



Em McAvan

“I Think I’m Kinda Gay”: Willow Rosenberg and the Absent/Present Bisexual in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*



Kennedy: Let's start with the easy stuff. How long have you known? That you were gay?

Willow: Wait. That's easy? (“The Killer In Me,” 7013)

[1] Bisexuality has often occupied an ambiguous cultural status. Subsumed within heterosexual and homosexual representations and histories, bisexuality has rarely been explicitly coded as bisexuality. Marjorie Garber in her mammoth work *Vice Versa* suggests that bisexuality is commonly understood by two apparently contradictory truisms—either everybody is bisexual (the pop-Freudian view) or no-one is. In the second, bisexuals are at best self-delusional about their desires and practices, at worst simply untruthful. Both truisms work together to systematically erase the bisexual subject, in the first, colonising bisexuality by disregarding its differences from other forms of sexual identity, in the second, suggesting bisexuality to be inauthentic or simply impossible. [\[1\]](#)

[2] *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is notable for being one of the few shows on American network television to have featured a long-term, loving queer relationship. It was nominated for a number of GLAAD awards for its portrayal of the Willow/Tara relationship, which was as subtle and complex as any on the show have been. The story arc of Willow Rosenberg sees her go from diffident computer geek with an unrequited crush on Xander, to a relationship with the male werewolf Oz, the eventual ending of that relationship, to relationships with fellow witch Tara and Slayer potential Kennedy. In short, a not uncommon “coming out” narrative. Even though, after coming out, Willow briefly retains the possibility of a future relationship with Oz (“New Moon Rising,” 4019), by and large she seems to fit the usual “road to Damascus” conversion that characterises coming-out stories, a model which of course works for many gay and lesbian people. However, there are a number of ways in which Willow could be just easily re-imagined as a bisexual subject. As Claire Hemmings points out, for bisexual scholars, the “need for this ‘re-imagining’ is precisely because of a lack of a clear bisexual narrative, a lack of spaces where [bi] sexuality is ‘read as’ bisexual” (20). This re-imagining will inevitably mean not merely the familiar project of queering heterosexuality, but of problematising notions of fixed gay and lesbian identities—of queering the already-queer, without that necessarily meaning a recourse to heteronormativity. In doing so, the project of producing a specifically bisexual reading requires “quotation from other imaginaries—lesbian, gay, straight, swinging” (Davidson 10). What concerns me then, as a multiple-desiring scholar, is tracing the ways in which bisexuality does—and does not—appear in *Buffy*. In particular, I shall focus on the character of Willow Rosenberg, who is, as Jes Batts evocatively puts it, “a hybrid site upon which several of the show’s most

resounding ambivalences converge, overlap and shadow each other" (1).

Sex/Gender/Desire

[3] In one of the founding texts of queer theory, Judith Butler in *Gender Trouble* argues that heteronormativity is produced in a culture that suggests heterosexual genders and sexuality to be natural and innate, and to confirm each other. She says that:

gender can denote a *unity* of experience, of sex, gender and desire, only when sex can be understood in some sense to necessitate gender—where gender is a psychic and/or cultural designation of the self—and desire—where desire is heterosexual and therefore designates itself through an oppositional relation to that other gender it desires. (30)

For Butler, the sex/gender/desire matrix works to regulate subjects as both heterosexual and normatively gendered. She argues that heterosexual genders and sexualities work to confirm each other, desire "expresses" gender, and gender expresses desire. Gender thus naturalises heterosexuality, presuming the gendered coherence of both self and desired other. Butler argues however that unity is, in fact, merely the "effect of a regulatory practice that seeks to render gender identity uniform through a compulsory heterosexuality" (42). Heteronormativity is thus not merely the project of a compulsory heterosexuality, but of producing normatively gendered subjects.

[4] Bisexuality, however, problematises the sex/gender/desire matrix, for though it will at times be necessarily be "opposite" sex related, it makes the once-and-forever nature of heterosexual identity impossible. Think of the hysterical denials of queerness by such comments as "but he/she's *married*," as though heterosexual marriage necessarily excludes the possibility of queer sex. In short, where the heterosexual act is often thought to confirm identity forever, by its nature bisexuality does not and *cannot* effect such a confirmation. As Amanda Udis-Kessler puts it, bisexuality can "bring about a personal and potentially collective crisis of meaning" (355). Bisexuality calls into question unified essentialist narratives of past, present and future, and it is precisely this crisis of meaning—indeed, an excess of meaning—that is apparent in those textual moments where the possibility of a bisexual reading of Willow appears.

[5] Of course, bisexuals have often been criticised for essentialism of their own. Donna Haraway famously excluded bisexuality from her *Cyborg Manifesto*, dismissing bisexuality as a nostalgic attempt at pre-Edenic wholeness. And Davidson et al point out that bisexuals themselves have a greater tendency to essentialise their experience, searching for ways to discover "an eternal, essential bisexual Truth" (10). "Bisexual" can suggest a unitary essentialism to a set of desires and bodily practices that are necessarily multiple, which might seem an inherent contradiction.^[2] Additionally, the "bi" in "bisexual" suggests only desire for men and women and excludes other queer desires, practices and identities such as transgender and genderfuck. Bisexuality can not only presume the gender stability of one's desired, but the stability of one's own gender as well. Hence many non-essentialist queers have adopted the term "pansexual" to mark a more inclusive model of sexuality and gender. But given the general absence of transgendered characters from *Buffy*,^[3] however, the task of tracing fluid and multiple sexualities is limited to tracing the dis/appearance of bisexuality in the text.

[6] I argue that, though the series explicitly codes Willow's sexuality in essentialist binaristic terms, there are a number of instances in which she is coded as *implicitly* bisexual—both before and after coming out. In the alternate universe of "The Wish" (3009), we see Willow as a vampire, and later again in "Doppelgangland" (3016) when the doppelganger is sucked into the "real" Buffyverse. As has been noted frequently, Willow's doppelganger is a polymorphously kinky bisexual vampire who presages real Willow's coming out in the following season. Vamp Willow seems equally at home propositioning her vamp lover Xander

as Sandy (a girl at the Bronze), playing with “puppy” Angel and licking “real” Willow on the neck. In a phrase that foreshadows her own coming out, Willow describes her double as “so evil and skanky...and I think I’m kinda gay” (“Doppelgangland,” 3016). But whilst these episodes could easily be read as indicators of Willow’s “true” sexuality, and similarly her eroticised relationships to Xander and Angel as a heterosexual “mistakes,” it would be highly reductive to read Vamp Willow as straight or gay; rather, it is possible to reposition her into a more nuanced bisexual reading.

[7] It is interesting to note then that after Willow’s coming out as a lesbian, we see instances in which bisexuality appears to rupture the stability of Willow’s sexuality. In the Series 7 episode “Him” (7006) for instance, Willow (like all the female characters) is attracted to R.J—unlike Spike and Xander who remain immune to his magic letterman jacket. Here gender clearly determines sexuality; the efficacy of the spell suggests an essentialist relation between sex, gender and heterosexual desire. This brief moment of instability in Willow’s identity is quickly recuperated when she tries to magically change R.J’s sex—an instance of the conflation between magic and lesbianism critiqued by Edwina Bartlem and Gwyneth Bodger. [4] Yet despite the recovery, the attraction to R.J nevertheless represents a rupture in the coherence in the text, in which the possibility of a bisexual subject briefly appears.

[8] The Series 6 episode “Tabula Rasa” (6008) is another example of the sex/gender/desire matrix at work in Buffy. In “Tabula Rasa,” the Scoobies lose their memories from a misdirected spell of Willow’s. Upon waking from unconsciousness, the members of the group try to reconstruct their identities based upon their clothing, their driver’s licenses, and so on. Willow and Tara notice they both have UC Sunnydale student IDs, and though Tara’s attraction to Willow is readily apparent, Willow makes the heteronormative assumption that they are “study buddies.” Because she has borrowed Xander’s jacket, and has woken up “snuggly-wuggly” on Xander’s shoulder, Willow makes the assumption that she and Xander are a couple—though Xander himself makes the self-effacing assumption that Willow is in fact his elder brother’s girlfriend. Spike and Giles, ignoring the obvious classed differences in their voices, [5] decide they are father and son because of their shared Englishness, whilst Buffy and Dawn start bickering and thus soon recognise each other as siblings. We see then, in their collective amnesia, certain reconstructions of the characters that, in varying degrees, rely on essentialist assumptions. Buffy and Dawn, for instance, despite a lack of any identification except for Dawn’s necklace bearing her name, have an essential “sisterness”. That the characters continue to speak in their distinctive idioms—Spike’s litany of Englishness (shag, knickers, bollocks) and Willow’s “snuggly wuggly”—suggests language to be expressive rather than constructive of identity. Willow’s double assumption, of Xander as partner and Tara as friend, then takes on added significance. Unlike Tara, though, who is immediately and obviously lesbian, Willow takes most of the episode to come to the realisation that (again) she’s “kinda gay.”

[9] The episode clearly mirrors the overall arc of Willow’s coming out and can be read in a number of ways. First, there remains the possibility that the episode suggests that there are some characteristics that ring true, essential characteristics, and some that are learned and performed, and the text places Willow’s sexuality in the second—a construction that might suggest Willow was born straight and *became* lesbian. This can be read as problematically suggesting an essential heterosexuality for Willow, but the episode can perhaps work in other ways as well. The classic coming-out narrative tends to go something like this: one is born gay or lesbian but takes time to overcome the internalisation of compulsory heterosexuality and come to the acceptance of one’s gay or lesbian self. Heterosexual desire is, then, to be denied as the inauthentic attempt to enter normative heterosexuality, an odd inverse of how heterosexual-identified people can dismiss their atypical queer sex as “experiments”. As Claire Hemmings points out, “one is allowed ‘mistakes’ as long as they are seen as mistakes, or as an interruption to one’s true sexual identity” (18). While “coming out” remains one powerful way for gays and lesbians to understand their own experience, it nevertheless works as an implicit attempt to erase the possibility of bisexuality. In beginning the episode with Willow’s assuming a relationship with

Xander, her first crush, "Tabula Rasa" (6008) perhaps suggests that Willow's early heterosexual desires cannot be entirely dismissed or forgotten, that they might remain a lingering part of her, such that one can read her as a bisexual character as easily as straight or lesbian.

I Think I'm Kinda Gay

[10] Let me now contextualise my discussion of the occasional appearance of Willow as bisexual by using Derrida's famous reading in *Of Grammatology* of Rousseau's use of the word "supplement". Derrida ascribes two functions to the supplement. Firstly, as it is most commonly read, the supplement "cumulates and accumulates presence" (144). The supplement is, firstly, an addition. But, simultaneously, Derrida argues, the supplement "adds only to replace [. . .] it intervenes or insinuates itself *in-the-place-of*" (145). The supplement, therefore, both adds to and replaces the sign. The bisexual "slips" of Willow, if I may call them so, function as supplements within the text, both adding to her identity, as well as replacing, for that moment in time, gay for straight or straight for gay—and over time, bisexual for straight or gay. Bisexuality is an identity often read intertextually over time, after all, unless one is currently engaged in a threesome or polyamorous relationship.^[6]

[11] Indeed, I am not making an argument for Willow as "really" bi, or "really" gay, or even "really" straight. Rather, the construction of Willow's sexuality is incomplete, as shown in the quote by which I have titled this paper—"I think I'm *kinda* gay" (emphasis added). Bisexuality appears as ruptures in the coherence of the hetero or homo subject, a discursive excess between what is signified and what is claimed as an identity. This is analogous to what Kevin Hart, drawing on the work of Derrida, calls the trespass of the sign, the notion that "the sign trespasses over its assigned limits, thereby blurring any qualitative distinction between the concept and the sign" (14). In the first three series of *Buffy*, Willow is signified as heterosexual, yet episodes like the aforementioned "Doppelgangland" (3016) demonstrate the limits of such a signification, as well as prefiguring her future lesbian subjectivity. As any queer reading will demonstrate, the self-designated margins of a text are permeable, meaning that an ostensibly heterosexual character like Xander can be queered, and that Willow post-Series 4 can be considered bisexual.

[12] To return again to the source of my title, uttered by Willow in "Tabula Rasa" (6008) as well as in "Doppelgangland" (3016), the word "kinda" functions as a hinge word, multiple readings stemming from the different possibilities in that one word. A dominant reading of the phrase would be to read "kinda" as empty, devoid of meaning, in which the statement is reconstructed and meaning totalised as merely "I'm gay." Yet "kinda" may also function as a qualifier—if Willow is "kinda" gay, then implicit is the suggestion that she's also kinda not. Similarly Willow's "Hello? Gay now" to Anya ("Triangle," 5011) not only recalls there was once a time that Willow was not gay, but raises the possibility that there may also be a time in the future where she may not be. Hello? Gay *now*. It's notable, then, that those moments in which Willow seems to articulate her sexual identity most clearly also contain the possibility of their own failure. Willow's equivocations contain not only an ambivalence toward directly expressing a gay identity,^[7] but also the possibility for a more fluid sexual identity.

[13] The hinge word is symptomatic of a much larger process of language—the contestability of the sign's meaning. One should be careful not to take a nostalgic reading of the loss of the transparency of the sign, creating a pre-Fall linguistic utopia of a stable language of presence. As Hart says "there is not a fall *from* full presence but, as it were, a fall *within* presence, an inability of 'presence' to fulfill its promise of being able to form a ground (14). Derrida's analysis does not produce any positions outside language, as his well-known aphorism "there is nothing outside of the text" attests. Derrida's work has proved productive itself for queer and feminist critics, for the inability of any sign to totalise meaning offers the possibility for critique of any universalised truth claim, and with the emergence of a Butlerian identity-as-performance, of essentialist claims of any sort of fixed

identity. It is the gaps in a text, in this case *Buffy*, that offer the opportunity for resistant readings and critique. To return to Willow, the gaps by which I am reading present the opportunity to show the ways in which bisexuality appears unacknowledged, which have been glossed by the apparent simplicity of statements as “hello? Gay now.” Rather than simply oscillating between a straight/lesbian binary, to register the appearance of bisexuality in *Buffy* as a supplemental excess is to begin to think through sexuality as transitive, as “becoming” (to steal a phrase from Deleuze and Guattari) rather than being.^[8]

Evil Queers

[14] Judith Halberstam argues that “monsters have to be everything that the human is not and, in producing the negative of human, make way for the invention of the human as white, male, middle class, and heterosexual” (22). Whilst *Buffy* does at times revise this formula (say in the figure of the quintessentially straight, white Major Wilkins), as often as not^[9] the monstrous works precisely as Halberstam describes. Thus it is not coincidental that Willow is most strongly coded as queer the two times that she is “evil” (that is, monstrous). Tanya Kryzwska suggests that, “as with most Hollywood films, [*Buffy*] use[s] very direct means to underline the current nature of a split nature” (181). She argues that “evilness” is visually coded through such devices as “‘bad’ Willow’s black lipstick and leather and Angel’s smoking” (181). Both times Willow is coded as evil she is implicitly coded as bisexual, a bisexuality marked by excess.^[10] The first is prior to her coming out, Willow’s vampire double from the alternative universe of “The Wish,” (3009). Vamp Willow is the clearest example of a bisexual Willow for, though she is involved with (vamp) Xander, she propositions men and women alike—from Angel to Sandy (a girl at the Bronze, in “Doppelgangland,” 3016) to “regular” Willow. When taken with her “puppy play” with Angel in “The Wish,” the BDSM connotations are clear—the polymorphous inverse of Willow’s vanilla, loving relationship with Oz (and later with Tara too).

[15] Indeed, there is an on-going association between BDSM and bisexuality on *Buffy*. BDSM and bisexuality both appear in *Buffy* and *Angel* as a very clear part of vamp sexuality. Of the many queer instances one could cite, there is a very definite homoeroticism to Druscilla and Darla’s relationship, and Spike’s confession that “Angel and me were never that close... except that one [time]” (*Angel*, “Power Play,” 5021). In substituting all-body pain for the phallus, vamp sexuality arguably breaks free of heteronormative penetrative logic. So even when explicitly heterosexual, as Viv Burr notes, “vampire relationships are sadistically and explicitly sadistic, with violence as a sexual appetiser” (351). For instance, Spike’s sexuality is clearly kinky—Buffy says, “you’re in love with pain,” (“Smashed,” 6009)—as is Druscilla’s (“spank us to Tuesday” *Angel*, “Reunion,” 2010) and Darla’s (“you’re hurting me. That’s good too” “Angel,” 1007). But as Burr notes, though *Buffy* makes BDSM “visible [. . .], it does not endorse non-normative sexual practices; [and] it can only do this because those engaging in SM practices are mostly presented as non-human” (358).

[16] So it’s worth remembering this association between bisexuality, soul-less vampirism and BDSM kink then in the light of Justine Larbalestier’s assertion that “in the Buffyverse sex in a loving relationship is good, and sex that is not about love is bad, or at the very least empty” (216). Unlike Buffy’s on-going flirtation with darkness, Willow’s relationships are framed as de-sexualised and most definitely vanilla. Farah Mendlesohn notes that sex with Oz occurs off-screen, while Willow’s relationship with Tara “neutralis[es] her sexuality and then [. . .] rechannel[s] thoughts of lesbian relationships in a safe direction” (59). Vamp sexuality, on the other hand, is coded as “dangerous or violent,” and there indeed is a stark contrast between regular vanilla Willow and the polymorphous queerness of Vamp Willow. Lastly, as well as bisexuality and BDSM, Vamp Willow recalls the myth of queerness as narcissism by propositioning her alternate self. She asks, “want to be naughty” and licks “real” Willow’s neck—a queer act which also has a distinctly masturbatory feel about it. These associations overlay each other, creating a profoundly overdetermined queer subject—desiring women, men and self, all outside of the bounds of normative vanilla heterosexuality. The vamp double is clearly framed by the text as perverse, a cautionary

example of excessive sexuality.

[17] The other time Willow is coded evil and implicitly bisexual is in her rampage after Tara's death at the end of Series 6. Here she is again coded as queer, wearing a phallic black suit, her usual red hair turned black, as are her eyes. If she is not exactly butch, she is certainly far more butch than in her usual flowing New Age styled "Celtic" clothes. Willow's evilness, then, is immediately identifiable by the gender trouble posed by female masculinity (to use Halberstam's felicitous phrase). The plot arc marks the appearance of an explicitly queer gender, the queerness of Willow and Tara as femmes, one suspects, have been largely lost on *Buffy's* predominantly heterosexual audience.

[18] Bartlem argues that Willow's apocalyptic rampage is that of the "evil lesbian", a new version of those "lesbian-coded femme fatales, psychotic killers and supernatural beings" (Bartlem n.pag) that have long represented hegemonic heterosexuality's fears of queerness. The "evil lesbian" as a trope encompasses the vampire queens of horror movies, the lesbian killers of the pulps, as well as more recently queer-coded villains like the infamously bisexual Sharon Stone in *Basic Instinct*. Bartlem suggests that in this sequence, Willow becomes "the archetypal vengeful and destructive woman" (n.pag). Her nascent butchness arguably re-doubles the "evil lesbian" queer coding, but it is also possible however that the arc is more ambiguous than Bartlem proposes.

[19] For one, whilst I agree that Willow is coded as explicitly queer in her rampage, the arc also codes her as implicitly both bisexual and kinky (a common enough trope on *Buffy* as I have mentioned with regard to vamp sexuality). There are a number of parallels between Willow's evil vamp twin and her appearance in the Series 6 finale, particularly her repetition of Vamp Willow's "bored now" ("Villains," 6020), and again Willow shifts from a loving (but vanilla) relationship into an excessive, perverse, bisexual subject. Her relationship with the magic dealer Rack is sexualised—he says she "tastes like strawberries"—and she calls Dawn "cutie," ("Two To Go," 6021). So while as Bartlem suggests that Willow's rampage is symbolically associated with an addiction to lesbian sex, it is notable that heterosexual desire *also* appears at this time, as if to warn of the dangers of boundary crossing. And significantly too, her queer desire is at its most perverse with Dawn—besides the obvious age difference, given that Willow and Tara became Dawn's *de-facto* parents after Buffy's death, the sexual come-on to Dawn takes on a quasi-incestuous meaning as well. Once again, we see how bisexuality appears as a symbolic excess, one which is conflated with monstrosity, with evilness. Willow is at her most sexual when she is evil, when she is implicitly bisexual. We see in her magic rampage a contradictory construction by which she is coded as *both* Evil Lesbian *and* Bisexual Pervert, sexualising all of her exchanges. Thus lesbian, heterosexual and bisexual overlay each other, the overdetermination of queerness results in a suggestive (if unacknowledged) bisexuality at the same time as pathology collides with an explicitly queer coding of both gender and sexuality.

[20] The question arises then, why does the spectre of bisexuality appear most strongly in those episodes in which Willow is coded as evil? The figures of Vamp and Evil Willow ally an excessive sexuality (associated with both bisexuality and BDSM kink) with a non-normatively gendered female masculinity. In this, *Buffy* is perhaps not as different from the homophobic norms of American TV as many of its fans (myself included) would like. Whilst the characterisation undoubtedly affords viewers the pleasures of queer and kinky readings, it is problematic to foreground those subversive readings at the expense of acknowledging the conservative cultural work such constructions may do. As Vivian Burr argues with regard to BDSM on *Buffy*, "this sexuality is not really being offered to us as a viable choice; it is only something (bad) vampires do" (251). But bisexuality need not necessarily be characterised as excessive, or of a barely acknowledged 'kinda' outside of the realms of legible sexual identity. As Claire Hemmings points out, "the notion of bisexuality as 'outside' is, of course, absolutely produced through existing structures of sexual identity" (19). How could *Buffy* have attempted to show a non-pathologised bisexual subject in Willow? At the time, a number of American shows (*Ally McBeal*, *Party of Five*) were making mileage out of a flirtation with (femme coded) with lesbian sex, but rapidly retreating back into normative heterosexuality—which is something that, to his credit, *Buffy* creator Joss

Whedon very clearly wished to avoid. Yet bisexuality need not be necessarily recoverable by a heterosexist economy of desire—to problematise any aspect of the sex/gender/desire matrix is to problematise it *all*, to queer it. Whilst *Buffy* allows enough gaps for the able critic to trace a bisexual subject present in its apparent absence, the task of more fully representing a queer-coded bisexuality remains to be taken up by other writers and shows.

Works Cited

- Bartlem, Edwina. "Coming out on a Mouth of Hell." *Refractory: A Journal of Entertainment Media*. 2.1 (2003).
<http://www.refractory.unimelb.edu.au/journalissues/vol2/edwinabartlem.htm>
- Battis, Jes. "'She's Not All Grown Yet': Willow as Hybrid/Hero in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*." *Slayage* 8 (2003). <http://slayageonline.com/essays/slayage8/Battis.htm>
- Bodger, Gwyneth. "Buffy the Feminist Slayer? Constructions of Femininity in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*." *Refractory: A Journal of Entertainment Media* 2.1 (2003).
<http://www.refractory.unimelb.edu.au/journalissues/vol2/gBodger.pdf>
- Butler, Judith. *Gender Trouble: Feminism and the Subversion of Identity*. New York: Routledge, 1990.
- Burr, Vivianne. "Ambiguity and Sexuality in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*: A Sartrean Analysis." *Sexualities* 6.2-4 (2003): 343-60.
- Davidson, Phoebe, et al. "Introduction." *The Bisexual Imaginary*. London: Cassell, 1997. 1-14.
- Deleuze, Gilles, and Félix Guattari. *A Thousand Plateaus: Schizophrenia and Capitalism*. Trans. Brian Massumi. London and New York: Continuum, 1987.
- Derrida, Jacques. *Of Grammatology*. Trans. Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak. Baltimore: John Hopkins UP, 1976.
- Garber, Marjorie. *Vice Versa: Bisexuality and the Eroticism of Everyday Life*. London: Hamish Hamilton, 1995.
- Grosz, Elizabeth. *Volatile Bodies: Towards a Corporeal Feminism*. Sydney: Allen & Unwin, 1994.
- Halberstam, Judith. *Female Masculinity*. Durham, NC: Duke UP, 1998.
- _____. *Skin Shows: Gothic Horror and the Technology of Monsters*. Durham: Duke UP, 1995.
- Haraway, Donna. "A Cyborg Manifesto: Science, Technology, and Socialist-Feminism in the Late Twentieth Century." *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature*. New York: Routledge, 1991. 149-81.
- Haritaworn, Jin, Chin-ju Lin, and Christian Klesse. "Poly/Logue: A Critical Introduction to Polyamory." *Sexualities* 9.5 (2006): 515-29.
- Hart, Kevin. *Trespass of the Sign: Deconstruction, Theology and Philosophy*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1989.
- Hemmings, Clare. "Bisexual Theoretical Perspectives." *The Bisexual Imaginary: Representation, Identity and Desire*. Eds. Phoebe Davidson, et al. London: Cassell, 1997. 14-38.
- Krzywinska, Tanya. "Hubble-Bubble, Herbs, and Grimoires: Magic, Manichaenism, and Witchcraft on *Buffy*." *Fighting the Forces: What's at Stake in Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Eds. Rhonda V. Wilcox and David Lavery. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002. 178-94.
- Larbalestier, Justine. "The Only Thing Better Than Killing a Slayer: Heterosexuality and Sex in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*." *Reading the Vampire Slayer: The New Updated Guide to*

- Buffy and Angel*. Ed. Roz Kaveney. London and New York: Tauris Parke, 2004. 195-219.
- Mendlesohn, Farah. "Surpassing the Love of Vampires: Or, Why (and How) a Queer Reading of the Buffy/ Willow Relationship Is Denied." *Fighting the Forces: What's at Stake in Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Eds. Rhonda V. Wilcox and David Lavery. Lanham: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002. 45-60.
- Rieger, G, M Chivers, and J. M Bailey. "Sexual Arousal Patterns of Bisexual Men." *Psychology Today* 16.8 (2005): 579-84.
- Udis-Kessler, Amanda. "Present Tense: Biphobia as a Crisis of Meaning." *Bi Any Other Name: Bisexual People Speak Out*. Eds. Loraine Hutchins and Lani Kaahumanu. London and New York: Alyson, 1991. 350-59.

Notes

My thanks to Bron Bateman and Margaret MacIntyre for looking over earlier versions of this paper, and to the anonymous reviewers of *Slayage* for their insightful comments.

[1] An example of this would be the "study" of male bisexuality by Rieger, Chivers and Bailey in 2005 that measured erectile response to porn and "found" that male bisexual desire does not exist--which was news to the many male bisexuals living under the assumption that they did, in fact, exist.

[2] Davidson et al pose the question of how "can we imagine bisexuality in ways that recognise, precisely, that we are constructing and interrogating a bisexual imaginary rather than discovering an eternal, essential bisexual Truth?" (10)

[3] There are two exceptions, although both have no consciousness of themselves as transgendered. The first is the magical spell that turns Willow into Warren in "The Killer In Me" (7013). The second is only a possibility—the possible MTF transgendering of R.J in "Him" (7006), should Willow have been able to complete her spell.

[4] Bartlem argues that the connection between lesbian sex and magic on *Buffy* perpetuates "the normative, homophobic notion that lesbian sex is not real, physical or visually presentable" (n.pag). Bodger, on the other hand, suggests that magic is "a metaphor for female deviancy in the series. It comes to represent both the lesbian relationship between Willow and Tara, and later Willow's (and by extension woman's) inability to handle power as she becomes 'addicted' to magic in a sustained witchcraft/drug analogy."

[5] This seems a peculiarly American inattention to the subtleties of classed accents in the UK —the difference between Spike's working class accent and Giles's accent would be readily apparent to any British person. Though interestingly, Spike's transformation from middle-class "William the Bloody Awful" poet suggests a kind of "mockney" slumming similar to Giles's changed accent as Ripper in "Band Candy" (3006), which would place them *both* as middle-class. However, given their erased memories, the class difference in accent is still immediately noticeable in "Tabula Rasa" (6008).

[6] For those unfamiliar with the term, polyamory is the practice of engaging in multiple and simultaneous sexual or loving relationships. See Haritaworn, Lin and Kleisse for a good critical introduction to polyamory.

[7] A notable exception would be her claiming of her relationship with Tara as "lesbian-gay type" lovers in "Checkpoint" (5012).

[8] Although of course, bisexuality must necessarily be considered in relation to both sides of that binary. As Claire Hemmings points out, "bisexuality expresses itself in relation to those other terms [straight, gay, lesbian], its history is marked by its presence in those different communities" (20).

[9] I'm particularly thinking here of the persistent coding of people of colour as monstrous—either from the threat of a racialised "primitive" ("The Pack," 1006; "Inca Mummy Girl," 2004; "Dead Man's Party," 3002) or as vampire (significantly, Mister Trick, as well as any number of anonymous black vamps). Indeed it's not until the arrival of Principal Wood in Series 7 that we see anything resembling a

non-monstrous black subject.

[\[10\]](#) Indeed, as Battis points out, Willow vacillates between a non-existent corporeality (her invisibility in "Halloween," 2006 is symptomatic of this), and one "inscribed to the point of excess" (4). Both extremes indicate that Willow exhibits a far more fraught relationship to the corporeal than any other character on *Buffy*.