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"And Yet": The Limits of *Buffy* Feminism



[1] In "Doomed" (B4011), Buffy tells her soon-to-be boyfriend Riley that she comes "from a long line of [slayers] that don't live past twenty-five." Treating *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* as a feminist show, as many critics and the show's producers claim it is, and the character Buffy as its star feminist icon, reveals that in this version of feminism the only viable feminist icon is a young one. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* was a television show aimed at young people (see Sherryl Vint's embarrassment at enjoying the same show that is "the favorite of 14-year-old girls everywhere," par. 2). It is therefore perhaps only natural that the younger characters are the most vibrant and that the show endorses a child's or adolescent's perspective and often critiques the close-mindedness or ineffectuality of adults, as quite a few scholars have noted (see for instance Jowett, Breton and McMaster, Bowers, and Skwire). At the same time, for a show that claims to be pro-female, its portrayal of adults is quite gendered; the central characters are the young people and Giles—an exemplary patriarch—and a revolving cast of expendable women. The adult women have a far lesser chance of attaining and maintaining insider status, or of finding the ability to aid meaningfully in the fight against evil, which is the most important feminist activity of the show. The show's final empowering images suggest that past a certain age, feminism ceases to be an option and women must cede their fight to the next generation. This situation is far worse for those characters and actresses whose bodies come under scrutiny or criticism, whose bodies seem more "womanly" or mature, or whose reproductive potential interferes with the youth narrative; they are shown as helpless counterpoints to the main characters and are punished for their abjected bodies. Through an examination of adult female characters on the show such as Joyce, Cordelia (as portrayed on *Angel*), and Darla (both shows), we aim to show the limited places available for a mature adult woman in the Buffyverse. This is consistent, we contend, in the portrayals of even minor female characters. Aside from the show's focus on youth, there are also consequences to the show's treatment of women's and girls' bodies. We mean to illustrate the ways in which actual women, and our complex and intractable embodiment, complicate, disrupt, and otherwise expose the limitations of the feminism espoused by the show, which is not meant to undercut this version of feminism, but to examine the consequences of applying the show's philosophical position to bodies both political and material. The potential social ramifications of *Buffy's* feminism include a lack of coalition-building options, the erasure of adult women as effective role models, circumscription of options for women in choosing how to deal with their own bodies, and the perpetual delay of true empowerment by continually projecting progress onto the next generation while denying the inter-generational cooperation that could make it possible.

[2] In order to keep the discussion focused and make our points more clearly, we begin by clarifying our terms. For the purposes of this essay, we discuss feminist theory and practice in association with a broad and largely U.S.-based understanding of the "wave" metaphor, with second-wave feminism representing a largely white, middle class, educated framework of political organization and action focused on securing rights for this same group (perhaps best exemplified by Betty Friedan's touchstone work *The Feminine Mystique*) and with a tendency to universalize the particular experiences of this narrowly defined grouping and project them onto all women (see Hollows and Moseley, 2-8; and Sheridan, Magarey and Liburn, 28-9). For evidence of *BtVS's* link to second-wave feminist ideals, one need look no further than the "Caucasian persuasion" ("Faith, Hope, and Trick," B3003) of Sunnydale itself, or recognize, as critic Rachel Thompson notes, that the show can only manage to deal in feminist issues of white middle-class young women of

glamorized body types (par. 36-7). Additionally, due in part, perhaps, to Whedon's affinity for the comic book tradition, Buffy exists as a superhero, and in this way is ultimately linked to a tradition which constitutes her (and thereby the show's messages) as a liberal reform figure rather than a radical critique figure, as Jeffrey Pasley asserts (265). In this framework, then, third-wave feminism can be understood as the successive critiques of the increasingly monolithic second-wave, exemplified by the widely various texts of authors such as bell hooks, Angela Davis, Gloria Anzaldúa, Dorothy Allison, and others who aim to expand the understanding of women's experiences and empowerment to include the lives and concerns of women of color, immigrant women, impoverished women, queer women and the wide range of "othered" women not fully considered—when treated at all—within the liberalism of the second wave. We see little evidence of the third wave's effect, other than as a source of monstrosity (as in Ampada, the Inca Mummy Girl, "Inca Mummy Girl" B2004), a victim (Kendra), or a very occasional target for parody (the anthropologist "birthing" the new cultural center in Season Four's "Pangs," B4008—but more on her below). Finally, in this context, then, post-feminism can be understood as the engagement with, and inflection by, elements of feminism (usually liberal second-wave feminism) but without overt identification with, or political allegiance to, a hegemonic—or even coherent—definition of feminism. This post-feminism is often a product of the marketplace. As *Bitch* magazine's Rachel Fudge notes, Buffy entered a cultural moment saturated "with mixed messages about feminism and femininity, all tied up in the pretty bow of marketability" (par. 6). In this reading, then, popular culture (and *Buffy* in particular) provide a "site of struggle—a space where the meanings of feminism can be contested —with results that might not be free of contradictions, but which do signify shifts in regimes of representation" (Gamman and Marshment as cited in Hollows and Moseley, 9).

[3] Having briefly addressed just what it is we mean when we say "feminism," and locating that more rightly as a nexus of "feminisms," we must turn ourselves to the question of *Buffy's* (and Buffy's) relationship to feminism. Since the inception of the show, a great deal of attention has been given to the rather reductive question "is Buffy feminist?" Joss Whedon, show creator and long the head writer, attributes to the show and its lead character an unequivocally feminist "mission statement," a position reiterated frequently, everywhere from DVD commentaries to mass media interviews, in a recursive bid to solidify the show's status as feminist and empowering. Other observers of the show may voice some conflicts or contradictions, but more often than not ultimately write what British television critic Charlotte Brunson refers to as the "Ur-feminist article" in which a text

"takes a television programme or film that has a central female character—or characters—and which is usually addressed to a feminine audience, and explores it within the vocabulary and concerns of feminism. The structure of the article usually involves setting up what is proposed as an obvious feminist reading of the text in which the text—and the heroine—fail the test—Then what the author does is to mobilize her own engagement with the text, her own liking for the treatment of the dreams and dilemmas of the heroine, to interrogate the harsh dismissal of this popular text on feminist ground, and to reveal the complex and contradictory ways in which the text—and the heroine—negotiate the perilous path of living as a woman in a patriarchal world. The text is redeemed, and precisely the features that made it fail the feminist test render it more resonant, interesting and sympathetic for women now." (44)

Texts of this nature abound in both mass media and academic discussion of Buffy, resulting in a wide variety of problematic "redemptions" for the show—from Sherryll Vint's dismissal of Sarah Michelle Gellar's status as a sexualized celebrity figure whose real-world status as a glamour icon

and makeup skill undercuts Buffy's liberatory potential as merely a "way to make feminism fun" (par. 22) to Zoe-Jane Playdon's even more problematic figuration of those who don't wholeheartedly embrace Buffy as feminist as misguided tools of the patriarchy who simply misunderstand the show and mistakenly apply to it a set of standards attributed to Germaine Greer and Janice Raymond—standards, incidentally, which would figure Buffy as compromised by her construction within media, as well as within a patriarchal control circuit in both the Council and entertainment industries (157). In other words, if you don't see Buffy as redemptively feminist, it's because you simply don't understand fully the pagan festivals of Eostre, attendant goddess mythology, or Buffy's "unacknowledged labor of reproduction" (despite her not being a literal mother, nor serving in any official capacity related to the reproduction of anything but Maybelline sales) and a host of other extra-textual confabulations seemingly unrelated to the show itself (see Playdon, 182-194). These excuses for the show's limitations seem rooted more in a desire to find points of identification and redemption within the text than a concerted effort to read the text within its presentational and cultural contexts. Even the most responsible and widely cited critics tend to allow the text to stand without significant intervention into its more problematic moments and portrayals, as when Rhonda Wilcox cites Vint and Patricia Pender's works as a road to claiming that the show evidences "instances of normalizing the physical presentation of the character" (179), which does not exactly redeem the more frequent glamour processing, or when Roz Kaveney blithely dismisses critiques of the seeming punishment of lesbianism that comes in Tara's death (35) as "nonsense."

[4] On the other hand, there are those who simply dismiss the text's disruptive, transgressive or feminist potential, perhaps most notoriously authors Michael P. Levine and Steven Jay Schneider's crypto-Freudian reading of the show which posits that the character Buffy herself cannot hope to contain meaning as her "girl next door" status marks her as a potential love object, but whose attractiveness according to cultural beauty status makes her an empty lust signifier, one who can "embod[y] certain central themes of love and desire" (302) but cannot express agency. [1] For Levine and Schneider, "[I]t is *BtVS* scholarship that warrants study at this point, not *BtVS* itself" (301), as to them, the show succeeds only to the extent that it recycles conventional and archaic stereotypes of gender and the sexual containment of young women (300-302), a point they make by applying the all-too appropriately warmed-over 1912 Freud essay "On the Universal Tendency to Debasement in the Sphere of Love," in which Freud, in all his "what do women want?" misogyny, posits that men inherently debase the objects of their lust and can rarely come to love them. In the logic of "Feeling for Buffy," it follows that Buffy, and by extension the show, cannot hope to access the complexity of human life and struggle, because she—and perhaps even the show's other glamorized female actors, or even those audience members who both consume and imitate its attendant imagery—are simply too attractive to be taken seriously as people, a reduction which seems to reveal more about the authors' biases than about the stakes of the show.

[5] Rather than simply embrace or negate a feminist reading of the show (or negate but redeem it because of our love for it), then, we posit that the show does attempt to engage with a liberal, emancipatory, discursive feminism, one most aligned philosophically with the second-wave but presented in post-feminist fashion, but that a reading of this effort reveals gaps, inconsistencies, and contradictions within both the show's version of feminist empowerment, and within the larger world's feminisms also. In effect, then, while the feminism of *BtVS* is compromised and often ambivalent, these problems do not simply erase its effort to engage with feminism any more than its efforts redeem the show as simply and only "feminist." Reading the positioning of adult women, as well as the treatment of both women's real and textual bodies affords us an opportunity to examine the ways in which the show—like popular feminism more generally—often builds its version of empowerment upon the reinstatement of a generational divide

and a "disidentification" with older women which both "redeem[s] whatever text it is for the modern girl's consumption" and "remake[s] the cultural memory of the censorious feminist" (Brunsdon, 45), treating the concerns and feminisms of adult women as out-of-touch at best and actively antagonistic to the aims and interests of the young at worst. In this way, then, *BtVS*'s treatment of adult women, and of women's bodies, speaks to a problematic tendency to treat the concerns of women as periodized and generational, and to discourage thereby cross-generational cooperation and coalition-building. Nowhere is this more apparent than in the treatment of secondary characters.

[6] How does Buffy, and how do the other young, female characters more generally, learn to become women in the Buffyverse? As J. P. Williams has noted, "Even as it proclaims allegiance to ideals of female power, *Buffy* presents few positive female models for its teenage protagonists" (61; see also Jowett, 174). In this section, we give an idea of the range of mature, adult roles available to women on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. We have limited ourselves in this section mostly to characters on *Buffy* because of that show's alleged feminist "mission statement," partially summarized by Joss Whedon in the pilot episode: "It's such a charge when somebody underestimates you and you turn out to be stronger than they are and that's really the heart of the show" (DVD commentary, "Welcome to the Hellmouth," B1001) Without providing an exhaustive list, we can still say that the majority of adult female characters on *Buffy* are portrayed as nonessential, largely ignorant of and incapable of handling the supernatural complexities of life on the Hellmouth and thus unable to participate meaningfully—or long-term—in the show's central premise and its main vehicle for female empowerment, the fight against evil. Additionally, while there is obvious overlap among characters and themes in *Buffy* and its spin-off, *Angel* itself is based on a different aesthetic, that of noir. As Jennifer Stoy suggests: "From its inception, *Angel* has been a noir series, borrowing everything from the visual aesthetic—to the stock characters (detective Angel, limey Wesley Windham-Pryce, girl Friday Cordelia Chase, femme fatale Lilah Morgan) to familiar storylines" (163). As Joss Whedon himself says in the commentary to the pilot episode of *Angel*, he felt like he was "betraying [his] feminist sensibilities" (DVD commentary, *Angel*, "City of," A1001) by beginning with Angel rescuing a stock "damsel in distress." While Whedon has attempted to "update" the noir genre, Stoy provides the critique: "Joss Whedon might know how to portray a femme fatale, [but] his sympathy towards her position and moral reasoning is as inflexible as his post-war forebears—a troublesome position for a 'feminist' television series maker" (164). For these reasons, we will focus on female characters on *Angel* only insofar as they have a developed backstory coming from previous appearances on *Buffy*, which has allowed characters like "girl Friday" Cordelia Chase to transcend in some ways the limited and decidedly non-feminist stereotypes of the noir genre.

[7] These limitations on female activity and occupation are visible in recurring adult female characters as well as in one-episode characters. Take for instance the teachers and professionals who work at Sunnydale High School. Several of the teachers are portrayed as incompetent, such as history teacher Mrs. Jackson in "The Puppet Show" (B1009) who confiscates the talking puppet/demon hunter to restore classroom order only to have Xander steal it from her classroom cupboard, or Miss Beakman who accepts fake homework after Amy performs a spell on her in "Bewitched, Bothered, and Bewildered" (B2016). The functionaries at Sunnydale High can even become the subject of the gang's investigation, as Miss French the sexual "predator" biology teacher She-Mantis attempts to mate with Xander and then kill him in Season One's "Teacher's Pet" (B1004) or as the lunch lady—who does not even merit a name—in Season Three's "Earshot" (B3018) is the one determined to kill all the students for being "vermin" who "eat filth." This is similarly the case for Nurse Greenleigh in "Go Fish" (B2020): she is aware of Coach Marin's experiments on the swimteam, and yet she is incapable of convincing him to stop. He calls her a "quitter" and pushes her into the sewer to be eaten by the monster remnants of the swim team.

Interestingly enough, Nurse Greenleigh, as an overweight, middle-aged woman, is only seen as fit to be food for the swim team. Later in the episode, as Nurse Greenleigh's facedown, forgotten body floats by, the coach pushes Buffy into the sewer saying that although they have been fed, "boys have other needs." In the culmination of the episode, when Buffy accidentally drops Coach Marin into the sewer, she says that the swim team "really love their coach," suggesting that the monsters are discerning enough to avoid sexual contact with an actual adult woman, especially when other options are available.

[8] By far the most complex teacher at Sunnydale High is Jenny Calendar. From the start of her run on the show she engages Giles in lively debate, challenges his worldview and even his knowledge, telling him, "You have got to read something that was published after 1066" ("School Hard," B2003), and pursues him as a sexual partner. She is easily brought into the group because of her abilities—she is the "techno-pagan" who forms the circle of Kayless on the internet to get the demon Moloch out ("I Robot, You Jane," B1008), she possesses her own library of texts (including the one that reverses the invitation for Angelus to enter Buffy's home), and she combines her knowledge of magic and computers to translate the ritual to restore Angel's soul ("Passion," B2017). Furthermore, she has embraced her sexuality, attending the Burning Man festival, dangling a corkscrew from some unnamed body part not her ear, and suggestively telling Giles she wants to "make [him] squirm" ("The Dark Age," B2008). Her independence and freedom are unmade, however, by episode thirteen of Season Two, "Surprise," when a meeting with her uncle reveals that she is "Janna, of the Kalderash people," and her subordination to the patriarchal order and her duty to her "people" become clear (Jowett, 175). J. P. Williams has pointed out that Jenny is "the adult woman best equipped to survive *Buffy's* world" but she "cannot triumph" (71). In fact, much as her name emphasizes the quickly passing days that structure human mortality, her circumstances continually reframe her within a circuit of males angling for possession and control of her body. While Giles's desire for sexual union with her seems most benign of all such forces, it bears notice that overt initiation of their romantic entanglement results in her being literally possessed by a demon associated with Giles and his wayward youth. This chain of attempted containments and possessions—by Giles, by the demon which uses her body as a host, by her uncle and culture of origin and, finally, Angelus—culminates in her demise. Her death is the "ultimate woman-in-jeopardy scene," and the way Angel lays out her body for Giles to see afterward emphasizes her passivity: "her arms laid out with palms upward, her torso twisted to achieve maximum visibility" (Williams 71). Holly Chandler explains that Calendar's dead body is more of a message between men: Angel has effectively communicated to Giles that "he got to her first" (par. 48). Jenny Calendar's eyes are wide and staring, as Joyce's will be in the episode "The Body" (B5016), and as Anya's will be near the end of "Chosen" (B7022). In each case, the staring eyes indicate the finality of death, and it is no coincidence that this is projected onto the adult women of the show. As Whedon himself disclosed in an interview associated with "Passion" (B2017), the same episode in which Jenny Calendar died, "death is final and death is scary" (DVD interview, Season Two); according to the show, it would also seem that human death's scary finality comes in the body of a woman.

[9] The group's adult female role models do not improve much once they begin to interact with the "heady discourse" of academia ("The Freshman," B4001). Three female representatives of the university intellectual community each are treated as monstrous mothers. First is Willow Rosenberg's mother, Sheila, who is presented as the ultimate neglectful mother in "Gingerbread" (B3011): she is completely uninvolved in and clueless about Willow's life, everything from her haircut, to her best friend's name, to her musician boyfriend, to her experiences with witchcraft [21], not to mention Sheila's obliviousness to all the times the gang made "round robin" phone calls in order to secure permission to stay out all night researching and saving the world. At the same time, Sheila Rosenberg maintains a consciously feminist position, one that Willow finds

alienating, saying, "The last time we had a conversation over three minutes, it was about the patriarchal bias of *The Mister Rogers Show*" ("Gingerbread," B3011). While Sheila's response, "Well, with King Friday lording it over the lesser puppets," is indeed a possible feminist critique of that television show, her unwillingness to focus on Willow's actual complaint—that her mother doesn't take the time to talk to her—makes Sheila Rosenberg seem to be simultaneously an ineffectual mother and a nitpicking academic. In the next season, Buffy accuses Willow of "channeling [her] mother" during a blistering attack on the real meaning of Thanksgiving as "one culture wiping out another" ("Pangs," B4008). This conversation takes place as Professor Gerhardt of the UC Sunnydale Anthropology department breaks the ground for a new cultural center on campus, saying, "When I first realized we were outgrowing our current cultural center, I was concerned. Then I realized it was like seeing one's child grow up and move on to better things." Although they fall on opposite ends of the ideological spectrum, with Sheila Rosenberg boycotting Columbus Day and Thanksgiving and Professor Gerhardt celebrating the idea of the melting pot of U.S. American culture, the fact that they are linked in the opening scene of this episode points to their similar positioning within the academy, women more in touch with their work than with actual, biological children. Furthermore, Professor Gerhardt's "child," the cultural center, ultimately causes her own death: the Native American spirit Hus is released as the ground is broken and he later kills her and cuts off her ear with a Chumash knife on exhibit in the cultural center, Xander gets syphilis, and a raiding party nearly ruins the gang's Thanksgiving. The "child" has arguably gone on to bigger things, but not necessarily better things. And this is not even the most destructive child wrought by a female academic on the show. Professor Walsh's creation Adam—born from her brain and scientific work, not from her womb—deserves this title, as he kills his "mommy," dissects a child and several demons, leads the Sunnydale demons and vampires to infiltrate the Initiative and attempts to "start a war that would kill us all," as Giles says at the end of "Primeval" (B4021). But even before Adam develops into Season Four's "big bad," Professor Walsh has become a problematic character. Her intelligence and influence over Buffy threaten Giles, especially when Buffy calls her "absolutely the smartest person I've ever met" ("A New Man," B4012, see also J.P. Williams 69). In the same episode, an important exchange between Giles and Professor Walsh takes place in her office, in which Giles calls Buffy a "girl," and Professor Walsh pointedly responds "I have found her to be a unique woman." Giles snaps back: "Woman, of course, how wrong of me to choose my own words." Even though Giles attempts to use his interaction with Professor Walsh to instruct her on how to deal with Buffy, he resents it when he himself is instructed. Her feminist critique of his infantilizing rhetoric turns immediately into a critique of her own character; the central character Giles operates as a locus of both authority and sympathy, effectively reducing Walsh's legitimate critique to a censorious nitpick. He later calls her a "harridan," a "fishwife," and says "I'm twice the man she is"—she has emasculated him and effectively (but only temporarily) replaced him as Buffy's authority figure, even father figure ("A New Man," B4012). Given that the episode concerns Giles's generational and informational isolation from the group, the audience is encouraged to identify and feel sympathy for Giles, the feminized man, rather than Professor Walsh, the masculinized woman (Jowett, 175-176). All of these female academics can be seen in counterpoint to the male academics: the professor of popular culture from "The Freshman" (B4001) who throws Buffy out of his class for "sucking" the energy of the class, and the history professor from "Checkpoint" (B5012) who derides Buffy's theories on Rasputin as "Flights of Fancy 101." Neither of the male professors's reproductive capacities is called into question or even alluded to.

[10] However, adult female characters are not necessarily always defined by their profession on the show. For instance, Joyce's Book Club friend, Pat, from Season Three's "Dead Man's Party" is defined by the plethora of activities with which she seems to fill her "single lady" life. She has attached herself to Joyce in Buffy's absence, making her an intrusive presence once Buffy returns, even as she suggests that Buffy and Joyce need to "rebound" ("Dead Man's Party," B3002). Throughout the course of the episode, she makes reference to the other activities in her

life, like the book club (reading Oprah's Book Club pick *The Deep End of the Ocean*), like making empanadas in her Spanish class, or in accepting the invitation to Buffy's welcome home party saying, "[F]orget facial night and let's party!" The episode implies that she fills her life with a variety of activities because she lacks a family of her own, and when Buffy kills her at the end of the episode (because she puts on a mask and becomes a demon), it seems like poetic justice that Buffy is getting her family back from her mother's usurping adult friend.

[11] Giles's adult friend Olivia represents a single life of a very different sort. Olivia's appearances on the show focus on sex, helplessness, silence, and childbearing, aligning her with a very different (though similarly Victorian-inspired) character type than that of the merry spinster represented by Pat. Olivia appears in Season Four as an occasional sexual partner for Giles, most notably in the episode "Hush" (B4010). She comes to town for the explicit purpose of having sex with him, as she indicates by cutting their conversation short a minute after she arrives: "That's enough small talk, don't you think?" As they kiss, the camera pans down to Giles setting his glasses down on the work he was doing figuring out who and what the Gentlemen are from Buffy's dream ("Hush," 4010). Olivia is a distraction to him, one incapable of actually helping to defend the town from the monsters. Whedon's commentary for "Hush" demonstrates that her helplessness was purposefully constructed: "I needed people who would be not as savvy and canny about everything that is going on as our people" (DVD commentary, "Hush," B4010). She, as so many of the other adult women, serves to express what an outsider might feel, what an ordinary person not endowed with exceptional strength or knowledge might think in counterpoint to the supernatural reality the show explores. But as outsiders, the adult women are more often impediments to fighting evil or saving the day than they are meaningful participants. Her final appearance on the show, in "Restless" (B4022) reduces her role further to that of a chastising reminder to Giles of the biological family he cannot pursue having because of his relationship to the Slayer. Her last moment as a character on the show comes when she appears crying next to an empty, overturned stroller, an image which seemingly links her unhappiness to a failure to produce Giles's offspring. The normality she represents would seem to be limit her roles and functions to those related directly to her sexuality and reproductive potential. (For a reading of Olivia that examines the character solely as a reflection of *Giles's* sexuality and "adult" private life, see Jowett, 182, 184).

[12] This outsider status crescendos in the show's treatment of elderly women. In "Teacher's Pet," when Willow and Buffy try to locate the She-Mantis to stop her from having sex with and then killing Xander, they arrive on the doorstep of the "real" Miss French who taught biology at Sunnydale High for thirty years before retiring. When Buffy exclaims in frustration that the She-Mantis "could be anywhere," Miss French says, "No, dear, I'm right here" ("Teacher's Pet," B1004). The joke is that the elderly woman mistakenly thinks that someone might actually be looking for her, not a She-Mantis who stole her identity. Another elderly woman with a thirty-year history of service to children is Genevieve Holt, presented in Season Four as the children's aid from the Lowell Home for Children. Under her "reign of repression," as Anya calls it, she forcibly baptized children by holding them underwater, shaved the heads of girls who "preen[ed] like Jezebel," and generally punished the "dirty" children in her care, thus causing the spirits of those children to haunt the fraternity house where Buffy's boyfriend Riley lives ("Where the Wild Things Are," B4018). Her calm demeanor and slight and feeble physical presence sharply contrast with her rigid religious cruelty, thus exposing her as a monster of sorts. The show presents another twist on the invisibility and irrelevance of elderly women in Season Six's "Double Meat Palace" (B6012), when it is revealed that the "wig lady" who comes in everyday is actually a monster with a snake-like creature growing out of her head. She eats Double Meat Palace employees for their high fat content as well as because no one will miss them given the high turnover of employees at fast food restaurants in general—as someone else who is socially invisible, she recognizes those

who share her status to some degree. The show acknowledges the limited social world of elderly people, but does very little to overturn that notion. They are treated as irrelevant to the show's central focus or as actively working against it—either way there is no constructive role for them to play. All of this is dramatically confirmed in the final narrative arc that brings the female Guardians into the Slayer mythology in Season Seven. These "women who want to help and protect [the Slayer]" illogically hid from the Shadow Men, silently watched the Watcher's Council, and have done nothing actually helpful or protective since they forged the scythe that killed the last pure demon who walked the earth. The last Guardian, who thinks Buffy's name is a joke and who also drolly remarks "I look good for my age," dies right after giving this bit of exposition, her neck snapped easily by Caleb ("End of Days," B7021). Furthermore, the help from these ancient mystical women is reascribed when Buffy tells Spike that the reason she even has this new, most powerful of weapons is because of *him*—because of the speech he gave her the night before, telling her that she is "a hell of a woman" and encouraging her to continue fighting despite being dismissed from the group ("End of Days," B7021).

[13] So far, we have only acknowledged the portrayal of individual female characters on *Buffy*. The show's presentation of female groups is similarly problematic, seeming to question the entire idea of coalition-building, demonstrating again the narrow focus of its definition of feminism. Groups of women on the show are treated as well-intentioned but not necessarily effective in achieving their goals. For example, Joyce Summers's Mothers Opposed to the Occult, or MOO, is created with the noble goal of "tak[ing] Sunnydale back" from the evil that surrounds it. Joyce tells Buffy that her work as the Slayer is "fruitless," but that MOO—mobilizing "grown-ups" and using the bureaucratic machinery of the school and the state—will protect the innocent ("Gingerbread," B3011). The organization's name itself suggests that the (largely middle-aged) women who belong to it are docile, unthinking, cow-like individuals, suggesting that mediocrity coming together, even if for a well-meaning goal, is a particular kind of horror now being unleashed on Sunnydale. The "wanna-blessed-bes" of Willow's college Wicca group fare no better. In the commentary for "Hush" (B4010), Joss Whedon describes the mentality of these "girls" as, "We are earthy and crunchy and useless." The scene is designed to fit in with the general theme of the episode, that language impedes actual communication, but it does manage to get a few digs in against a particular kind of "woman power" group—one, as Willow says, organized around "All talk. Blah, blah, Gaia. Blah, blah, moon. Menstrual life-force power thingy" ("Hush," B4010). And they reject Willow's attempt to broaden the group's focus into the "wacky notion of spells." The young women in the group do not even get to benefit from the customary clever language of the show. To Willow's suggestion, one redundantly replies, "Oh yeah. Then we could all get on our broomsticks and fly around on our broomsticks" ("Hush," B4010). They also manage to silence Tara, first interrupting her to say to Willow, "One person's energy can suck the power from an entire circle" and then quieting the group just so Tara can speak, which causes the painfully shy young woman (who is also prone to stuttering) to refuse the chance. The group receives a partial redemption in Season Seven, when Willow seeks their help to reverse the spell that has turned her into Warren ("The Killer in Me," B7013). However, Amy does most of the speaking and action for the group, and they all leave quickly after Amy's feigned attempts to help do nothing. The group's initial ignorance of the Hellmouth and the supernatural forces at work in Sunnydale and their later inability to perceive Amy as an enemy in their midst or to help Willow in her hour of need make them seem insignificant, and irrelevant to any of the potential feminist action to be performed on the show.

[14] The perfect group of women on the show is actually never seen—the disembodied coven from Devon that sends Giles to Sunnydale at the end of Season Six to defeat the "dark magical force" they perceived to be rising in Sunnydale ("Grave," B6022). They imbue Giles with their power and send him to fight her—a strange choice when, as Dark Willow points out, his "borrowed power" is a lesser one than that of either Willow, or of the coven itself when united and

embodied. Once Dark Willow has been stopped, she spends the first two episodes of Season Seven under their tutelage. But this is really *Giles's* tutelage, as Willow, again, points out. He is the one who has gone "all Dumbledore" on her, teaching her to live with and control her power, like the father figure character and most powerful wizard from the Harry Potter series. They may be, as Willow declares "the most amazing women [she's] ever met," but they are afraid of her in a way Giles doesn't seem to be ("Lessons," B7001). By the third episode of the final season, Willow's mantra "everything's connected" has gone from being something she learned from Miss Hartness in the coven ("Lessons," B7001) to something that Giles has taught her ("Same Time, Same Place," B7003). The coven and its seers are mentioned periodically throughout Season Seven, finding potential slayers and sending them to Sunnydale and consulting with Willow on the final spell that will turn all potential slayers into actual ones ("Showtime," B7011; "Potential," B7012; "Chosen," B7022). Taken together, the show has created a "powerful coven" to be Giles's new instrument—they are a source of information that he wields just as he did information from the Council or from his own extensive studies.

[15] It is important to treat Buffy's mother, Joyce Summers, as emblematic of the process by which adult women's contributions are minimized or overlooked as well as emblematic of how this process is linked to the idea of age and an aging body. In the first two seasons, while Joyce has no knowledge of her daughter's role as the Slayer, she seems an ineffectual parent, and the dramatic irony in which she says things like "I know. If you don't go out it'll be the end of the world. Everything is life or death when you're a sixteen year-old girl!" ("The Harvest," B1002) and Buffy and the audience know that it could be the end of the world, makes her seem ridiculously out of touch with her daughter, and with the reality of life as a resident and citizen of Sunnydale (Jowett, 178-179). For the show's "secret identity" premise to work, Buffy has to keep her status as the Slayer hidden from everyone. But as the show goes on and various people are included into the group, one wonders why her mother is not extended the same courtesy. This is especially significant in the scene in "Passion" (B2017) when Buffy knows that Angelus can enter the Summers home uninvited and may be targeting Joyce. Buffy wants to tell Joyce, but both Xander and Giles try to talk her out of it. Xander, in what seems to be a stand-in voice for the show's writers and insider audience, says "The more people who know the secret, the more it cheapens it for the rest of us" ("Passion," 2017). And Giles attributes the cause of the problem to Buffy acting as a "slave to [her] passions" in wanting to protect her mother from Angelus's potential assault. Either way, the group drops the question without developing a satisfactory reason why Joyce cannot know this crucial piece of information—the show nods in the direction that it's silly and even dangerous for her not to know, but not enough to change things. Joyce is, after all, an ordinary woman who wouldn't know what to do with such information.

[16] Joyce herself acts as the symbol of all of the unpleasant aspects of adulthood—failed relationships (with Buffy's dad and with the homicidal robot Ted), family disappointments, chores and paperwork—she is nearly always seen doing something related to home care, cooking, cleaning, or "wrestling with the IRS" as she tells Darla in the episode "Angel" (B1007). As Lorna Jowett has made clear, "Joyce's female strength is represented through suffering" (183). Joyce's passive acceptance of pain and the banal difficulties of adult life directly contrast with Buffy's active fight against evil. But to move beyond her adult and motherly responsibilities, Joyce is also the symbol of the aging female body. Joss Whedon's commentary for Season Five's "The Body" (B5016), in which Joyce is "the body," indicates that the theme of this episode is "the extreme physicality" of death, which he aimed to represent in the episode by delivering "almost obscene physicality. A little more physicality than we necessarily want or are used to." This includes the sounds of Joyce's ribs breaking as Buffy gives her CPR, the "gross and upsetting" (DVD commentary) thought that the paramedics or the audience might see Joyce's underwear (really just her upper thighs) as they move the body around, and the fact that each act opens with some view

of Joyce as her body is processed: she is zipped into a body bag, her clothes are cut off as she is prepared for an autopsy, her head is bandaged after the doctor checks where the tumor was ("The Body," B5016). All of this stark confrontation with natural death, with "the body," which is expressly female here (even in the statue that Dawn is supposed to be sketching in art class), demonstrates the connection established between adult, mature women and death. When Anya expresses her frustration with death in the episode, this becomes quite clear. She says "There's just a body, and I don't understand why she just can't get back in it and not be dead anymore. It's stupid. It's mortal and it's stupid" ("The Body," B5016). The "it" to which she refers does not necessarily just mean death; she could also be referring to the female body in general, especially given Anya's continuing focus on her own aging, mortal body (See for example "The Replacement," B5003 and "Once More With Feeling," B6007). Social irrelevance, aging, frailty—all of the negative aspects of adulthood are embodied in the mature woman. As much as Joyce was a constant, motherly presence in the lives of the Scooby gang unnoticed until her death, she becomes also a constant reminder of mortality as well, as her body finally fails.

[17] Given the show's engagement with discourses of feminism, and the centrality of Buffy's status as initially a girl and then a young woman to the show's premise and figuration of feminism, it seems certain that the show constructs her as undeniably female—a subject as well as a material, sexed body. While the show, arguably, exists purely in the realm of discourse, Buffy's bodies—whether literally those of actress Sarah Michelle Gellar and her body-doubles, those of the secondary cast and stunt players, or even metaphorically that of the always-already sexed character Buffy Summers who acts as the "hand" of demon-slaying—circulate in the realm of the material. While in agreement with Judith Butler that attempts to ground sex in materiality tend to presuppose the constructed subject more than examine the means of its construction, we here further concur that the category of materiality provides not only a place to examine the ways in which femininity, women's bodies, and the notion of the material are mobilized to articulate and contain subjects (*Bodies*, 28-31), but also that the material body represents a category "without which we cannot do anything" (29). Here, the treatment of bodies affords an opportunity to interrogate the show's engagement with feminism, as well as to expose some troubling undercurrents which merit further examination. So, then, how does the show treat bodies, especially female bodies?

[18] Perhaps ironically, one of the primary ways in which the show deals with female bodies is by refusing to deal with them at all, or by engaging with them only for the sake of a joke. In a show that purports to deal with the real demons of adolescent life, and featuring a female lead, it manages never to deal with problematic menstruation; on the rare occasion when menstrual periods make an appearance, at the margin of the show, it is for the purposes of a joke, as in B2003 "School Hard," when Buffy sends Xander to her purse for a stake and he finds instead a tampon, causing him to flinch and drop it, or in B2016 "Bewitched, Bothered and Bewildered" when Cordelia faces irate critique from the bespelled Harmony and remarks "Ok, Harmony, if you need to borrow my Midol, just ask." While some critics seem inclined to excuse the show's refusal to address adolescent female bodies seriously, it is not enough to say that it's a television show and therefore it could not do so. In fact, given that the show—like all television—uses its platform to sell products, it seems strange that the show wouldn't use its opportunity to sell precisely such products as Midol or tampons. By treating the bodies of the young women on the show as important and the characters as role models, the frame could expand and menstruation could be treated as common ground, much as the show did when allowing Sarah Michelle Gellar to license her Buffy face to Maybelline. However, unlike makeup, in the first case menstruation exists purely as the set-up for a joke predicated upon masculine panic when faced with the reality of menstruation and in the second case, menstruation exists as peripheral to a common-sense logic of the hormonally irrational woman, the PMS sufferer in need of an over-the-counter remedy for her

temporary insanity. Similarly, in "Phases" (B2015), when Willow finds out that Oz is a werewolf, she compares his monthly three-day transformation into a beast to her own implied PMS when she says, "Three days out of the month, I'm not much fun to be around either." Here, not only does menstruation exist purely to set up a joke about the insanity of women with PMS, but the joke does not even consider the girl's experience of her own body and hormonal fluctuations, merely expresses sympathy for the inconvenience it poses to others by making her "not much fun to be around."

[19] In fact, while the show studiously avoids dealing directly with the realities of a maturing adolescent female's body, it frequently addresses the male body, also as a source of humor, but differently. Consistently, jokes about the male body rely upon similarly common-sense logics of adolescent male sexual fantasy, objectification of women, and masturbation, yet without offering significant critique. However, while the jokes aimed at female bodies mobilize a verbal castigation and containment of those same bodies by yoking them to Victorian notions of insanity and even degeneracy associated with the biological necessity of menstruation [3], jokes directed at male bodies and bodily habits do not target the males for judgment and containment so much as make merry sport of the uncontainable nature of male desire. For instance, in "Harsh Light of Day" (B4003), Anya enters Xander's basement and removes her clothing while he reaches for a juice box; when his gaze returns to her body, he squeezes the juice container and it erupts in an arc, an implicit reference to and joke about adolescent male sexual excitability and tendency to early climax. Only two episodes later, as Buffy and Willow discuss the desire to find a male companion in whom the mind is mightier than the penis, Xander exclaims "Nothing can defeat the penis!"—a joke which earns him the derisive stares of the young women, but upon which he comments only "Too loud. Very unseemly," as though volume were the problem with the intrusive assertion ("Beer Bad," B4005). Similarly, while many have noted the show's fetishization of male and female bodies alike and some see in this an egalitarian impulse, few note the ways in which male gazes work to objectify female characters unproblematically, such as in "Restless" (B4022) when Willow's dream is disrupted and Xander allowed to comment about his masturbation while fantasizing about the lesbian sex life of his best friend Willow and her love interest Tara. In the commentary over this episode, writer/director Whedon allows that the moment does not work diegetically, as it places Willow's own dream in the point-of-view of another, Xander, and that doing so violates the internal logic of the dream structure by marginalizing the central character's own consciousness, but that he kept it because he found it funny (DVD commentary). Even bonding with each other, women do so, within the show, through phallic jokes rather than shared experience of their own bodies, as when potential slayer Rona remarks that she just likes "the feel of wood in [her] hand," and lesbian fellow-potential Kennedy replies that Rona "lost [her] there" ("Potential," B7012).

[20] So what happens, then, when the show *does* address female bodies? Some of the treatment is business as usual: containment of female desire through attachment to a love object; projection of socially marginal, anarchic violent, sexual and other embodied impulses onto males and/or females depicted as explicitly monstrous; and explicit fear of aging—as in Buffy's concern about having "Mom hair" ("Lessons," B7001). However, on rare occasions, the show deviates from its typically superficial and elided treatment of female bodies; when it does, the results suggest a limited effort at complex depiction, the mixed results of which open a host of difficulties. To exemplify this, the much-bemoaned death of Tara bears further scrutiny. While Kaveney offers a reading of this and subsequent scenes intended to dispense with all critiques of Tara's death as recapitulating the all-too-familiar death or insanity options presented most often to lesbian characters (35), it does not go far enough to say that because Warren did not aim for Tara, her death and Willow's resultant vengeance spree do not contribute to a "punish lesbianism" reading, because doing so simply sidesteps examining several key points of the portrayal. While Tara does not die due to the misogynist Warren's wrath against her in particular or lesbians in general, her

death comes as a direct result of her reconciliation with Willow and the physical expression of it through sex. Throughout the episode ("Seeing Red," B6019), the lesbian lovers are depicted in bed, in afterglow, or engaged in the continual foreplay, both public and private, common to newlyweds. In fact, only because of their post-coital malingering and playful sexual banter are she and Willow still in the room when Warren's stray bullet strikes. While one might overlook this choice as coincidental, this moment acquires additional significance when one considers that in all previous episodes of their multiple season relationship, the lovers' sexual union has played on the level of metaphor—plenty of hand holding, glances, and floating roses, but no sex. In fact, show creators comment on more than one occasion that magical practice plays as metaphor for sex between the two witches (see for instance Whedon's commentary on "Hush," B4010), an assertion already complicated by season six's alignment of magical practice with addiction. Lesbian sex, then, begins as magic—which evolves into an addiction, one which drives Tara & Willow apart—but becomes physical, only to be followed immediately by death for one and insanity (in the form of an addictive spiral of self-and other-destruction) for the other. As soon as their sexuality and its expression grow overtly material and embodied, Tara dies by penetrating wound, allowed to comment upon her splattered blood only in the context of her lover's stained clothing: "your shirt" ("Seeing Red," B4019).

[21] The bloody death of Tara raises questions beyond that of the portrayal and textual containment of lesbianism, when taken in context with Whedon's commentary on the actress Amber Benson, who played Tara. In the commentary for "Hush" (B4010), Whedon notes that he "wanted someone smaller" and less "womanly" than Benson for Tara, as her adult body did not, to him, convey the supposed emotional vulnerability he was looking for in the character (DVD commentary). While he ultimately came around to admiration for the actress's abilities at playing the character, his comment on her body—a healthy body, and still well below average size, but larger than the other actresses on the show—also raises questions about the producers' reasons for killing the character. If Benson had been a size two, would it have been another chosen to die? Additionally, the "splatter death," one of the few on the show, and certainly one of very few concerning major characters, brings the textual moment back to its roots in horror cinema, by linking her death to the signs of abjection common to horror. Matt Hills and Rebecca Williams cite Barbara Creed in discussing the use of abjection as "any ritual or process that is concerned with protecting the self's Ôclean and proper body" (204, Creed 9-11). In this sense, then, any moment on screen in which blood, mucous or other bodily fluids pass the barrier of the body is a scene of abjection, a moment at which the body's borders become permeable and the subject loses coherence. In Creed's work, she explains that the mobilization of abjection appears to contain "monstrous femininity" (12) by relegating all bodily processes to a position of lack and inflicting torture on that objectified body as a kind of psychic punishment for violating cultural body taboos. In Judith Butler's work, abjection figures as a part of subject construction, a way in which the body and its natural processes become first internalized as negative in meaning, then productive of self-loathing, and finally generate a set of rituals to contain the threat to the subject-self posed by recognition of the body as animal (*Power* 50-51). In this sense, then, the showing of Tara's blood, especially given that the usual figures of abjection in horror—here, the vampires—turn to dust rather than bleeding, relegates her to the position of object. That the character has so recently been portrayed as engaged in sexual union adds to the abjection, amplifying the threat posed by her body by asserting, for the first and only time, its animal drives and needs. Her body is violated and its disruptive potential contained in the same gesture. The doubled body, both of character and actress, is made the locus of a nexus of meanings which punish the body in its excesses of materiality.

[22] The notion of abjection also offers an interesting turn to reading the show's final episode. To open the Hellmouth and enable their assault on the minions of the First, the Slayers

and Potentials use their own blood, slashing their hands to open the seal, passing the knife between them, beginning with Buffy and ending with the unnamed minor Potentials. In his commentary on "Chosen" (B7022), Whedon calls this a "good, earthy, almost-menstrual metaphor" which he labels "important because they're all becoming empowered together" (DVD commentary). What he never explains is what this metaphorically represents. If the young women share a "red tent" experience, bonding emotionally by bleeding together, what binds them is ultimately their self-mortification, a far cry from the natural processes of menstruation. More importantly, if Whedon means the audience to read this moment of bleeding as the shared experience of menstruation, what might it mean that this moment also opens a door to hell by the passage of blood through a permeable, round portal? If those moments represent a vaginal metaphor, as in Whedon's account, then the shared vagina also represents the ultimate site of abjection—the final taboo. Crossing this threshold is literally a passage to hell; that the young women receive their slayer powers only moments later actually underscores the abjection more than redeems it as abjection operates as an "unmaking" of self to allow a refashioning to suit the desires of another (Butler, *Power* 52). Here, the young women lose who they each were through a ritual self-mortification in order to meet the desires of, narratively, Buffy and, metanarratively, Joss Whedon and the show's other producers. This moment's "empowerment" metaphor seems to undermine its own liberatory message at the same moment that it articulates it, much in the way that the "shared power" metanarrative of the season undermines its own message by silencing all voices but Buffy's as a means to articulate a cooperative empowerment message (on this point, see Spicer par. 28). Beyond the problems at the level of symbolic meaning, the moment resists reading in any real-world context; there is no single act that all women can realistically choose to participate in and share—even menstruation represents a shared circumstance, but not a choice. How, then, are real females empowered by this moment? The most this moment offers its audience is a vague hope of a P/potential future empowerment, based upon a problematic metaphorical choice and as-yet-unnamed symbolic act of self-mortification.

[23] If menstruation figures rarely and problematically in the narrative of *Buffy*, the show's treatment of maternity serves to refine the message of bodily mortification, amplifying it in several ways for projection onto the mature females of the Buffyverse. Character reduction to container for offspring underscores a tendency to position maternity as self-sacrificing and erasing of identity and external referential purpose for women, a tendency both shows share with generations of writers, particularly because, as Barbara Creed puts it, functions such as "menstruation and childbirth are seen as [É] two events in a woman's life which [É] place [É] her on the side of the abject" (Creed 50, cited in Hills & Williams 205). This tendency toward reduction through maternity tendency appears, as noted above, in the treatment of mothers whose children already exist, in that their lives revolve around sacrifice and suffering, or they appear as monstrous for failing to do so. In the portrayal of pregnancy and birth, however, the erasure of women as agents and reconstruction as sacrificial objects becomes more apparent yet. While no major character bears a child during the run of the show, Darla and Cordelia, two characters originally created on *Buffy*, go on to give birth during their tenure on *Angel*. The first character with a narrative arc involving pregnancy is Darla, whose return to life as a human woman marked the end of the spin-off's first season. Acting as a narrative center of the second year, Darla's relationship with Angel is revealed as a complex one somewhere between mother and lover. Strangely, after becoming a vampire again when Drusilla sires her dying, syphilitic body, Darla becomes pregnant with Angel's child during a night of sex after which he rejects her brutally and with finality. Interestingly, shortly before becoming a vampire again, the dying human Darla tells Wolfram & Hart attorney Lindsay "I can feel this body dying, Lindsey. It's being eaten away by this thing inside of it" ("Darla," A2007). The ambiguity of this moment allows for a reading in which she refers not to the syphilis killing her, nor to the soul she only recently reacquired, but to life itself. Read this way, given the events of the next season, the scene acts as foreshadowing of the "thing inside" which

does kill her, the infant Connor. When Darla returns at the beginning of *Angel's* third season, she is hugely pregnant, an obscene possibility what came about at least partially as the result of a crass joke by writer and producer Tim Minear who, when asked what the writers should do to open the third year, asked Joss Whedon if they could bring back "something in Darla's box" (DVD commentary, "Lullaby," A3009). The rather vulgar objectification aside, the idea that her body acts as a conduit for story purposes posits her body as vessel, and the narrative arc creates her as a polluted vessel, one who must die to give birth to innocence because, as the character Wesley puts it, she is not "a life-giving vessel. She cannot do what must be done in order to bring a baby to term" ("Lullaby," A3009). While pregnant, Darla shares the soul of the fetus, a figuration which both supports an anti-abortionist reading of life beginning at conception and which figures her as incomplete, as her moral accountability must be acquired from a fetus, whose self is more complete in utero than is hers after more than four centuries. Her undead body cannot give birth, however, and so in order to save the infant she stakes herself, an act of self-sacrifice so complete it literally destroys her and, unlike her previous deaths, from this one she does not return to life. Calling Connor "the one good thing, the only good thing" she and Angel did together, she stakes herself because when she ceases to share a soul with Connor, she will no longer be able to "love" him ("Lullaby," A3009). Here, maternal love figures as self-sacrifice to an impressively literal extent.

[24] It seems to some extent that sacrifice of self and one's ambitions read as moral maturity in the Buffyverse—but is that only true for women in the Buffyverse, or for all of us? Cordelia, as Hills & Williams note, faces peril constantly, especially subject to abjection via rape and demonic spawn (206). It is interesting, too, that Darla's sacrifice quite literally sires Cordelia's though the vector of Connor, Darla's son and father of Cordelia's offspring. While some might claim that because neither birth shows the bloodiness, there's not a clear link to the typical horror use of abjection, but Darla's ashy death by suicidal penetrating wound and Cordelia's belly absorbing the blood of an innocent murder victim bring the literal body abjection back into frame. Further, while television rules and producer choice shift the imagery, death is the culmination and ultimate expression of the sacrificial maternal abjection, as the inside/outside binary of the body compromised by birth lends itself to the episode title "Inside Out" (A4017), highlighting the liminality and disruption of this moment (Hills & Williams 206). That the character enters a coma and then ultimately dies as a result of the birth only underscores the ways in which the show posits maternity as an erasure and self-sacrifice. Additionally, the show's projection of this sacrificial maternal body onto the body of Charisma Carpenter, using her real-life pregnancy, extends the abjection beyond the frame onto the body of the actress. As the actor's body changes, the character audience know and expect erodes, leaving an increasingly "crazy pregnant lady" ("Orpheus," A4015). Interestingly, this escaping of the frame seems to extend even to writers' readings of the show, as when critic Ian Shuttleworth cites Carpenter's pregnancy as the cause for the show's weaknesses in its fourth season, blaming the "(literally) growing biological demands made on the actress" (251) for the show's failure to present a coherent and compelling story. This aligning of maternity and female biology with failure and lack furthers the abjection, and mimics the logic of the glass ceiling, which denies women access to corporate and other structural power by treating the potential for maternity as a sure sign of female weakness and inability to sustain career focus. The culmination of Cordelia's pregnancy leaves her in a coma, while the culmination of Carpenter's leaves her unemployed, written out of a series after four years and out of a character after seven, seemingly purely due to becoming pregnant without producer permission.

[25] At the moment of empowerment in the series finale, the only people the audience sees receiving the slayer power are girls ("Chosen," B7022), and twenty-year-old Kennedy has voiced concerns that she may be too old to be a slayer. What about all the potential slayers Buffy's age and older? One of the consequences of the show's narrative structure and writers' choices during its run is that there's no room left to imagine adult women being similarly empowered by

this moment. The disidentifications with and erasures of adult women, failure of female communities, and refusal to address women's bodies other than as abjected does not necessarily undermine the show's, producers', or audience members' feminism. This essay's title, drawn from the episode "Band Candy" (B3006), provide a frame in which to understand our point: in dialogue between Joyce and Buffy, each uses the phrase "and yet" to acknowledge the limitations Buffy faces—limitations imposed by the authority of first Principal Snyder (who orders her to sell candy for the band despite not being *in* the band) and then Joyce (who calls herself the "best" mom, but refuses to let Buffy drive). The phrase "and yet" cuts both ways—it signals a recognition of these limits, but it also ironically concedes that these limits remain unchallenged on any level but the rhetorical. We contend that the show similarly addresses some of the problems of feminism and female empowerment—by acknowledging at least some of the challenges, tipping a wink to the show's own limitations, and ultimately letting them stand. These problems are not limited to mass culture, commodity culture, or any other facet of contemporary life. While this show does not represent a perfectly applicable message of real-world empowerment, it does concern itself with the issues and attempt to engage with those issues in productive ways. And yet, its interventions leave much unaddressed while also creating all new problems of representation and applicability, which critics have too often overlooked in the effort to redeem a show they, understandably, laud for its feminist intentions and witty writing. Perhaps, then, the best message to take from this is that, like slaying the forces of evil, feminism's work is never done.

Notes

[1] The mobilization of embodiment as evidence against female subjectivity, and therefore humanity, demands further scrutiny. A discussion of female embodiment as it structures both the Buffyverse and the critiques of it appears below.

[2] For more on the unmaking of Jenny Calendar, Sheila Rosenberg's parenting failures, and several of the problematic portrayals of other adult women, see J. P. Williams's excellent essay "Choosing Your Own Mother: Mother/Daughter Conflicts in *Buffy*."

[3] For more on the show's references to and reliance upon Victorian degeneracy rhetoric, see Laura Diehl's "Why Drusilla's More Interesting than Buffy," especially paragraphs 6-8.

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