Stafford, "a surrealistic episode so jam-packed with information that we'll probably be seeing allusions to it for the rest of the series" (Stafford 244). Like any other auteur work, "Restless" "can only be reread" (Wilcox par. 1) by itself—or, as pointed out by Matthew Pateman, since "Restless" "falls just over halfway through the complete *Buffy* corpus" it is a point from which one can "flow back and forth across the whole story" (109). Roz Kaveney writes that season four deals with "authority, order and the estrangement of the self and others" (13). As will be developed in a following section, each dream of "Restless" is for the protagonist an inner fight, "a struggle with the self" (Wilcox par. 6). Joss Whedon said in an interview talking about season six that for him "childhood is so rich with metaphors, a lot of it had to do with leaving that behind." I think this is the main theme of *Buffy* as a show (childhood and leaving it behind) and "Restless" is just another example of it. It probably all started with Buffy losing her virginity and the man she loved at the same time ("Surprise" 2.13 and "Innocence" 2.14), followed by the destruction of the high school ("Graduation Day" 3.22) and getting to adapt to university life in season four. "Restless," at the end of season four, will be followed by Buffy losing her mother in season five ("The Body" 5.16) and becoming a parent for Dawn; by Buffy's dying ("The Gift" 5.22), being resuscitated several months later ("Bargaining" 6.2) and having to adapt to life again, then ending with Buffy sharing her power with other slayers ("Chosen" 7.22). As we will see, play does not concern only childhood, but is certainly part of it. Matthew Pateman writes that the first dream of "Restless," Willow's dream, is about performance ("Performance dominates her dream" 126). He describes how "the opening shot frames the action in a televisual equivalent to the theatrical space of the proscenium arch stage" and how "the lens operates as our fourth wall and the strong verticals at either side of the screen and the joining horizontal at the top provides the stagelike quality" (126). I think that first segment of "Restless" demonstrates that "Restless" itself is about performance, performance of the self and its relations with others. About her encounter with the Shadow Men in "Get it Done" (7.15), Buffy says while she is in the same desert where she has already been in "Restless" that "none of this is actually happening. This is like a play. A shadow play. Some non-reality re-enactment hologramy." That's what "Restless" is, at least from the protagonists' point of view. The dreamlike quality, the surrealistic elements, the impression of physical flowing make of "Restless" a "pastiche of realism" (Pateman 111), a play. That makes acting the main form of play in "Restless" but not the only one. Dutch historian Johann Huizinga concluded his book *Homo-ludens, A Study of the Play-Element in Culture* by saying that "all is play" (212). I will extend that statement by saying that "Restless" is all play.

[2] Huizinga analyzes play in its numerous characteristics and reveals it as the driving force of all human social structures and activities. For him, play comes first ("culture arises from play, it is played from the very beginning" 46) as animals and

children play. He doesn't mean that play turns into culture or evolves into it, but rather culture "proceeds in the shape and the mood of play" (46). "Activities like hunting tend in archaic societies to take a play-form" (46). Play becomes a cultural phenomenon as "once played it endures as a new-found creation of the mind, a treasure to be retained by the memory" (10). It becomes tradition by being repeated ("the play-element gradually recedes into the background, being absorbed for the most part in the sacred sphere. The remainder crystallizes as knowledge: folklore, poetry, philosophy or in the various forms of judicial and social life" [46]). Huizinga describes play from the purest form of play of young animals and children to higher forms, which he calls "social manifestations" (7), like any kinds of rites and contests, drama, riddle, poetry, philosophy or the use of masks and disguises. "Restless" gather all those forms of play: the animal's play with the shot of Miss Kitty Fantastico playing with a wool ball, the archaic people's with the first slayer trying to separate Buffy from her friends (contest), the children's with the shot of Buffy building sand castles in a sandbox, the fair sequence, Giles and Spike playing on swings, Anya waving hands pretending to drive, Riley and Adam building a fort with pillows, the preponderance of masks and disguises, and finally the presence of higher forms of play like poetry with Willow writing a poem by Sappho on Tara's back ("the function of the poet still remains fixed in the play-sphere where it was born" Huizinga 119), acting and drama with the *Death of a Salesman* sequence, Anya's comedy act in the Bronze, Spike posing for crowds as an attraction in his crypt, and even music and song with Giles' "Exposition song" at the end of his dream (Huizinga talks about "the indissoluble bond between play and music" 158). Those are a few examples of the forms of play present in "Restless."

[3] I believe that the narrative of "Restless" relies fully on the character of play in the sense that it is through forms of play that the characters' personalities are explored. I have already stated that "Restless" is about performance and it is the dream area that gives that performance its stage, its playground. As Huizinga writes, play "is a stepping out of 'real' life into a temporary sphere of activity with a disposition all of its own" (8). This particularity of play brings it to the immaterial world, the spiritual world, "the sacred sphere," which is also the sphere of dream. Huizinga further describes the general characteristics of play as its pretending quality (which is introduced at the beginning of the episode with Willow telling to Riley "it's like you're blackmailing the government" about the information he could reveal and by Buffy when she innocently pretends not to have heard her mother pointing out that she "finally" met Riley) and its limitedness ("all play moves and has its being within a playground [...] all are temporary worlds within the ordinary world, dedicated to the performance of an act apart" [10]). That particular "act apart" in "Restless" is "the struggle with the self" as experienced by the four protagonists: their fears, their wish-fulfilment, their regression, their exertion, and their search for purpose in life. For that they will go through different playgrounds within the main playground, the area of dream: for example, Tara's room, the backstage and stage at the Bronze, Xander's basement where he keeps coming back, Buffy's sandbox and the sacred desert, the Initiative, the different stages Xander goes through, the fair, Spike's crypt. But let's not forget that the dreams of "Restless" are plays within a teleplay (the episode) that we watch on our television set that forms a playground in itself: what we're watching is a play within a play within a play-moment. In the following sections, I will make a closer analysis of the episode and the characters through categories of higher forms of play like contest, drama, and the use of masks and disguises, language and aesthetics.

Contest

"The function of play in the higher forms which concern us here can largely be derived from the two basic aspects under which we meet it: a contest for something or a representation of something. These two functions can unite in such a way that the game 'represents' a contest, or else becomes a contest for the best representation of something. Representation means display, and this may simply

consist in the exhibition of something naturally given, before an audience. [...] The child is making an image different, something more beautiful, or more sublime, or more dangerous than he usually is.”(Huizinga 13)

[4] The episode “Restless” is composed of four dreams, dreams of the four protagonists, Willow, Xander, Giles, and Buffy. Like any of our dreams, “Restless” deals with events that stress fears related to personalities, and fears that took place during the previous days: Spike tried to isolate Buffy from her friends and mentor by using their respective fears of being wrongly perceived by others and being rejected as a consequence. And it worked. For a while, Buffy was “all alone” (Spike in “Primeval” 4.21). In the previous episode, “Primeval,” the four characters fight Adam, the “unstoppable-killer-cyborg-demon hybrid thingy” villain (Willow in “This Year’s Girl” 4.15), by invoking the power of the first slayer. The spell used Tarot-like cards that define each protagonist by his or her main characteristic within the group: Spiritus, Spirit, for Willow, the versatile over-smart witch; Animus, Heart, for Xander, the less intelligent but loyal friend; Sophus, Mind, for Giles, the educated father-figure Watcher, and Manus, Hand, the physical flesh for Buffy the vampire slayer. Rhonda Wilcox writes “...Spirit, Heart, Mind and Body can be seen as aspects of one person; the first three all being non-physical qualities, and the fourth representing incarnation in the form of the hero” (par. 5).

[5] “Restless” is not only particular in its form, but also in its place within the whole seven-season series and in the characters’ development. Indeed, each dream, on one hand, summarizes each one’s personality, with characteristics, and on the other hand forecasts “what’s to come.” At the end of season four, they find themselves at a crucial point of their lives, especially for the three young adults, Willow, Xander, and Buffy, who are at a lifetime crossroad, at the intersection of childhood and adulthood, where personal fulfillment conflicts with desires, fears and frustrations. As very well written by Rhonda Wilcox, “the battle being fought in ‘Restless’ can be seen as a struggle with the self” (par. 6). I would add that the battle takes the form of a life path where the options of each one are reviewed. Willow figures herself as the lesbian, the intellectual, the one that is mocked; Xander the one that doesn’t understand what is told him, the one that doesn’t move forward, the ever-parents’ basement-renter; Giles the teacher, the father, the wanna-be rocker; Buffy the daughter, the girlfriend, the slayer. The self not only struggles, but also foresees and tests.

[6] In “Restless”, the “search for the self” takes the form of an enigmatic trip where each character is pulled from a place where they feel secure and thrown into another one where time and space are mixed up, and where they literally have to face their fears as they have been revealed by Spike’s machinations in “The Yoko Factor” (4.20). This enigmatic trip can be paralleled with a rite of passage that teenagers in primitive societies have to go through as a symbolic maturing, one that would leave a remembered and recognizable trace in time. “Restless” is not exceptional as a season finale that relies on a rite of passage for Buffy and her friends. In “Prophecy Girl” (1.12), “Becoming” (2.21-22), “Graduation Day” (3.21-22), “The Gift” (5.22), “Grave” (6.22) and even “Chosen” (7.22), new steps, in the form of challenging authorities, sexuality, the choice to kill or not (Faith, Willow), the choice to sacrifice or not (Angel, Dawn), including oneself (Buffy, Xander), have to be overcome in gradual levels. By the season four finale, authority has already been challenged with the destruction of the Initiative and Adam in “Primeval” (4.21), sexuality has been confronted in “The Yoko Factor” (4.20), and there was nobody to kill or sacrifice, so the remaining fight had to be inner, specific to each one.

[7] In “Restless”, the four protagonists are pursued by the first slayer, whose power they have invoked in the previous episode. What we can gather from the episode is that she was a primitive individual, with no watcher, and that she doesn’t agree with Buffy’s having friends. She acts as judge and executioner and apart from punishing, her goal is to reach Buffy, her contemporary counterpart, by eliminating what makes Buffy “the” vampire slayer—her friends, her family, her watcher, her boyfriend—to remind her she must content herself with being only “a” vampire slayer, only “flesh.” She has to eliminate each piece of the “super-entity,” first the Spirit, the Heart, and the Mind, by progressively weakening and finally destroying the given characteristic in each part of the entity, in order to reach Buffy, the Hand, and then be able to confront her physically on the slayers’ sacred area, the desert. As a symbolic character, the first slayer is the representation of one of the themes of “Restless,” “the animal force that used to be

us" as said by Giles. She is the embodiment of the primal urges that conflict with the requirements of a civilized society. She is the representation of what Buffy, Willow, and Xander have to go through as young adults symbolically in life and literally in their dreams; she is their rite of passage. But we understand who she really is only towards the end of the episode; until then, she's just another demon the four protagonists have to fight as they do every week. But she's not another demon; in "Restless" the first slayer is a representation of social and spiritual regression.

[8] The contest launched not only concerns the individual quest and struggle of each protagonist but also tests the capacity of the group to remain connected, just as Spike did two episodes before. Indeed, the four dreams are not separated one from the other, and they reunite through the journey of the whole "super-entity," as described by Wilcox (par. 5). Pieces of information gathered in each dream about the threat the group has presently to face, are stocked in a mutual active memory and are recalled in the next protagonist's dream. As in real life, the group acts as a whole and as in real life, it is Giles who gathers the pieces of the puzzle. Because of what happened to Willow, he is able, in Xander's dream, to know that "it's because of what" they did, and in his own dream, after what happened to Xander, to understand that "the spell we cast with Buffy, must have released some primal evil that's come back seeking I'm not sure what," etc., and to deduce the way to defeat this particular enemy: "I can defeat you with my intellect...I can cripple you with my thoughts." As in real life, he transmits this knowledge to Buffy, the last link, who is able to know who constitutes the danger, in what way, a spiritual way, which explains why she is reluctant at first as she says to Anya, "I'm not in charge of these things." She is reluctant to enter the contest.

Masks and disguises

"The 'differentness' and secrecy of play are most vividly expressed in 'dressing-up'. Here the 'extra-ordinary' nature of play reaches perfection. The disguised or masked figure 'plays' another part, another being. He is another being. The terrors of childhood, open-hearted gaiety, mystic fantasy and sacred awe are all inextricably entangled in this strange business of masks and disguises." (Huizinga 13)

[9] In "Restless" the search of the self takes the protagonists through different sets, different "playgrounds," different situations and different identities. Just as Huizinga wrote, costume is used to express the "differentness" of those identities: Buffy is a little girl when she wears overalls in the fair sequence or a primitive warrior when she puts mud on her face; Xander is a soldier or an ice-cream truck driver; Riley is a cowboy or a member of the Initiative when he wears a suit. The "pretending" (or drama) character of play is used at its maximum effect thanks to the dressing-up; the characters' personalities seem to expand to several dimensions. It's hard to keep track of who is being perceived as what and by whom, self-perceptions coming into the mix. From the beginning of the episode there is a confusion of identities that's going to continue through the four dreams. Matthew Pateman is right to speak of Plato's "Eidolon" and "representations of things' pure identities in the upper reaches"; "what we see in the dreams are not the characters but representations of them" (238). But our own perceptions of the mythology of the show are played with: Giles is in his tweed suit (the one he used to wear in the first three seasons of the show, when he was clearly identified as a Watcher, a knowledgeable authority figure) twice: in the playground sequence where he and Spike are on swings and in the hypnosis-session sequence. In both cases, it helps the viewer to decipher a certain code of the scene: "here Giles is the authority figure, the Watcher."

[10] Giles in Willow's dream says that costumes are "all about subterfuge," which can define Willow's dream. She's insecure about her identity (the lesbian, the nerd, the witch, the academic) and her fear of being punished for not "positioning" herself (Battis par. 16) is projected in the others' behavior towards her. Buffy mistakes Willow's casual outfit (in this scene a yellow t-shirt and a long red skirt) for her theater play costume. This "costume" (Battis par. 16), this outfit has been created by Willow to project the image of a college student that favors her spiritual side. It reflects a cool, open-minded, hippie persona and opposes the rigor

requested by academic achievement. But could this costume's purpose be to fill the "lack of embodiment" (par. 16) between "the oppositional binaries of her character" (par. 3) as written by Jes Battis in a very interesting portrait of Willow—the binary poles being "the crayon-breaky Willow" and "the scary-veiny Willow" ("Grave" 6.22)? She is not ready to wear a positioned outfit that everybody would recognize without ambiguity. Similarly, in "The Body" (5.16) she deplors the fact that she can't find any of her outfits that would mean unconditional support and understanding for her friends Buffy and Dawn: "why can't I be a grown-up?" She fails to "position" herself: she rejects both the masochistic submissive image of "crayon-breaky Willow" and the sadist feminine image of "scary-leathery Willow" of "Doppelgangland" (3.16) at this point of the "Restless" episode. She's willing to take a drama class but refuses to perform. She wants to use the costume only for the benefit of hiding, and not "acting" other personas than the one she struggles to construct. Her inability to position herself provokes her inappropriate behavior that others perceive as "fake." Her fear of being discovered is so overwhelming that her anguish comes to life: she lives her phobia, performing before a hostile audience composed of her friends.

[11] The fact that Buffy herself tears off Willow's costume is not trivial. Willow developed this "constructed identity" (Battis par. 21) in order "to fulfill her need for identification through the slayer" (Battis par. 13). When the one that allowed her to emancipate takes back what has been acquired, Willow regresses to a pre-magical state, the "crayon-breaky Willow," the one whose clothes are chosen by her mother, who's chosen as prey by vampires ("Welcome to the Hellmouth" 1.1), the one who does somebody else's homework and who's "old reliable" ("Doppelgangland" 3.16), the one whose personality is determined by others (Battis par. 11). At the end of her dream, she finds herself dressed as we first encountered her in "Welcome to the Hellmouth" (1.1) with a dark plaid dress with a white shirt underneath and white leggings, her hair being long again, and she's reading her book report about "The Lion, the Witch and the Wardrobe" in front of a whole class. Feeling insecure and unprotected without her constructed image, she places her friends and lovers within the angry mob; and the audience described by Giles "will find her, strip her naked and eat her alive," which occurs literally (in dream at least) with the first slayer sucking out of her "spirit," in other words, her magical and spiritual knowledge.

[12] As said by Giles at the opening of Xander's segment, "It's all about the journey." Indeed, "journey" is the main theme of Xander's dream through the exploration of what would or could be his future, knowing that it's seized by his lack of (academic) intelligence, his "anxious masculinity" as it has been described by Simkin, and his family background. In order to compensate his "lacks," he fantasizes the cliché older woman and the lesbian couple who reflect him a more advantageous image by luring him to potential sexual intercourse. During his journey, each time he projects himself in a specific situation, he experiences the sexual compensation and the costume that goes with it. First, he's in Buffy's house, in a familial environment, he's the Xander his friends and we know; thus he wears his casual outfit, and portrays Joyce, the mother figure, as the "older woman." When he considers himself as working poor jobs, he wears the ice-cream truck uniform. By wearing that uniform, he experiences the dimensions of this situation: he has a stable relation with a woman (Anya) and fantasizes about a lesbian couple that would invite him into their sexual intercourse. When he "really" considers enrolling in the Army, he's a soldier in a soldier outfit taken into a fantasy nourished by movies like *Apocalypse Now*. He's brave and dares to tell Snyder "how glad" he was that Snyder was "eaten by a snake."

[13] He says to Willow and Tara that he's "going places" and indeed, it's the only thing he does. His journey along the *Buffy* sets where he turns round and round points out his incapacity to produce something new, a different sexual and mental pattern from what his parents have already produced. And he never finds the "way out." Through his exploration, instead of going forward, as he thought, he went backward, he regressed "back to the beginning," where "the line ends with" his parents. Strangely enough, the words of the cheese man echo Xander's situation when he says, "these, will not protect you." Indeed the costumes didn't protect him. Subsequently, his heart, the only instrument that defines him outside his family and that would enable him to escape, is removed by the father illusion endorsed by the first slayer.

[14] The way the first slayer is dressed probably reflects her obedience to animist beliefs. The dry mud that covers her face may signify her purpose and function among her community: she's

a warrior and a killer, who has to be outcast to perform her duty. The mud is the physical embodiment of her beliefs. It is an organic element that symbolizes the return to primal origins for Buffy. Indeed in Buffy's dream, when she finds the mud in her weapons bag, she's compelled to spread it over her face, in such a way that she would disappear behind this mask. Then, she is in trance; her face expresses fear and aggressiveness. She becomes *the* weapon, the "one," "alone." Riley acknowledges that now she's on her "own" and Giles, in his dream, doesn't recognize her while she is wearing the primitive mask: he echoes, "I know you" as if he were seeing her for the first time. The mud is also the link between her and the first slayer. By wearing this costume, Buffy becomes a primitive slayer.

Language

"The great archetypal activities of human society are all permeated with play from the start. Take language, for instance, that first and supreme instrument which man shapes in order to communicate, to teach, to command. Language allows him to distinguish, to establish, to state things; in short, to name them and by naming them to raise them into the domain of the spirit. In the making of speech and language the spirit is continually 'sparking' between matter and mind, as it were, playing with this wondrous nominate faculty." (Huizinga 4)

[15] Because the episode is mainly a dream, in "Restless" language is often distorted as in the *Death of a Salesman* play or in the *Apocalypse Now* sequence. In both cases, it's a drama that's being acted, that's being played, but because we are in a dream, the language is at the same time familiar and unfamiliar. It's worth noting that in the previous episodes and especially in "Primeval" (4.21), the vocabulary related to "play" is very intensive, as for example: Buffy's "you're playing on my turf" and "Put on your game faces"; Xander's "I can't even act surprised"; and Spike's recurrent "That was fun." As said earlier, the narrative of "Restless" relies fully on the character of play while at the same time the direct language of play is kept to a minimum except for Joyce's "a mice is playing with my knees" and "I'm learning how to play Mahjong" and the French words said by Giles. He says in French: "les jeux." In French, the nouns "play" and "game" are translated by the same word, "jeu," while the verbs "play" and "act" are translated with the same word, "jouer." I would have liked to make a commentary on those French sentences, but the language is not correct enough to be sure of the author's intentions. But as the following paragraphs will show, language has been used by Whedon to mirror the characters' identities, either as they perceive themselves or as they think they are perceived by others. The range of vocabulary used for each character is personified. Nevertheless, he portrays the use of the power of language with much irony in Buffy's dream when she encounters Riley and Adam in a completely human form at the Initiative, playing at being "men," displaying physical threats, in charge of dominating the world. By "giving things names" with the sole purpose of domination, they misdirect the domain of the spirit while at the same time they protect themselves, with Adam not willing to tell his real name. This power of naming is fragile and impermanent. Therefore it always has to be renewed by new forms of classifications.

[16] Xander's "anxious masculinity" (Simkin par. 2) is characterized by his lack of confidence and the fact that he seems not to be able to find his place in the world and in his world, the Scooby gang. Indeed, he's not a fighter, he's not a reader, and he hasn't acquired sufficient technical skill to handle any kind of job in a self-satisfactory way, yet. Buffy and Willow's "I'm way ahead of you" and Giles' "The others have gone on ahead" indicate that Xander perceives the others as sexually and emotionally more mature than he and that he's aware that he remains in a boy-state. In his dream, the others acknowledge this boy-state with the vocabulary they use towards him: Buffy's "You don't need help with that, right?" (about going to urinate), Joyce's "I've learned about boys" and "Don't get lost" (about going to urinate again), Anya's "Je t'escorte" (I accompany you) and Snyder's "You're a whipping boy" underline the fact that the others perceive him as a little boy (or he thinks that's how the others perceive him; we still are in his dream, after all) and contribute to maintain this state. His (psychosexual development) journey starts with the encounter with the (incestuous) mother figure, incarnated

here by Joyce, "Buffy's mom" as he qualifies her later to Snyder. He demonstrates he's quite at ease in this kind of relationship and that his "conquest" of women passes through (physical maternal) "comfort" (the camera zoom to Joyce's breast is quite clear). The "passive, victim role" (Simkin par. 19), which characterizes him, is translated by the fact that both Joyce and the couple Willow/Tara launch him direct invitations ("Would you like to rest for a while?" and "Do you wanna come in the back with us?") and act as if they wanted to make him benefit from their sexual experience, just as Anya did in "The Harsh Light of Day" (4.3).

[17] Whether it's as stage manager, as watcher icon or as father figure, Giles is always represented as the "one in charge." In Xander's dream, in the playground sequence, Giles and Spike are swinging on swings while Buffy is building sand castles in a sand box. In this sequence, Giles passes his knowledge to Spike (the boy) through language and oral recognition ("Spike's like a son to me"), while Buffy (the girl) is rewarded with only gazes. Giles' dream opens in his vacant living-room, Giles standing over a sitting Buffy, trying to hypnotize her. This scene translates Giles' own conception of power as patriarchal that relies on restrictions and lies: "this is the way women and men have behaved since the beginning...before time" and "you have to stop thinking." He conducts Buffy's access to knowledge and to a varied range of psychosexual behaviors (power) with directional dogmas that she will not be educated to question (though she asks, "don't you think it's a little old-fashioned?"). In the next sequence Giles, Olivia, and an eager Buffy ("Come on, come on! We're gonna miss all the good stuff") are at some fair, acting like a family. Giles holds Buffy back with constant criticism of her eagerness for playing, her natural childlike enthusiasm for doing things ("don't stick out your elbow" "I haven't got any treats"). In the sequence of Spike's crypt where he's being photographed as an attraction, Spike tells Giles that he should "have figured it all out yet, with his enormous squishy frontal lobes" (which is the part of the brain linked with the function of language), that his "thoughts" are not helping him to understand the purpose of his power. In the opening scene of Giles' dream, he stands above Buffy, who passively sits, and in the last scene, the first slayer stands above him while he is crawling on the floor. The watcher / slayer dynamic is inverted and as for his relationship with Willow and Xander, Giles regresses to a stage where his knowledge (what justifies his presence and status in the group) is taken away from him. The first slayer cuts his skull with a knife.

[18] While the vocabulary attached to Xander reveals a perception (from himself or/and from others) of an ever-boy state, the vocabulary attached to Buffy reveals a stigmatization inherent in her slayer condition: Riley's two references to her as "killer" and Giles' association in the same sentence to Spike of "Buffy" and "kill" ("I still think Buffy should have killed you") and his song's "warrior beast" and "primal evil," that also refer to Buffy. In the rest of the show, Buffy has never let anyone treat her as a "killer," but in her dream when she meets Riley at the Initiative, she is very submissive to him. Indeed, she talks very quietly; the conversation turns around him and the pronouns she uses with him are only "you" and "we" (she addresses him using "I" only once, after he is no longer onscreen). Though Adam is here with a fully human face, Buffy (and we) still perceives him as the "monster" or "demon" that he is incarnated as throughout season four. But he also perceives her as "monster" and "demon": "Aggression is a natural human tendency. Though you and me come by it another way," he states, to which Buffy responds, with her demonic figure (the first slayer) right behind her, "we're not demons." The only time that Buffy uses "I" in this scene, is "Wait! I have weapons." Here her voice (and by extension her subjectivity) has nearly disappeared and she associates herself with a negative word "weapons."

[19] As in the case of the other characters, her whole dream is a regression, one that leads her to the (spiritual and physical) desert (death). She reached the "primal" source of her power, which is, as we will learn in "Get It Done" (7.15), demonic, in other words, animalistic. But thanks to her knowledge constituted by her bond with her friends, she resolves instantly the riddle that is told her: "I have no speech, no name. I live in the action of death, the blood cry, the penetrating wound. I am destruction, absolute, alone." She recognizes her enemy, but at the same time, also, herself. In her turn, she defines herself with a riddle that uses the contraries of the words said by the first slayer: "I'm not alone,...I walk...I talk, I shop, I sneeze...I'm gonna be a fireman when the floods rollback. There's trees in the desert since you moved out, and I don't sleep on a bed of bones." While the first slayer's riddle is unequivocal and linear, Buffy's riddle employs contrasts and oppositions: fire / floods; trees (life) / desert (death); bed (warmth and

smoothness) / bones (coldness and roughness). She demonstrates her completeness as a slayer, as an individual and as a woman: she has a name and subjectivity that the others reflect back at her ("I'm not alone") and she has a speech ("I talk"). Huizinga writes about riddle, a form of play, that "the answer to a riddle question is not found by reflection or a logical reasoning; it comes as a sudden solution, a loosening of the tie by which the questioner holds you bound. By giving the right answer you strike him powerless" (110).

[20] Here, we are presented with two contrasted images of the hero. One is outcast, solitary, and dehumanized to perform a sacred duty, an image we can sum up as "masculine" (here we relate to Simkin's association of "masculine" and "animal" par. 5); another one, a more modern one, that maintains relationships and takes strength from the social group, we can sum up as "feminine." As already pointed out in many essays about *Buffy*, one of the characteristics that makes Buffy, as a slayer, so special and long-lived, is the fact that she has friends and family which bring her spiritual dimension. In alternate realities, as in "The Wish" (3.9), Buffy hasn't got any friends or family; therefore she's expressionless and only businesslike (like Kendra) and comes to Sunnydale only to fulfill her prophecy: being killed by the Master. The power Buffy creates emerges from the reconciliation of Spirit, Mind, Heart, and Body. Its strength lies in "sharing" and not "dominance" It rejects both notions of "good" and "evil" and the arbitrary classification of words. By willing to stop the fight ("It's over. We don't do this anymore," she says to the first slayer), she rejects the unequivocal notion of "only physical" of the first slayer and gives them the chance to communicate in a different way than fighting. It gives her the opportunity to escape the contest and the playground by understanding that it was only a dream, and to regain full consciousness of it. On her first attempt, Buffy "spiritually" wakes up lying on the carpet, not where she physically stands. On her second attempt, by denying the first slayer a physical existence and by using an excessive and unreflective, playful use of language ("also in terms of hair care, you really wanna say, what kind of impression am I making in the workplace, cause"), she is the one who ends the group's journey and allows the four protagonists to wake up.

Aesthetics

"The profound affinity between play and order is perhaps the reason why play, as we noted in passing, seems to lie to such a large extent in the field of aesthetics. Play has a tendency to be beautiful. It may be this aesthetic factor is identical with the impulse to create orderly form, which animates in all its aspects." (Huizinga 10)

[21] Matthew Pateman describes how the "representationally realistic techniques" in *Buffy* allow "the establishment of a 'real' Sunnydale" and "offer a secure, known, recognizable world" (24). In "Restless" that "recognizable world" is turned upside down. The characters jump from one set to another in the blink of an eye, from one identity (or representation of an identity) to another. "Restless" is a visual riddle. The first shot starting the dreams is a shot that moves down on Willow sleeping on Buffy's couch, taking us down to the abyss of the unconscious that expresses itself in dreams and where the play is going to unfold. Matthew Pateman also talks about how in the rest of the series "the camera lens really is just a window onto a world and we do not see the lens 'working'" (24). In "Restless" the camera is shown working. For example, slow motions are used to shoot Miss Kitty Fantastico playing with a ball and to shoot Buffy and The Primitive fighting in the desert. In my opinion, those two scenes echo each other and relate to the theme of animality. Shots of Miss Kitty and the First Slayer are juxtaposed in Willow's dream linking their animalistic nature. Another example is the overexposure used in the playground sequence in Xander's dream echoing the particular brightness of the desert seen in Willow's dream and Buffy's dream: Buffy's ongoing regression and eventual call to the desert is the theme here. Maybe because, as already stated, "Restless" is a play that explores the unconscious, I found the notion of "enclosurement" particularly present in "Restless." First in Willow's dream with the narrow space between the red curtains (a symbol of femininity according to Whedon's commentary), in Xander's dream with the basement (the red curtains and the basement are places where Willow and Xander feel secure, marking their reluctance to grow-up)

and in Buffy's dream with Joyce in a passive motherly role who lives inside the wall. That image could translate Buffy's own fear of social failure due to her slayer duties.

[22] One of the most important themes treated in "Restless" is, I think, "the representation of the male and female character types and the exploration of the relations between them" (Simkin par. 2). Whedon's use of the metaphor and the literal comes into play in that particular theme. The first example would be in the *Death of a Salesman* play segment. In the first sequence Riley "is cowboy guy," "pretends" the male self-confident posture and tone (at which the audience laughs) echoing the traditional image of "naivety and conservatism" as described by Simkin (par. 23); Harmony is dressed as a German milk maid, a submissive role performing heavy physical duties like carrying milk, and Buffy takes the over-feminine icon role whose body is extended on the couch, her costume and hair being reminiscent of the character Vera Kelly in *Chicago*, "a sexual predator that sucks dry her victims" (Simkin par. 19). In the second sequence, Buffy breathes to cowboy Riley a very resentful discourse composed of words that are usually used to describe men as animals ("men with your groping and spitting all groin no brain three billion of you passing around the same worn-out-urge"), while Xander lies on the floor in a tuxedo suit crying at Harmony's feet. Though we could label each one as weak or strong (the camera shot reveals the two "strong" poles in the foreground and the two "weak" poles in the background), both types of women castrate both types of men, one by reflecting to them an advantageous but false image of themselves, and the other one by humiliating them intellectually and physically.

[23] Laura Diehl's "Why Drusilla Is More Interesting than Buffy," through the characters of Drusilla and Darla, reminds us what purposes the creation of myths such as the "monstrous" and "vampiric" womenserved: "the female vampire is man's sexual nightmare and sexual obsession...reflecting a primal fear and loathing of the sexual instinct in women...female monstrousness in these discourses is always attached to sexuality. The female vampire (especially the lesbian vampire) functions as a repository of patriarchal anxieties over female strength and sexuality" (par. 4 and 5). We have already seen that the vocabulary attached to Buffy in "Restless" is used to stigmatize her as a slayer ("killer" "demon"). In his dream, Xander says to Willow and Tara "I'm talking to my demon" and in The Initiative scene we can hear "the demons have escaped, please run for your lives." In those instances, if we replace "demon" by "women" we clearly arrive at the level of *Buffy's* feminist discourse. In "Restless," the representations of men and women are literal, and instead of being hidden behind metaphors, as in the entire rest of the show, here they are hidden behind the act of playing in its whole meaning. To talk about the sexed woman as a demonic figure, here we don't need metaphoric Darla or Drusilla, but literal Buffy, Willow, Tara, Anya, Harmony, and Joyce who play different roles, while they always keep playing their respective roles: Buffy is in a dominant-woman role in Willow's dream in the *Death of a Salesman* sequence while in her own dream she is in the submissive-woman role in her encounter with Riley at The Initiative; Joyce is seen as the sexual, aggressive mother making advances to Xander while she is seen as the physically restrained mother in Buffy's dream living in the wall; Willow is seen as the victim being sucked dry by a demon at the end of her dream while in Xander's dream, she is seen as "the demon that sucks dry her victim," the lesbian.

[24] However, the male characters, though they also play different roles, still play the same kind of roles: Riley is always the male hero icon that pretends over-confidence with the help of tools and disguises, Giles is the repressive father, and Xander is the little boy whose victimized-phantasms prevent him from growing up. While in the show, their personalities leave space for ambiguous characteristics and commentaries (Giles is usually perceived as a feminized character, Riley did make some effort in his relationship with Buffy, and Xander has after all many qualities), in "Restless" they are perceived as linear personas, and could be seen as the three dimensions of the same man as expected by a patriarchal society: repression-brutality-stigmatization, and that presentation is given in order to hide "anxious masculinities" (Simkin) and insecurities and to keep "power." That's why we don't need a symbolic Frankenstein-like Adam, but a literal human-face one, who also reunites these characteristics, in the series and in "Restless." The metaphoric figures of "Restless" appear, after a closer reading, also literal. They represent, on one side, what's within, our animal and primitive heritage: the "animal", Miss Kitty Fantastico, and the "primitive," the first slayer who during the whole episode until the end, is perceived as "the demon of the week" by the characters and the viewers. The colors they display

are alike: black and white. On another side, they are both female characters and therefore serve the explicit designation of a cultural disease: the demonization of women. Black and white are also the colors that Willow and Tara are wearing when they are gazed on by Xander and invite him into their sexual play. And through the literal representations of Buffy and Giles in the fair sequence as "daughter" and "father," it becomes obvious that "watcher" and "slayer" are diverted metaphoric symbols for "men" and "women" throughout *Buffy*.

[25] Sue Turnbull defines an "aesthetic moment" as "the moment when the history of the text and the experience of the viewer come together in a potentially productive intellectual and emotional encounter" (par. 41). I believe "Restless" to be one of those aesthetic moments, one that links people regardless of boundaries. To create "Restless" Joss Whedon certainly didn't get stopped by any creative boundaries, which makes it so rich in density and in meaning. I also believe there is still a lot to say about "Restless" even though it is a very difficult subject to treat, as there are so many layers intertwined in its content: anthropological, social, feminist, narrative, psychoanalytical, poetic, artistic, surrealist, parodic, and playful. If, as written by Huizinga, "culture arises from play" (46), is it possible that Joss Whedon with "Restless" and its prominent presence of forms of play created a piece of culture, something that on one side changed the course of the series and gave it a new impulsion and on the other side something to be retained, to be played with intellectually and emotionally by the viewers?

But with the end of the play its effect is not lost; rather it continues to shed its radiance on the ordinary world outside, a wholesome influence working security, order and prosperity for the whole community until the sacred play-season comes round again.—(Huizinga 14)

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