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Being a Vampire Sucks: Regarding the Anonymous Vampires in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

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Before I start I would like to take the opportunity to thank the members of Buffyforum (<http://www.buffyforum.se>) who through the years have scrutinized the Whedonverse in every way possible and of whose insight in all aspects of each show I have made shameless use. Thanks also to my two colleagues Johan Kärnfelt and Kaj Johansson who, although not at all fans of the shows, have a keen understanding of academic work and do not hesitate to tell me when I'm being wrong or foolish.

[1] Why are there vampires in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*? Isn't the answer to that question obvious? Just take a look at the title of the show; how could there not be?¹ Let me rephrase the question: What is the function of the vampires in *Buffy*?² In my attempt to give an answer I will describe some characteristic features of the anonymous vampires in the Buffyverse.³ (Editors' note: The next issue of *Slayage* will include Gert Magnusson's discussion of named vampires.)

[2] The essay deals exclusively with the anonymous vampires, which means that any mentioning of named vampires is either peripheral or done to clarify the anonymous vampire's functions. After a short general introduction on how vampires are perceived ("Oh, scary vampires...") follows a part concerned with the anonymous vampire's weaknesses ("...they die from a splinter"), followed by a part that deals with their great numbers ("Isn't He Gonna Go Poof?"). My explanation of their weaknesses is mainly done internally, diegetically: it is what is said, done, and what happens in Buffyverse that is discussed. The succeeding part (the vampires being surprisingly numerous) is by contrast brought as a means to say something externally about the series, i.e. the discussion is taken to a metaperspective. It is the creation, the production of the TV show that is used to provide an answer as to why there are so many of them; i.e., the answers are sought outside the Buffyverse.

"Oh, scary vampires..."

[4] We all know that vampires are dangerous: they make the blood freeze to ice, they are monsters of incredible strength, and they are nearly impossible to defeat. Vampires in general, i.e. not only in the Buffyverse, have an enormous advantage in being regarded as mythical creatures. Very few of us believe that they exist (this is true in Sunnydale too), which make people totally unprepared on how to behave to minimize the risk of being attacked and what to do if they were to be so unfortunate. The certainty among people that they don't exist shouldn't, however, be confused with their knowledge of vampires. Most people (in and out of the Buffyverse) have a rather large knowledge of them. Dracula has, according to the vampire Spike, caused the vampires more damage than any slayer ever by letting the story about himself and the vampire's weaknesses become known, so that it now is common knowledge how to destroy a vampire.⁴ If Spike is right, one may on the one hand claim that it probably was a lot easier for vampires to kill humans in the early days when almost no

one knew how to deal with the threat--when it didn't matter if you knew you were facing a vampire, you still didn't know how to avoid being killed. On the other hand, the belief in vampires was earlier, at least in certain parts of the world, significantly more widely spread than it is today, which presumably made people more aware of the threat.⁵ Now that people dismiss their existence, it doesn't matter that it is common knowledge how to destroy them and how to take measures to keep safe (how many among us wear a crucifix as protection in case we should be attacked?). This is to say that our knowledge and our worldview do not always coincide.⁶ In addition to the advantage that our conviction that they don't exist gives them, the vampires also have the benefit of being stronger and able to heal much faster than humans.⁷ When the vampire Angel is trying to explain to the newly born werewolf Nina that life as a monster is not all that bad, he says that it feels rather good to be "nearly indestructible."⁸ As if that weren't enough, they have, as Spike points out immediate access to their weapon (the fangs), while their opponents have to reach for theirs.⁹ Yet another advantage is that they rarely die from wounds caused by conventional weapons such as knives, swords or guns, even though the weapons hurt and may make the vampires more cautious.

[5] Given all these advantages, one would assume that vampires were formidable opponents that a slayer only with utmost difficulty could best, but that is not the case. The Buffyverse, and Sunnydale in particular, is no ideal place for vampires, despite all the "Happy Meals with legs."¹⁰ There are two big problems concerning the vampires in Buffyverse: They are too weak and they are too many.¹¹

"...they die from a splinter"

[6] How is it that the vampires in Buffyverse, despite all their own advantages, are no big threat to Buffy? How is it possible for her to defeat them so easily? Is the difference in strength and skill in such a decisive way in favour of the slayer that the vampires, though they themselves have many skills, don't stand a chance? To a certain extent this is true: a slayer is shaped and created to destroy vampires; but this is not the whole truth. Vampires also have some qualities and characteristic features that stand in their way. One thing that many vampires in Sunnydale have in common is that they are young and inexperienced (as vampires). Most of them haven't been vampires more than days or hours when they for the first and last time get introduced to the slayer. Some Buffy does away with when they crawl out of their grave. That she patrols Sunnydale's cemeteries on a nightly basis contributes to the vampires' not getting very old.¹² This means that they never have had time to acquire experience of what it means to be a vampire, what qualities they have and how they can be used, before they have been transformed into a pile of dust. It is in this context that Angel's conversation with Nina is to be seen. Angel has gathered knowledge and developed his skills during a couple of centuries in a way that freshly baked vampires cannot match.¹³ Another prominent feature among the vampires who roam the Sunnydale cemeteries is their anonymity: you seldom get to know anything at all about them (despite the fact that they can't really be called faceless). Buffy kills that kind of vampire without further ado. Often she drives her stake through them almost instinctively while having a conversation with Willow, Angel or someone else.¹⁴ Yet another feature is their apparent lack of control of their tendency to violence and their blood thirst. When they are newly born they want to kill and it is very difficult to convince them that it isn't healthy to give in to their craving.¹⁵ It would have prolonged their lives significantly

if they had learned to be a bit cooler. That the newly hatched vampires are consumed by their thirst for blood also makes them predictable. They hardly ever plan what they are going to do, which make them vulnerable to strategy. These listed features make them ill equipped to a life in a town where a slayer resides.¹⁶

[7] But the shortcomings of vampires don't stop with being young, inexperienced, and unable to keep their urges in check. The vampires of Sunnydale also share the common weaknesses that usually characterize vampires. They are, for example, vulnerable to sunlight, which make them almost harmless half the day. Consequently, Faith and Buffy goes on a vampire hunt in the middle of the day.¹⁷ In addition they are vulnerable; in Dawn's words: "they die from a splinter."¹⁸ As their hearts evidently are very easy to target, they die easily (it is quite rare that someone misses the heart when they drive some wooden object through them).¹⁹ The exception is the über vamps: they don't die easily until the final battle in "Chosen," but there they fall like bowling pins.²⁰ Besides sunlight and wooden splinters they are also sensitive to fire, beheading, and holy water.²¹ Not to mention the limitation that they can't enter into a human home uninvited, which any other serial killer manages to do.²² Because of the vampire's weaknesses, the Scoobies are unarmed most of the time, which is the only way to get the vampires at least a little bit frightening (from a production perspective). This last reflection signals that it is time to look at the series from a metaperspective. Up until now the internal relations in Buffyverse have been discussed (the vampires are weak and that's why they don't last that long). The following part deals with some of the features that have been given the vampires in order to shape the TV show in a desired way.

"Isn't he gonna go poof?"

[8] The vampires of the Buffyverse are surprisingly numerous. This should have been a circumstance that played to their advantage (what they lack in strength they take back in numbers), but in a TV show such logic isn't necessarily true. That they are many just makes it possible to kill more of them in each episode. This can easily be explained if one leaves the Buffyverse and instead looks at the show from a production perspective with the targeted audience in focus.²³ *Buffy* was from the start a teenage series with action as one of several important ingredients.²⁴ Given this set of prerequisites, it is possible to imagine it to be a goal to have a certain number of fights per episode. In addition the visual effect when the vampires are turned to dust had to be repeated, the presumption being that a young audience is more attracted to action and special effects than an older audience (I must confess that I have no evidence to back up that assumption). It is however impossible in this kind of series to have a great number of fights without the good winning most of them. If one combines many fights with the good winning most of them, plus the demand to repeat the visual dust effect, then it follows that many vampires have to die. When this image of life in Sunnydale has been established, it becomes very difficult to change, despite the fact that the series gets more mature over time.²⁵ At the same time the anonymous vampires' deaths hardly ever move the narrative forward; whether there is one anonymous vampire or fifty is in most cases of no significance.²⁶ The large number of opponents is however treated a bit differently in *Buffy* than they usually are in movies and TV series. In most cases with vast number of opponents it is precisely their great number and their anonymity that is the point. It's not the question of one singular "Indian" (Wild West), German, or Japanese

(World War II), or insect (*Starship Troopers*), there are hundreds or thousands of them and it is their numbers that constitute the danger. In the world of monsters, it is primarily zombies who always consist of an anonymous mass. In the Buffyverse the anonymous vampires rarely have that function; instead, Buffy picks them off one or two at a time, day in and day out.²⁷

[9] Given that a certain time of every episode has to consist of fighting, it follows that Buffy and Angel cannot deal with all the fighting themselves: it would be boring if they were the only ones fighting. The other Scoobies have to kill vampires too.²⁸ But since the other Scoobies are ordinary humans, it follows that vampires have to be able to be killed by humans. Consequently four teenagers in the beginning of the third season are able to kill 60% of the vampires they hunt.²⁹ Note that in this case it's not a question of defending yourself if you happen to be attacked; it is the case of active vampire-hunting.³⁰ Also compare the vampire hunters Holtz, Justine and Gunn in *AtS*: they are all humans but they still win fight after fight. Holtz being a captain was already used to fights when he first began his hunt for Angelus, Darla, and every other vampire he could get his hands on. He also had his men to help him when he started out on his crusade (not to mention the Inquisition); he wasn't alone. Justine by contrast had no combat experience that we know of and she also fought alone until Holtz took her under his wing. Considering the circumstances, being alone and lacking both the guidance of a watcher or super strength, one must conclude that she did remarkably well. Gunn has fought vampires his whole life under conditions which resembles those of ancient Sparta. His whole mini-community is organized for a life in combat. My point is that vampires can be killed by almost anyone who knows what they're up against, which in turn entails that vampires almost stand or fall with people being convinced of their being nonexistent. As soon as people take them seriously, they lose.

[10] In the beginning of this essay I emphasized the vampire's advantages (incredible strength and so on). Despite this, Buffy kills vampires with ease; therefore, she must be a lot stronger and more skilful than the vampires. So far there is no problem: "one girl in all the world," it makes perfect sense.³¹ But when the series develops so that more or less anyone can be a vampire hunter, it makes both Buffy's and the vampire's status unclear. Are the vampires good fighters? It doesn't look like it, in spite of "all those fancy martial-arts skills they inevitably seem to pick up."³² Is Buffy something special? Not when it comes to killing vampires.³³ Buffy has probably not killed more vampires than Holtz, and Justine seems to kill vampires as easily as Buffy.³⁴ Regardless of the fact that the show explicitly is about a *vampire* slayer it is no wonder that Buffy's main opponents almost always are something else.³⁵ It is only in the first two seasons of *Buffy* that vampires are trusted to be Big Bad's.³⁶ Even if one takes a look at separate episodes, they only rarely carry a leading role in the tale.³⁷ Perhaps the clearest way to drive this point is to compare the anonymous vampires to the demons of the show. The demons have almost always the function of being monsters of the week (MotW), which means that they drive the story onwards.³⁸ This leads to a strange observation: The anonymous vampires are constantly there, but they seldom contribute something more tangible than dust. I will next discuss one pivotal example of an anonymous vampire who contributes very little to the plot.

[11] It only goes to show that there has to be an anonymous vampire who is killed even in "The Body": i.e., you can't have a single episode without an anonymous vampire (or other supernatural being) beating the dust as the monsters reaffirm the series' status as a horror show.³⁹ Rhon-

da V. Wilcox has in *Why Buffy Matters* defended the killing of the vampire at the end of "The Body" with two arguments, one being that the vampires are a part of Buffy's ordinary life, a life that doesn't go away no matter how serious her situation gets, the other argument being that the vampire at the morgue is a metaphor for the never absent death.⁴⁰ These are insightful arguments that I buy at an intellectual level. I have already made the point that the anonymous vampires have a different role than anonymous enemies en masse usually have in TV series and movies. One can argue that they are a part of Buffy's daily chores as a tiresome, sometimes boring, but never-ending task (a bit like vacuum cleaning, but the other way around as it gets dustier when Buffy is efficient). This fits well into Wilcox's way of seeing the vampires as a part of life for Buffy, not as something extra that is added on top of what she is, and if the vampires are a part of her life it would be odd if they suddenly disappeared. Wilcox's other argument is also pointy. Though vampires are a part of Buffy's life, the vampire in the morgue is still regarded as an intrusion. It's an attack on the realism of the episode, i.e. the verisimilitude of the rest of the episode is attacked from the supernatural realm.⁴¹

[12] As long as I regard the scene at a distance, intellectually, I can't see Wilcox interpretation as anything but an excellent illustration of what the episode has to tell us; it gives me a lot to think about. But as soon as I am watching the episode and thus captured by the story, the feeling that I had the first time I saw the morgue scene re-emerges, namely that the vampire takes the edge out of the episode, and my intellect can't make that feeling disappear. I then join the crowd who sees the vampire as "the single flaw in an otherwise uninterrupted realistic surface."⁴² My dismissal of the vampire is a consequence of my way of viewing anonymous vampires at large. If they had been important to the show I would probably have appreciated the morgue vampire, but as I don't regard them as important I find it difficult to see it as anything but annoying. What Wilcox calls the Michelangelo and Kubrick scene (the shot with Joyce, Dawn, and Buffy in a row, where Dawn reaches out to touch her mother) in the morgue is really an excellent shot, but it is just as good without being preceded by the killing of an anonymous vampire.⁴³

[13] It should by now be clear to the reader that I'm no fan of anonymous vampires as they are presented in *BtVS*, and to summarize, they have some traits that oddly enough make them ill-equipped to be a part of a show on vampires. As I have argued, the first problem is all their weaknesses: When they are newly born they want to satisfy their initial thirst; they are also filled with uncontrollable wrath and lust for destruction, i.e. they want to destroy, maim, and kill.⁴⁴ When it comes to evil, it too is connected to bloodlust and a will to destruction via a strong desire for immediate satisfaction of the needs felt. Any delay is almost unbearable.⁴⁵ The second problem I have discussed is that they are not only weak with a short life expectancy, they are also too many. Their great numbers also make them into stereotypes, as they don't get an individual voice or thought.⁴⁶ Lastly the anonymous vampires are insignificant to the narrative and no one (I hope), in or out of the Buffyverse, would miss them if they left or were left out.

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Notes

¹ A note on notes is probably necessary before the reader gets too annoyed. A large portion of my texts consists of notes which make my essays difficult to read as it is awkward to jump back and forth from the main text to various notes. The main text is, however, always written to be possible to read without a single glance at the notes. If that is the case, one may wonder why I litter my discussions with such an amount of extra reading. As I see it, the main text is a kind of skeleton: there is a connection between the different parts, and the picture that emerges is that of a figure. The notes then add flesh and blood, more distinctive features, to the skeleton. Not all my readers agree with me. Still, I often get the response that my notes are more fun and interesting to read than my main text, so take your pick.

² Alternatively one may ask: Why does the series have a title that refers to vampires?

³ With the term "Buffyverse" I mean the TV shows *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (*Buffy*) and *Angel the Series* (*AtS*), plus the 1992 movie *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Comics and other literature are not included. In some cases I contradict what happens in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer Season Eight* and *Angel: After the Fall*, as different media entail slightly different rules when it comes to world-shaping. I have therefore chosen to limit the discussion to the TV shows and the movie.

⁴ *Buffy* "Buffy vs. Dracula" 5.1. Bram Stoker's tale is incorporated in Buffyverse by Spike's suggestion. As I interpret Spike, Dracula has through his own carelessness, i.e. his failure in London, facilitated the publishing of Stoker's book. When his book became a success, it turned the knowledge of stakes, sunlight, and other dangerous things into common knowledge.

⁵ According to Bruce McClelland there are even today "Bulgarian villages where the residents are willing to provide the phone numbers of known vampires" (par. 8).

⁶ This division may be illustrated by Maggie Walsh's reaction when Buffy tells her of her methods: "We use the latest in scientific technology and state-of-the-art weaponry and you, if I understand correctly, poke them with a sharp stick." ("A New Man" 4.12). Walsh's view (her amazement at realizing that her world of science has its counterpart in a world of myth and magic) is quite realistic. The concepts *knowledge* (here, people's knowledge of vampire mythology) and *worldview* (here, their disbelief in the existence of vampires) don't always coincide, and in this case, they shouldn't. Unfortunately, as I will show next in an example that contradicts Walsh's reaction, they do.

The guiding star in the Initiative's method is science. In the Initiative, one does research along the guidelines of modern natural science. So how does the Initiative know that they are dealing with vampires and demons? Already in "The Initiative" (*Buffy* 4.7), i.e. before Buffy has had any chance of telling them what they are chasing, it becomes clear that they know that they are hunting both vampires (Graham identifies Spike as a vampire before they attack the dorm) and demons (Riley calls himself a demon hunter). It also baffles me that Riley in his briefing before they go on their hunt of Hostile 17 tells his men to stake it as a last resort, as this not only means that they know that he is a vampire, but it also entails that wooden stakes are a part of their weapons arsenal. Of course everyone who works at the Initiative knows how to kill a vampire; it belongs to the realm of general knowledge, and they would most likely also notice the similarity between certain HST's and vampires. But until they've met Buffy they shouldn't know that they were dealing with vampires and demons, and they should certainly not shape their scientific theories and experiments along the line of the creatures being fictional beings (or traditional superstition) brought to existence, if they had any academic survival instinct. And even if one of the scientists for some reason would come up with the idea of driving a wooden stake through their hearts, it wouldn't count as science. Such an experiment lacks scientific credibility as every creature with a heart dies from that experience (the creature turning to dust would however awaken their scientific curiosity). What makes vampires different is not that they die from a stake through the heart; what makes them special is that it is one of very few ways to kill them.

⁷ This adheres to adult vampires. Holtz had no physical problem in throwing his young daughter into the sunshine. *AtS* "Lullaby" 3.9.

⁸ *AtS* "Unleashed" 5.7.

⁹ *BtVS* "Fool for Love" 5.7

¹⁰ *BtVS* "Becoming Part 1" 2.21.

¹¹ As *AtS* is part of Buffyverse, the vampires of Los Angeles also lack in strength and are easily killed.

¹² It is odd that the personnel at the churchyards don't play an important role in Buffy's life. She should be able to get daily updates from them and spend almost as much time with them as with Giles in the library. One imagines that everyone in Sunnydale who is involved in dealing with the deceased must have developed his or her own security measures—never enter a coffin without a crucifix in hand, never inquire into the sound from the empty reception room, never examine a disrupted grave. Besides, how do they explain all the dead bodies that are missing (the vampires that have risen and walked away) to their respective families? It's clear that the groundskeeper at Liam's (Angelus's) grave never had been acquainted with a vampire before; otherwise he wouldn't have mistaken Darla and Angelus for grave robbers. But then again, Angelus wasn't born above a Hellmouth (*AtS* "The Prodigal" 1.15). However, the staff at any of Sunnydale's graveyards can't be so inexperienced if they are to survive for long.

¹³ In "Why We Fight" (*AtS* 5.13) Angel averts an attack from the newly born vampire Lawson with ease and tells him: "You're new at this. I'm not."

¹⁴ See for example "The Prom" (*Buffy* 3.20), where Buffy and Angel are having a discussion and Buffy kills a vampire without interrupting the conversation. She just says "[n]ot now" when the vampire jumps them, kills it, and continues her talk with Angel. In "Something Blue" (*Buffy* 4.9), Buffy and Willow are patrolling while discussing Buffy's love life. A vampire attacks them and Buffy kills it immediately while continuing the promenade as if nothing has happened. The last example, at least, is meant to be humorous, but this doesn't negate the fact that most vampires are no serious threat to Buffy. See also "Lies My Parents Told Me" (*Buffy* 7.17), where Giles forces Buffy to a prolonged training session in which she fights the vampire Richard, but isn't allowed to kill him. When she in the simultaneously ongoing conversation with Giles makes the note that she is in the middle of the fight of her life, Richard makes a grin and says "[r]eally?", but it is of course not that fight she is talking about.

¹⁵ The vampire who gets away while Buffy and Willow are sitting and waiting for him to crawl out of his grave in "The Freshman" (*Buffy* 4.1) is an exception. One wonders how he knew he was in danger. He looks at Buffy's weapon when he sneaks up on them from behind, but Buffy's talk about slaying will hardly give him any clues. Very few people know what a slayer is, and he has yet to meet his sire to learn that there is one girl he should beware of.

¹⁶ Compare to shows about natural life on television where you see newborn sea turtles hurrying across the beach toward the slightly safer sea. Before the day is over most of them have fallen prey to hunting animals. The same is true about the vampires in Sunnydale. Of the ones we have seen being born there, only Harmony, that we know of, has made it out of Sunnydale.

¹⁷ *Buffy* "Bad Girls" 3.14. It is rather strange that Buffy hunts vampires at night. This has probably something to do with what Joyce describes as Buffy's never prevailing in her fight against the vampires. They never end. In Joyce's view there's need of a more rational solution to the problem, a plan (*Buffy* "Gingerbread" 3.11). But to Buffy her fight has nothing to do with extermination. If that were the case, daily hunting in broad daylight and sleeping in the safety of her own home at night would have been a better strategy. Instead she is involved in a never-ending fight between good and evil with myth and magic as ingredients, a fight that goes on forever, and neither side will ever be the one left standing. Buffy sees her duty as to confront immediate or closely approaching danger, not to create a final solution. Joyce is however not alone in wanting an end to the fight between the natural and the supernatural (metaphorically, between good and evil). Both the apocalypses (anyone of them) and military operations à la the Initiative have the function and purpose to win ultimate victories, where the opponent in the one case is annihilated, and in the other case gets rehabilitated. The same can be said of Jasmine's shiny, happy world. This too is an example of a wrecked equilibrium where good and evil cease to be a part of human life (*AtS* 4.18-21). Wolfram & Hart's idea put forward by the late Holland Manners in "Reprise" (*AtS* 2.15) that hell is on earth and that the fight isn't about winning is more in line with Buffy's way of conduct. In consequence, an important theme in Buffyverse can be said to entail that the fight between good and evil is both eternal and what makes us human. Without that struggle we would have been something completely different from what we are; it is uncertain what. It is also probable that Manners is lying, for to withdraw the struggle against evil would have been an excellent way for Wolfram & Hart to once and for all neutralize the good, and if Manners isn't lying—what do they need the scheduled apocalypse for?

¹⁸ *Buffy* "The Real Me" 5.2.

¹⁹ The stake does not need in most cases to be very thick (exempting old and powerful vampires); a number two pencil may suffice. That the pen is more powerful than the sword gets clear both when Willow kills a vampire with a floating pencil in "Choices" (*Buffy* 3.19), and when Angel kills a werewolf with a silver pen in "Unleashed" (*AtS* 5.3).

²⁰ *Buffy* "Chosen" 7.22. Arwen Spicer has convincingly argued that the über vampires are too many as well as too strong for Buffy and her new slayers, even though the vampires have lost almost all their strength (pqr.15).. The Über vampires die like flies already before Willow's spell is in effect; i.e., they are killed by a bunch of teenage girls. Yes, they are potential slayers, which means they have the reflexes and the strength hidden inside, but they are yet to receive the force that is bound to the Chosen One. Considering that one Turok Han earlier beat Buffy almost to a pulp it is incomprehensible how weak these vampires have become. In the final battle they are even weaker than the ordinary anonymous vampires.

²¹ Buffy counts the ways of killing vampires while she and Xander are on their way to rescue Jesse in "The Harvest" (*Buffy* 1.2). Concerning beheading, Dana starts an investigation in "Damage" (*AtS* 5.11) of where the limit lies on what it is possible for a vampire to lose before the dust whirls. Luckily enough she only gets to chop off Spike's hands before she is stopped. The idea seems to be that there could be other body parts the loss of which a vampire might not be able to survive. A look at "Sacrifice" (*AtS* 4.20) suggests however that you may expose a vampire to a rather harsh treatment without its dying. The creature who tries to awaken Jas-

mine's interest by means of flesh and blood magic on a vampire is quite ruthless but doesn't kill him, and has in fact trouble even making him shut up. He only succeeds by tearing the vampire's tongue out.

²² The Buffyverse is set apart from the classic Bram Stoker universe where Dracula is portrayed as elusive and supernatural; he seduces himself into his victim's hearts and consciousness, while the anonymous vampires of Buffyverse mostly act like a mixture of wild predatory animals and crude serial killers.

²³ Their weaknesses could of course have been discussed externally; likewise their great numbers could have been given an internal explanation. My choice of presentation is in that respect arbitrary.

²⁴ If one views the targeted audience as being at the same age as the young main characters are portrayed in the series, then one can either argue that the series was a youthful series from beginning to end (16 to 22 is youthful), or it can be argued that the series left the youthful life at the beginning of the fourth season (the problems the characters struggle with become more adult in nature). That the series attracts older viewers can also be interpreted as a sign of the series' mature appearance, but the opposite seems also to be true, as the early seasons appeal to older viewers too. For an in-depth analysis of the actual age span, the targeted age span, and the demographic of the viewers of *Buffy*, see Mary Celeste Kearney's "The Changing Face of Teen Television, or Why We All Love *Buffy*."

²⁵ Jes Battis discusses the possibility (though he doesn't believe it) that *Firefly* didn't reach a big audience because of the lack of explosions and that this was the reason it was cancelled before its time (par. 8). One can apply the same line of thought on *Buffy*. Maybe *Buffy* succeeded in reaching a larger audience due to all the anonymous vampires dying in "cool" special effects. Both shows had devoted fans, but only *Buffy* had a relatively large audience. It is possible to imagine that there were viewers who didn't follow the show episode by episode, but who liked the fights and the dust effect. Maybe it was in part these elements that kept *Buffy* going from season to season. This is not a view that I am committed to, but it's worrying that it could be true, and it feels irritating that I can't find convincing evidence against it. When I first got hooked, I jumped to the conclusion (and perhaps I'm not alone in this) that it was the quality of work, the keen eye for details, the well developed arcs, and so on, that captivated the audience. It hurts to think that I perhaps was wrong. Maybe it wasn't what makes *Buffy* different that got it a vast audience; instead it could be the elements that make it mainstream that has made it a success.

²⁶ There is still at least one time when it is of consequence. When Buffy is introduced to Professor Walsh and in her following conversation with Riley, it is precisely the great number of Hostile Sub Terrestrials she has killed that impresses them (*Buffy* "A New Man" 4.12).

²⁷ The final battle in "Chosen" (*Buffy* 7.22) is a notable exception.

²⁸ In the videogame *Buffy* only Buffy herself fights, which is something Krzywinska is mildly critical about. (par. 8 and 11).

²⁹ *Buffy* "Dead Man's Party" 3.2.

³⁰ The only main character who hasn't killed a vampire is Tara. But she did kill the biker demon Razor in "Bargaining (Part 2)" (*Buffy* 6.2).

³¹ *Buffy* "Welcome to the Hellmouth" 1.1. Notice the word "girl." It is surely no coincidence that it doesn't say "woman." A slayer is called early in life and lives perhaps no more than six months or a year. There is to my knowledge no account of the average lifespan of slayers; what we know is that slayers seldom live past 25 year old (*Buffy* "Doomed" 4.11). That Buffy not only manages to survive her eighteenth birthday (despite the Council's extra undertakings to make sure she doesn't get too old), but lives several years after that, must be remarkable (especially as she lives on a Hellmouth). Quentin Travers tries to justify the trials on Buffy's birthday by explaining that she, if she survives, will be a better slayer than she was before (*Buffy* "Helpless" 3.12). But the fact that a slayer has reached the age of eighteen is in itself a sign that she already is an accomplished slayer, otherwise she would have died a long time ago. The test therefore seems redundant. A more probable explanation is that a slayer rarely manages to go up against an experienced vampire if she is bereft of her powers, lacks weapons, and is forced to fight in a confined area especially selected by the Council, where the vampire has the benefit of knowing the surroundings. Most slayers probably die and a new one is chosen. If my suggestion is correct this would be a way for the Council to control the slayers rather than training them. A girl is easier to control than a young woman. This is not however to say that the Council consciously is trying to kill the girls who risk their lives to make the transition from girl to woman. Social practice has a way of being imbedded in rules and conventions where their functions will be hidden. Travers, as well as Giles and Wesley (to widen the comparison to *AtS*, "Spin the Bottle" 4.6) is most likely convinced that it is an exercise that, though cruel and archaic, still would be of advantage to the slayer, if she should survive. This however doesn't prevent that the function still may be to reinforce the Council's superiority by putting the slayer in her place. Of course there is no clear proof in the series to confirm this interpretation, but it may still be worth considering. Remarkable is also that Quentin Travers as late as the seventh season still refers to Buffy as a girl ("[t]he girl knows nothing", *Buffy* "Never Leave Me" 7.9; see Wilcox 100). At the time she is 21. See also Kevin K. Durand, par. 19.

³² *Buffy* "Lessons" 7.1.

³³ The progress towards it being less and less extraordinary to kill a vampire happens independently of all potential slayers becoming activated in the seventh season.

³⁴ Holtz killed 378 vampires during his hunt of Angelus and Darla (*AtS* "Lullaby" 3.9).

³⁵ The most conspicuous clarification of the difference in status is probably given in the beginning of "The Gift" (*Buffy* 5.22), where Buffy fights a vampire at the back of the Magic Box and then joins the others. When she is asked what she has been up to she shrugs and says "[v]ampire." The others just nod and go back to what they were doing. In light of the immediate destruction of the universe, a single anonymous vampire doesn't stand out as particularly exciting.

³⁶ It would have been feasible to have the Master as the first season's only vampire, with the killing of him as finale, but that would arguably have made the show significantly more mature. In the case of Angelus as Big Bad, he is only in the show from episode 2.14 to 2.22.

A different solution from creating a Big Bad that is killed in the season finale would have been to create arch-nemeses. You don't kill a Joker or a Lex Luthor; they return time and again. In that respect it is no coincidence that both the Trio and Holden Webster are quite happy in regarding themselves as Buffy's arch-nemeses—if they are right they become immortal. It is quite possible that the Trio are conscious of the alluring immortality. They don't separate fiction from reality but try to virtually reshape reality so that it becomes (follows the rules of) a fictitious world. According to that logic they become immortal by acting as Buffy's arch-nemeses, and a part of the acting is to state that the world is how they want it to be, i.e. that they are her arch-nemeses (*Buffy* "Gone" 6.11). If we take a look at Holden Webster, his most prominent feature is his confidence. He sees it as a good thing if she could become his arch-nemesis; it would be much more fun than if he just killed her (*Buffy* "Conversations With Dead People" 7.7). Harmony also calls herself Buffy's arch-nemesis, but in her case it is mostly her egocentrism that shows. When she lived, the world revolved around her; why should it be any different now? (*Buffy* "Out of My Mind" 5.4).

³⁷ The episode where anonymous vampires have the most prominent role (apart from the double feature starting the series) is "Prophecy Girl" (*Buffy* 1.12), where the vampires' anonymity makes the attack against the school even more unsettling, and "Chosen" (*Buffy* 7.22), where they have an important role to play. Perhaps it is also possible to add "Never Kill a Boy on the First Date" (*Buffy* 1.5), "The Wish" (*Buffy* 3.9), "Graduation Day Part 2" (*Buffy* 3.22), "The Freshman" (*Buffy* 4.1), "The Real Me" (*Buffy* 5.2), "Fool for Love" (*Buffy* 5.7) (staked with her own stake) and the über-vamp of the episodes "Bring on the Night" (*Buffy* 7.10) and "Showtime" (*Buffy* 7.11), as episodes where the anonymous vampires are not only used to show a choreographed fight scene. For a quantitative investigation of vampire attacks in *Buffy*, see Paul D. Shapiro, "Someone to Sink Your Teeth Into: Gendered Biting Patterns on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*—A Quantitative Analysis."

³⁸ See for example, "Teacher's Pet" (1.4), "The Pack" (1.6), "I Robot, You Jane" (1.8), "The Puppet Show" (1.9), "Nightmares" (1.10) and "Out of Sight, Out of Mind" (1.11), from the first season alone.

³⁹ *Buffy* "The Body" 5.16. Although Joyce's death certainly is a horrible event, it still doesn't belong to the horror genre.

⁴⁰ Rhonda Wilcox, *Why Buffy Matters: The Art of Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, 187-190.

⁴¹ Wilcox, *Why Buffy Matters: The Art of Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, 187. This is true if we regard the incident from the outside, from the viewer's perspective. It is only to the viewers that the vampire represents the collision between fantasy and reality. The vampire is no fantasy to Buffy and her friends.

⁴² Wilcox, *Why Buffy Matters: The Art of Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, 176. It's a bit weird to enjoy the analysis of a piece of art more than the art itself. There's of course no rule against it, but it feels strange.

⁴³ Her exact words are "a shot which visually recalls images from Kubrick and Michelangelo" (189). Wilcox concludes: "To put it simply: it all works together, realist and supernatural elements alike." (189n). I disagree. If one feels the necessity of entering a supernatural element in "The Body," it would instead be possible to use Glory (personally I think it

would suffice to cut the vampire). Glory's introduction is prepared early on in the episode by Buffy's telephone call to Giles. Glory could via Ben meet them all at the hospital and show her total indifference towards human life and death, i.e. she could treat Joyce as if she were a fictitious person that didn't matter, as persons are often treated in TV shows, and also a bit like how Buffy regards and treat vampires.

⁴⁴ How much fun is it to be a vampire anyway? The only thing they have to look forward to is to eat and destroy (they rarely create anything). It seems to be a loop one could get tired of after a century or two. In "Doppelg ngland" (*Buffy* 3.16), Willow (impersonating Evil Willow) says that she doesn't feel like killing anyone and asks where the fun lies in killing the hostage. The vampire Alfonse replies, "the fun would be the eating." Most of the time vampires don't have more fun than that. In a way the vampires' normal day resembles Buffy's never-ending day in "Life Serial" (*Buffy* 6.5), where nothing new ever happens. The place to sleep and the name of the food change, but for the most part one day is pretty much like any other day (the diet may vary from O- to A+).

Karl Marx (1818-1883) can be appreciated as a reference when discussing vampires. The concept *impoverishment* (German: Ausbeutung/Exploitation) as a way of blood-sucking falls effortlessly in place; what makes better sense than to think of capitalists as vampires who sucks the working class dry? But you can also turn the picture around. In his early writings Marx said that work in the industrial society alienated humans. The person was separated from her work by not owning it (or the product of it), she was not in a deciding position towards her work, and she didn't even have any interest in it. At the same time the work was physically exhausting and time-consuming. The result was alienation; she became a stranger to herself. When she got home after work she probably had no stamina or time to do more than eat and fix what was immediately necessary to the household and perhaps some sex, before falling asleep. Alienation makes what is common between humans and animals the centre of human life: eat, sleep and recuperate. Work is however, according to Marx, an important part of what it is to be human; man is a working animal. When the work we do is reduced to nothing but a means to survive, we have lost something that makes us human; we have lost our creative ability (*Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844*). This assessment also seems to fit the vampires: they don't do much other than destroy, kill, eat, and sleep. Being infertile they even lack the animal ability to reproduce. Angelus is quite right when he says: "A real kill. A good kill. It takes pure artistry. Without that, we're just animals" ("Fool for Love" *Buffy* 5.7). Perhaps the Master in "The Wish" (*Buffy* 3.9) is another example of someone who creates something: his factory is a way to go beyond just to eat and kill (then again, that was precisely what the factory was intended for). As it is to humans, vampires too need to cherish their creativity not to be alienated. I said that vampires don't reproduce, yet of course they do, but not through sex. Their reproduction system differs from that of the animals. There is however one similarity (beside the sexuality of the bite). The bite marks on a vampire are the equivalent to the navel on a human. They are the signs of the physical connection between mother and child, and the sire and the newly hatched vampire, respectively.

Returning to Marx, it is also possible to compare the vampires to the sub-proletariat (the Lumpen- or rag-proletariat), the third category of people that he speaks of (they don't constitute a real class in his eyes).

As work for man is a means to fulfilment, it follows that humans who don't work (capitalists and the sub-proletariat) haven't reached their full potential (the working class has on grounds of their being alienated also not reached what they could be). Marx has no kind words for the sub-proletariat: they don't work and they mainly consist of criminals and slackers (to use an anachronistic expression) (*The Eighteenth Brumaire of Louis Bonaparte*, chapter 5). The parallel to the vampires could hardly have been any more explicit. Vampires don't work and live almost exclusively by criminal activity.

Notice how strange that last sentence sound. What vampires do is not what we normally associate with the expression "criminal activity," even though what they do of course is a criminal offense. That the normal way of speaking doesn't seem to fit is due to the vampires' lacking one feature that signifies society at large and also most criminals: Vampires are rarely focused on money. When it comes to older Buffyverse vampires, they strikingly often lack worldly possessions. The only one we have met who presumably had worked his way up in this world was Russell Winters. He was rich (*AtS* "City of" 1.1). Dracula is probably also well off, but he was rich already when he was alive so he has only managed his wealth. (*Buffy* "Buffy vs. Dracula" 5.1). To talk about someone's criminal activity in the sense that she gets her livelihood by crime, without her criminal activity involving money, is in our society both uncommon and strange.

⁴⁵ So far I have presumed that anonymous vampires in their behaviour and in their way of thinking and feeling are very distinct from humans, but perhaps the gap isn't that wide after all. When I see people with bottled water in one hand and their mobile phone in the other, I start to wonder about the similarities between humans and vampires. The constant longing for the bottle (metaphorically, the mother's breast or a juicy neck), and the need to constantly both be available to others and to be able to reach out to them, where every delay is traumatic, seems to me to almost bridge the gap between the two species. I sometime wonder if people of today descend from vampires (that vampires don't get children make that suggestion tricky), or if they perhaps are the forefathers of the vampires (that this urge for immediate satisfaction in a massive way is a rather new phenomenon is a strong argument against that idea), or if they indeed are vampires (the blazing sun doesn't agree with that notion). Perhaps I'm all wrong and the gap between us is intact.

⁴⁶ Anonymous vampires seem very much alike both in behavior and in the way they think. It is possible that if one were to get to know them better, they would stand out from the collective stereotype and become individuals. It is however also possible that this only adheres to older anonymous vampires and that newly born vampires always are similar to each other and that only time and experience allow them to reach beyond the stereotypes.