



## Victoria Spah "Ain't Love Grand?" Spike and Courtly Love



[To find Victoria's own version of this essay go here.](#)

Your eyes two will slay me suddenly;  
I may the beauty of them not sustain,  
So woundeth it throughout my hearte keen.  
And but your word will healen hastily  
My hearte's wounde, while that it is green,  
Your eyes two will slay me suddenly;  
I may the beauty of them not sustain.

Upon my truth I say you faithfully  
That ye bin of my life and death the queen;  
For with my death the truthe shall be seen.  
Chaucer, "Merciless Beauty" (14th Century)

In Castiglione's *The Courtier*, there is an impassioned discussion of the nature of love, in which one of the characters, Peter Bembo, describes the way that earthly love can become elevated to heavenly love through a Platonic process of stages, or steps on a ladder, beginning with the love of an unattainable, virtuous woman, and leading to love of God and all humanity.

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(1) "Ain't love grand?" Spike bitterly and sarcastically remarks ("Into the Woods," 5010) alluding to the extent to which he has been a "fool for love" (or, if you prefer, "love's bitch"). But ironically, the development of Spike's passion for Buffy during season 5 has illustrated that the love that has possessed him truly is "grand" in the sense that it has transformed him into something better than he was before. The metamorphosis that Spike undergoes and the stages of that process bear a striking resemblance to the set of medieval romantic conventions commonly referred to as Courtly Love. The echoes of old stories of lovelorn knights and of the fair ladies to which they devote their lives and their swords add depth and weight to the story of Spike's love of Buffy.

(2) The term "Courtly Love" is used to describe a certain kind of relationship common in romantic medieval literature. The knight/lover finds himself desperately and piteously enamored of a divinely beautiful but unobtainable woman. After a period of distressed introspection, he offers himself as her faithful servant and goes forth to perform brave deeds in her honor. His desire to impress her and to be found worthy of her gradually transforms and ennobles him; his sufferings—inner turmoil, doubts as to the lady's care of him, as well as physical travails—ultimately lends him wisdom, patience, and virtue and his acts themselves worldly renown. Sound familiar? Like any intricate allusion, references to the various pertinent aspects of the mythos (which itself has no definitive version) are woven subtly throughout without heavy-handed complete correspondence. Spike and Buffy are after all modern characters and as such must retain the psychological depth lacking in medieval stock characters, and thus their story is not informed solely by the Courtly Love tradition. The correspondence, ironic and teasing at times, straight-forward at others, is however quite fascinating and worth further examination.

(3) In the late twelfth century, Andreas Capellanus's *De Arte Honeste Amandi* (*Art of Courtly Love* [\[1\]](#)) describes love as:

a certain inborn suffering derived from the sight of and excessive meditation upon the beauty of the opposite sex, which causes each one to wish above all things the embraces of the other.

This clearly describes Spike's state throughout the season. That he indulges in "excessive meditation" is spectacularly illustrated by the gradual growth of the Buffy shrine and other stalker-boyisms [2] and explicitly stated in "Crush" (5014):

Something's happening to me. I can't stop thinking about you.

and later:

I - Love - You! You're all I bloody think about. Dream about. You're in my gut . . . my throat . . . I'm drowning in you, Summers, I'm drowning in you. ("Crush")

And of course the desire for "embraces of the other" on Spike's part goes nearly without saying. [3]. Witness Spike's revelatory dream in Out of My Mind, the tense moments in the Bronze alley in "Fool for Love", the ecstatic sweater sniffing, the ragged "like I give a bloody damn" breath in "Into the Woods", various Harmony daydreams/sex-games, and of course the supreme proof: the BuffyBot. [4]

(4) In the Courtly Love tradition, the love engendered by this excessive meditation and supreme desire does not put the Lover in an immediate state of bliss. Rather:

According to the system, falling in love is accompanied by great emotional disturbances; the lover is bewildered, helpless, tortured by mental and physical pain, and exhibits certain "symptoms," such as pallor, trembling, loss of appetite, sleeplessness, sighing, weeping, etc. He agonizes over his condition and indulges in endless self-questioning and reflections on the nature of love and his own wretched state. (*Handbook to Literature*)

(5) In the 5th season, we see again a correspondence. Even before consciously realizing that he's in love, Spike says of Buffy:

She follows me, you know, tracks me down. I'm her pet project. Drive Spike round the bend. Makes every day a fresh bout of torture . . . You don't understand. I can't get rid of her. She's everywhere. She's haunting me, Harmony! ("Out of My Mind," 5004)

And when he does realize [5], it's not a happy moment. Spike immediately perceives that this is not good news for him, waking with a horrified gasp and letting loose:

Oh, god, no. Please, no. ("Out of My Mind")

(6) In these and subsequent scenes (such as the "Out For A Walk Bitch" scene ["No Place Like Home," 5005], run-away apology practice in "Triangle" [5011], and yelling fit in "Crush") Spike clearly suffers "emotional disturbance" and other "symptoms" of that "certain inborn suffering" we call Courtly Love. He explicitly mentions sleeplessness in "Crush" ("I lie awake every night!"), and we've seen the weeping (after his rejections in "Fool for Love" and in "Crush"). As for "self questioning" and "reflections on his own wretched state"—that much is implicit especially throughout the beginning stages where we see Spikes old "kill-Buffy" instincts at war with his new "help-Buffy" ones. [6] He also clearly exhibits another key symptom of Courtly Love, jealousy, when he says to Riley:

Sometimes I envy you so much it chokes me. ("Into the Woods")

His jealousy and the pain it causes him are also evident when he watches Buffy and Ben together in "Crush" and "Spiral" (5020).

(7) Why does Courtly Love insist on identifying love with suffering? Perhaps the reason lies in the fact that the object of all this affection is by definition an unobtainable or nearly unobtainable woman. By reason of a higher social status or previous marriage, she is literally out of reach, but also her virtue and goodness puts her above the lover, who is a flawed mortal, and a professional soldier (predisposing him to be rough, violent, uncivilized, etc) to boot. She is out of his reach [7] and he knows it, and yet his ruminations on love all bring him back to a helpless state of abject love. So even before she has had a chance to reject him, the lover is already suffering from the mere contemplation of the inappropriateness and futility of his love. And then of course when he does declare himself, the lady in question is expected to be—required to be—hard-hearted and aloof (at least initially [8]). But ironically, her refusal of his advances only increases his ardor. [9] As Capellanus' 14th rule states:

The easy attainment of love makes it of little value; difficulty of attainment makes it prized.

Clearly Buffy ranks pretty much at the top of the list for unobtainable women for Spike. If there's one thing that everyone in the Buffy-verse agrees on, it's that a Spike/Buffy romance is out of the question. Xander's fit of uncontrollable laughter and refusal to

Buffy, verse agrees on, it's that a Spike/Buffy romance is out of the question. Xander's fit of uncontrollable laughter and refusal to take "one of Spike's fevered daydreams that's not gonna happen" ("Crush") seriously says it all. But in case that wasn't enough, we have Riley's "If you touched her . . . you know I'd kill you for real," Dawn's "you know she'd never touch anything from you anyway," Joyce's advice that Buffy "nip this in the bud," Giles' "There is no way to Buffy . . . move the hell on," the normally mild Tara's "She's nuts!" when BuffyBot's mistaken for Buffy. Willow gives the following bit of advice:

you made it clear, right? That it could never happen. That there's no possible way. Ever . . . If he thinks there's even a little chance with you, there's no telling what he'll do. ("Crush")

Of course Buffy herself contributes the unequivocal: "The only chance you had with me was when I was unconscious."

(8) Perhaps a natural reaction, but actually very unlikely to have the desired effect, especially with someone whom we know was already 100 years previously philosophically inclined to agree that difficulty of attainment makes something prized. During a heated confrontation with Angelus, Spike says:

When was the last time you unleashed it? All out fight in a mob, back against the wall, nothing but fists and fangs? Don't you ever get tired of fights you know you're going to win? ("Fool for Love," 5007)

Even without love in the equation, we see that for Spike there is a certain glory and exaltation to be had in facing desperate odds with nothing but your own personal resources standing between you and defeat. So that when the following exchange occurs between Riley and Spike in "Into the Woods," we cannot be surprised at Spike's perspective:

RILEY: You actually think you've got a shot with her?

SPIKE: No, I don't. Fella's gotta try, though. Gotta do what he can. ("Into the Woods," 5010)

Despite not knowing if (and in fact rather doubting that) he has any chance of success, being disdainful of those restricting themselves to fights they know they're going to win, he's bound to try.

(9) So what's a poor love sick fool, uh, I mean knight, to do? How does he go about "doing what he can" in the face of overwhelming odds? He does what his experience as a soldier tells him to do, of course: he enlists. The Courtly Love relationship is frequently likened (and thought to be modeled on) the vassal relationship between a knight and his lord:

the lover submitted to his lady as a knight to his lord, swearing loyal and enduring service. Drawing attention to his pretz (worth) and valor (courage)—further increased by his pure and noble love- he would request merce (pity) and some reward. (Damaris Lockewood von Lubeck)

As successful performance in battle could advance him in the eyes of his noble lord, our lover hopes to advance in the regard of his lady by doing what he does best: fight things. In the chivalric tradition, success in battle was proof positive that God was satisfied with his virtue and worth, and thus embarking on a quest or some other war-like feat (slaying a dragon, destroying an evil knight, etc) was the perfect way to demonstrate that one was indeed worthy of affection. The metaphor of Lady as Liege Lord works especially well in the case of Spike and Buffy, since unlike the courtly lady who must after all remain at home attending to domestic duties, Buffy actually is the commander of the fighting unit which Spike gradually becomes a fully participating member of. [10] The key word is "gradually" however. Like any neophyte, it takes time and effort to establish his credibility and value to the cause.

(10) Being the typical impatient lover, Spike thus embarks on several perhaps premature attempts to "draw attention to his worth" and to promote the value of his aid to a decidedly unreceptive Buffy:

SPIKE: I wouldn't be here if I didn't have a good reason. As usual, I'm here to help you . . . ("Into the Woods")

BUFFY: What are you doing?

SPIKE: Making this woman more comfortable. I'm not sampling, I'll have you know. Just look at all these lovely blood-covered people. I could, but not a taste for Spike, not a lick. Know you wouldn't like it. ("Triangle")

SPIKE: I saved you.

BUFFY: I was regrouping.

SPIKE: You were about to be regrouped into separate piles. You needed help. ("Checkpoint," 5012)

If kid sis wants to grab a midnight stroll, she'll find a way sooner or later. I just thought she'd be safer with Big Bad looking over her shoulder. (Blood Ties)

It's just, we took on that Glory chippie together, I was right there with you, fightin' the fight. ("Crush")

And of course, in explicit bid to prove his love, he sets out to kill Drusilla for Buffy: [11]

You still don't believe. Still don't think I mean it. You want proof, huh? How's this? I'm gonna kill Drusilla for you. ("Crush")

(11) Reading this turn of events by the light of the Courtly Love tradition, we see one of the lines of reasoning behind this plan: In killing Drusilla, an agent of evil, he proves that he is good [12] and thus worthy of love on that account. Of course Spike's motives here are much more complex than that, and we can say with fair certainty that had he killed Drusilla, he would have been doing the right thing (killing something evil) for the wrong reason (to impress Buffy), that is to say without an innate desire to do good but rather with a selfish desire for personal gain. This scene however continues to reference the mythos of Courtly Love when, like our legions of love-sick medieval knights, Spike begs his lady for some sign that his sacrifices and pains are not to go on rewarded forever:

Just . . . give me something . . . a crumb . . . the barest smidgen . . . tell me . . . maybe, someday, there's a chance.  
("Crush")

Chaucer himself penned a line remarkably similar to this:

And therfor, swete, rewe on my peynes smerte,

And of your grace, graunteth me some drope;

For elles may me laste no blis ne hope,

Chaucer, "Complaint to his Lady" (14th century)

Chaucer's 14th century lover, begging to be granted some drop of "grace," without which he will have neither "blis" nor "hope," is every bit as abject as our modern lover, Spike.

(12) One might find all this groveling about and dashing off to do good in pursuit of a reward morally questionable at best, but the key point to Courtly Love literature lies in revealing the power of love to ennoble the lover, to elevate him to a higher moral plane. He may start out with purely selfish motives and physical desires, but eventually, by serving loyally and undergoing great trials in her service, the virtue of the woman he loves comes to spiritually enrich and ennoble him [13] and lead him to a higher, purer love.

(13) Because in loving the lady, he worships also her virtues, the Courtly lover comes to incorporate them into his own self, leading him gradually up the "steps on a ladder" [14] from his beginning base nature up through true moral goodness. And in fact, we see in moments of rebellion, Spike does protest that Buffy is somehow invading and changing him:

You're in my gut, my throat. I'm drowning in you, Summers, I'm drowning in you. ("Crush")

You think I like having you in here? Destroying everything that was me, until all that's left is you, in a dead shell. You say you hate it, but you won't leave. ("Crush")

Seeing Spike's long-standing identification with Evil (note the continued insistence on referring to himself as "Big Bad" despite evidence to the contrary) what he is actually saying here is that this invasive Buffy-force is rooting out ("drowning") the Evil within him ("everything that was me") and relentlessly replacing it with her own innate goodness.

(14) Outright rebellion against the lady's influence such as Spike demonstrates here is not quite the courtly lover's style, but he does conceive of her beauty and/or existence as wounding [15] him in a way similar to Spike's accusations that Buffy is "destroying," "drowning," and "torturing" him. The knight/lover may plaintively protest this torture early on, but at last he comes to a final state of ennobled fatalistic calm, where his humility is such that he is willing to continue toiling for her despite his pain, without hope of reward:

"Well may that love prosper through which one hopse to have the joy of successful love and serving loyally! But I expect nothing from mine except death, since I ask for love in such a lofty place. And so I see nothing in it but my own end, if my lady does not take pity on me or if Devotion and Love do not ask it from her. . . . In Love there is such great nobility, that it has the power to make the poor rich; so I look for its mercy and help. . . . Loyal love (of which I have a great abundance) will kill me." Gace Brule, Codex Buranus, 13th century

(15) And of course, this part of the tradition ties in perfectly with the evolution of Spike's love of Buffy, starting with the turning point of his resistance under Glory's torture in "Intervention":

SPIKE: Anything happened to Dawn, it'd destroy her [Buffy]. I couldn't live her being in that much pain. I'd let Glory kill me first. Nearly bloody did. ("Intervention")

BUFFY: I told Willow it would be like suicide.

SPIKE: I'd do it. Right person. Person I loved. I'd do it. ("Tough Love," 5019)

BUFFY: We're not all gonna make it. You know that.

SPIKE: Yeah. Hey, I always knew I'd go down fighting. ("The Gift," 5022)

In these three exchanges, we certainly see the sentiments of the ennobled courtly lover, who has resigned himself to "expect nothing from [my loyal service] but death, since I ask for love in such a lofty place." The "loyal service" itself has become a sufficient motivating factor.

(15) Interestingly, early on Buffy is willing to accept responsibility for the effect she has on Spike:

GILES: . . . you can't be responsible for what Spike thinks or feels.

BUFFY: Well, aren't I responsible? I mean, something about me had to make him feel that, right? Something that made him say, "woof, that's the one for me!" ("I Was Made to Love You," 5015)

But rather than being flattered that "something about [her]" made Spike want to "turn his back on the whole evil thing," she is quite upset and disgusted. In essence she is blind (willfully or not) to her role as the inspiring courtly Lady. Later, however, she tacitly accepts Spike's humbly offered tribute to her treatment of him (and seems willing to stand above him on the stairs and assume this elevated role:

I know you'll never love me. I know that I'm a monster. But you treat me like a man, and that's . . . ("The Gift").

Here Spike acknowledges that she has elevated him from his basic nature ("monster") to a level above ("a man"). He also accepts that his hopes of reciprocal love are futile, but by trailing off indicates that that point is no longer of such great moment. What is important is the change she has wrought upon him, and what he is now calmly willing to do for her: "go down fighting." Later, when Doc questions Spike's motivation, we see that this has indeed progressed beyond the question of reward (in terms of the satisfaction of physical desires) to a question purely of devotion and honor:

DOC: I don't smell a soul anywhere on you . . . why do you even care?

SPIKE: I made a promise to a lady. ("The Gift")

To be bound by one's word is one of the key injunctions of chivalry, the hallmark of the noble knight, and thus referring to Buffy as a "lady" here has a certain significance. Spike is now someone whose word of honor means something, thanks to the civilizing influence of his idol, which stands in lieu of the soul he does not have.

(16) And thus we see how the progress of Spike's love for Buffy during the course of the 5th season works remarkably well within the generic principles of Courtly Love. Von Lubeck sums up the power of this set of romantic conventions in this way:

True love was not an unregulated passion. Its essence was absolute loyalty and self-denial, service and travail, in favor of one's lady. Only by suffering and by the accomplishment of great deeds could the knight-errant prove his mettle and demonstrate the unblemished quality of his courtly love. The lover's inner struggle between his desire for immediate fulfillment and his awareness of the moral value implicit in striving for the unattainable; between individual ambitions and outward social constraints; between the self-imposed state of submission and the overwhelming need to express pain and resentment: these are the antitheses that lend the poetry of Courtly Love its dramatic tension and emotional richness. (Damaris Lockewood von Lubeck)

Indeed I think we can say that in antitheses lies the success of this particular story arc. To von Lubeck's list of antitheses inherent in the Courtly love tradition, we can of course add the conflict between vampire and vampire slayer, the question of Good vs. Evil, the long history of being "mortal enemies" versus the possibility of forgiveness, the simultaneous existence of intense love and intense hatred, etc. The liberal use of the Courtly Love mythos in the development of this story arc has been tremendously satisfying at least in part because tension between strong opposing forces has always been a big part of Spike's character.

(17) From his debut in "School Hard" (2003), we were presented with an arrogant, violent villain with a wicked tongue. And yet as the season and subsequent ones drew on, it was the ongoing diametric contrast of his humanity with his evilness that kept the character interesting: his dotting tenderness towards Drusilla and immediate humility after having snapped at her, his perfectly understandable jealousy and hatred towards Angelus, his maudlin depression at losing Drusilla, his frustration and despair at the impotency wrought by the initiative chip. Willow's attempts to comfort him when he found he could not bite her and later to prevent him from staking himself perfectly expresses the way in which Spike's very human qualities at times completely overwhelm our ability

him from staking himself perfectly expresses the way in which Spike's very human qualities at times completely overwhelm our ability to register his evilness, even before there was any reason to question that evilness. As Willow says, "we know him" ("Doomed," 4011), that is to say, we know his human side, and as such have a certain sympathy for him despite the evil.

(18) And this is I think why the Courtly Love tradition works so well here. After all, the courtly lover does indeed—put in the most unflattering terms—start out a depressed loser with a penchant for violence and an illicit lust for someone else's girl. But the Lover evolves, becomes something better, as his lust is transmuted to love and that love leads him into nobility. Love as catalyst for change for Spike is quite fitting given that most of his more human side has been revealed through love (his love of Drusilla). Thus we find in Spike's new found devotion to Buffy a perfect vehicle for moving him from one side of the Good vs Evil conflict to the other all the while staying true to the character developed throughout the last several years. And of course, most importantly, it was great fun to be along for the ride and tremendously satisfying to see our favorite Big Bad reinvented.

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[1] Part of Capellanus' treatise on love is composed of 31 rules describing how the lover should or does behave. The following list includes those of interest (for the full list, see bibliography below)

- He who is not jealous cannot love.
- That which a lover takes against the will of his beloved has no relish.
- No one should be deprived of love without the very best of reasons.
- A true lover does not desire to embrace in love anyone except his beloved.
- When made public love rarely endures.
- The easy attainment of love makes it of little value: difficulty of attainment makes it prized.
- Every lover regularly turns pale in the presence of his beloved.
- When a lover suddenly catches sight of his beloved his heart palpitates.
- A new love puts an old one to flight.
- Good character alone makes any man worthy of love.
- Real jealousy always increases the feeling of love.
- He whom the thought of love vexes eats and sleeps very little.
- Every act of a lover ends in the thought of his beloved.
- A true lover considers nothing good except what he thinks will please his beloved.
- Love can deny nothing to love.
- A lover can never have enough of the solaces of his beloved.
- A man who is vexed by too much passion usually does not love.
- A true lover is constantly and without intermission possessed by the thought of his beloved.

[2] And of course the wicked little in-joke that the stylized, stiff & romanticized hero of Courtly Love is really a hair's-breadth away from being an obsessed stalker is just one example of how much fun this decidedly archaic set of love conventions can be, providing they're not taken too seriously. Another little poke we might make in this direction is to view Spike's snagging Buffy's underwear as a twisted (and amusing) parallel of the knight's insistence on obtaining his Lady's "favor" and tying it on to his armor as he goes off to battle.

[3] Though Capellanus' description implies that this physical attraction must be mutual ("each one" to desire "the embraces of the other"), other sources do not. And either way, during the initial stages, the beloved in rejecting the advances of the lover keeps her true feelings secret so that Buffy's overt rejections in the 5<sup>th</sup> season of Spike's physical advances do not necessarily invalidate Capellanus' description. The 6<sup>th</sup> season, of course, has verified the mutual attraction

formed the mutual attraction.

[4] Though not universal, typically the courtly lover's physical lust is strongest during the beginning stages of his love, and as his moral character improves gradually ebbs away, replaced by chaste worship.

[5] The fact that this revelation comes to Spike in a dream is quite fitting, given that dream-visions are prevalent in the medieval literature of Courtly Love. See for example Chaucer's *Book of the Duchess* or the *Roman de la Rose* (Guillaume de Lorris & Jean Clopinel).

[6] It might be taking the analysis a bit too far, but it certainly is fun to consider the innate "pallor" of vampires and Spike's "loss of appetite" (due to the Initiative chip) as further "symptoms."

[7] Buffy's scathing "You're beneath me" certainly emphasizes this point, as did Cecily's rendition of the same comment to pre-Spike William. Morally and physically (Buffy has just shoved him effortlessly to the ground, reminding him of her superior strength and his inability to fight back) Buffy is on a higher plane than Spike, just as the Courtly Lady would be above her suitor by reason of birth or marriage.

[8] Nevertheless, whether married or not, she was almost always unattainable, by virtue of her high rank or physical distance, and by fear of social censure; it was, paradoxically, her very distance that lent value to the lover's patient suffering. The lady's worth could be increased by dispensing mercy to a worthy and deserving suitor, yet the lady who submitted too soon was to be condemned. Damaris Lockewood von Lubeck

[9] The Lover is however expected to restrain himself from pressing the issue against the Lady's wishes. Capellanus' 5th rule reads: "That which a lover takes against the will of his beloved has no relish." Force and coercion are dishonorable and not to be used, though persuasion, especially in the form of lengthy letters, songs, poems, etc is perfectly acceptable. And with the set-up of pre-Spike-William's interest in poetry and Buffy's declaration that she likes poetry, we may yet see something along these lines.

[10] Spike's gradual integration into the Scooby corps, starting in 4th season, could be a whole other essay, but in brief lets just say that Spike goes from "pitching in when [Buffy] pays [him]," to happening to be around to render services ("Family" [5006], "Blood Ties" [5013], "Checkpoint" [5012], "Listening to Fear" [5009], etc) to being on official Dawn-watch in "Tough Love" [5019] ("Dawn's safe with Spike") and finally to being an essential part of the fighting team in both "Spiral" (5020) and "The Gift," working with Giles & Xander while Buffy is out in "Weight of the World" (5021) and generally giving immediate (if not completely unquestioning) obedience to Buffy's snapped orders.

[11] Interestingly, way back in season 1, Angel killed his own sire, Darla, to save Buffy and prove that he was not "an animal." Whether or not Spike knows this when he sets out to kill Drusilla is unknown, but as Drusilla has recently told him of Angel's attempts to rehabilitate the revived Darla, he may well know what happened to Darla in the first place, and thus he could have this precedent in mind.

[12] As part of his initial argument to Buffy, Spike declares "And I can be [good] too. I've changed, Buffy." He goes on to state that "Something's happening to me" . . . "And if that means turning my back on the whole evil thing . . ." So I think we can say that though during this scene he explains that he wants to prove that he loves her, he can also be said to be attempting to prove this earlier point, that he can be good, can turn his back on "the whole evil thing." Of course chaining her up doesn't exactly win him brownie points; but given subsequent demonstrations of moral growth (see [bloodyawfulpoet.com](http://bloodyawfulpoet.com) for a great essay on this subject), I think we can chalk this up to "great emotional disturbances" rather than true regression.

[13] We find the following in Capellanus' writings on love:

Love makes an ugly and rude person shine with all beauty, knows how to endow with nobility even one of humble birth, can even lend humility to the proud; . . . Oh, what a marvelous thing is love, which makes a man shine with so many virtues and which teaches everyone to abound in good customs. . . . ("What is the Effect of Love?" Capellanus, *A Treatise on Courtly Love*)

This ties in nicely with the unspoken continuation of Spikes' reference to Shakespeare's St. Crispin's Day speech:

For he to-day that sheds his blood with me

Shall be my brother; be he ne'er so vile,

This day shall gentle his condition.

Henry V

Through honorable battle in a just cause (well Henry thought so anyway), and unselfish motives (Henry's soldiers were under strictly enforced orders not to plunder) the simple soldier elevates himself above his initial condition ("vile," that is to say, a commoner) and is endowed with nobility.

[14] It's probably just coincidence, but nevertheless interesting that in "Fool for Love", the 20 seconds of the song by Crushing Velvet played in the background at the Bronze happens to include the following lyrics (which occur in the 4 m 32 s song just once)

You see my song is like a haiku

You sit and stare at me until I'm not about you

And if that's wrong, it doesn't matter

I'm gonna climb my way to heaven on your ladder

And it comes over the bit of dialogue ending with Spike's declaration that he's "always been bad" (and the cut that reveals that "bad" in this context is not "evil," more like awful.)

[15] The following exchange occurs after Buffy has given her final orders before heading after Glory:

SPIKE: Well, not exactly the St. Crispin's Day speech, was it?

GILES: "We few . . .we happy few . . ."

SPIKE: "We band of buggered . . ." ("The Gift")

The line Spike is deliberately misquoting is of course "We band of brothers."