



The Many Faces of Buffy

An Analysis of the Disharmonious Visual Representations
of Buffy Summers in Primary and Secondary Texts

"Sarah has a very open quality to her face, and to her acting. She brings you in, which is the mark of a great television star. So that's why she turned out to be perfect for it." ¹

— Joss Whedon

"You've already met Buffy. She's beautiful, with a lion's heart and the face of an angel." ²

—"Storyteller"

"The One and Only, the Original, Accept No Substitutes Slayer"

Consider Sherryl Vint's dilemma in "Killing us Softly?" A Feminist Search for the "Real" Buffy:

"As a trained literary critic, I think of myself as a sophisticated reader of culture, able to distinguish between Buffy and Sarah Michelle Gellar. However, when I looked at a Buffy comic book [...] I discovered a slim girl wearing blue jeans and a purple sweater [whose] medium brown hair falls in a curve to her shoulders. In the final close-up frame, the girl is labeled "the slayer" by the text as she lifts her sunglasses to reveal her face. It is an attractive, heart-shaped comic book heroine face, but it is clearly not an attempt to present Sarah Michelle Gellar in comic book form. My immediate response to this image was that it was not the "real" Buffy because the character looked wrong. Clearly, by "wrong" I meant, "not like Sarah Michelle Gellar." My response to this text privileged the visual, just as my questions about the tension between secondary texts and the primary text privileges the consequences of the visual image over the written text."³



By following Vint's precedent of female image analysis, this guide will address this intertextual tension by attempting to answer the following questions:

What relationship does Buffy have to Sarah Michelle Gellar? Are they physically identical, or is Gellar an approximation of a fictional but fully-formed and different Buffy?

Are the Comic Book Buffy and the Television Buffy the same person? If so, how does one reconcile the fact that they are often visually dissimilar?



How does the comic book format affect the presentation of Buffy? What do illustrators change about this format to accommodate either themselves or the text?

And finally...

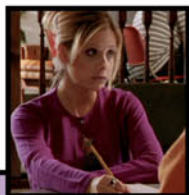
How much does an illustrator author?

"The seizing is sort of inevitable..."

Attempting to analyze the comic books alongside the television series without establishing the former's relationship with the latter would be an exercise in futility, so please enjoy this brief introduction on the textual hierarchy this analysis will be employing.



LICENSING
DEMONS?



Primary Texts

This is the meat of the franchise: seven seasons of the original television series and five seasons of its spin-off series.

They are defined by being licensed by parent company 20th Century Fox, endorsed by series creator Joss Whedon, and containing input from core secondary authors, including regular directors, writers, actors, designers, and crewmembers.

Among both fans and scholars, this text has historically been given the right of way when in conflict with secondary texts.



Secondary Texts

These are supplements to the primary texts, and include licensed "official" texts that may or may not fit into the "canon" defined by the primary text.

Examples include the comic books, trade paperback novels, posters, DVD menus, and packaging.

While these products have been licensed and officially endorsed by the production company and/or series creator at some point, they lack input from some secondary authors and thus are considered non-primary. At intersections, they historically yield to the primary text.



Unofficial Texts

These murky waters are filled with texts generated by third parties that share a role in the author-audience feedback loop.

Neither licensed, nor endorsed, nor officially recognized, these materials cannot be discounted as they have the power to inform the audience's interpretation of the series and the creators' understanding of their own creations.

This category includes forum discussions, convention panels, fan fiction, fan art, parodies—even the enduring classic *Buffy the Vampire Layer*.

There's no shortage of conflict within these texts, but we're going to limit our focus to one very narrow window of disagreement. Examining the physical representation of Buffy Summers in the primary text of the television series and the secondary text of the comic books yields a multitude of women, all of whom look *very* different.



Who is the "real" Buffy? What does she look like? How is her identity shaped by her appearance, and by the secondary authors who determine it?

"Can't you just look into my eyes and be all intuitive?"

AN ILLUSTRATED DECONSTRUCTION OF BUFFY
How artists use (or don't use) the traits of Sarah Michelle Gellar, her illustrators, and our culture...

Now that we have defined the terms of our search, let's start our inquiry by exploring the impact that Gellar has on illustrated conceptions of Buffy.

Gellar Upon Show's Conclusion

Age: 28

Estimated weight: 95lbs

Estimated Chest: 32B

Hair Color: Blonde

Gellar Upon Casting⁴

Age: 20

Estimated weight: 115lbs *

Height: 160cm (5'2')

Eyes: Green

Estimated Chest: 34B

Hair Color: Light Brown



* A note on how I've arrived at these estimates can be found after the endnotes.



Like Bette Davis and Sophia Loren, Sarah Michelle Gellar's eye shape is distinctive enough to be recognized outside the context of her face; in fact, UPN based its entire sixth-season marketing campaign around their recognizability.

Her lower lids have a distinctively low arch, making her eyes appear very round. Her upper eyelids are barely visible. Her eyebrows are very straight, and very low towards her upper lids; they are also shorter than the average brow. Overall Gellar's eyes are large and expressive, and she emotes very effectively with them.

In character art, large eyes are usually reserved for very young or very vulnerable characters. Gellar's unique eyes are quite large, but their closeness to her brows also takes up less space than is normal. This enables her to be simultaneously child-like and cute while her face retains more serious "adult" proportions.

Compare Gellar's eyes to Charisma Carpenter's



Sarah Michelle Gellar's eyes are green, but that's not always the case with Buffy. In the comics, her eyes are often blue; the original character designs for a Buffy Animated Series also depicted a blue-eyed Buffy, though the mock-up switched them back to green. Does this reveal an assumption on the part of the artists, or an intentional change to make Buffy fulfill the perfect model of a "blond haired, blue eyed" white woman? Does a Buffy that does not look identical to Gellar suggest that Gellar is an imperfect likeness to Buffy?



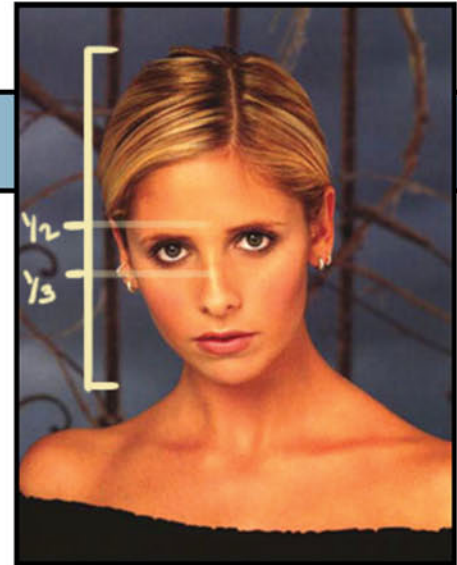
"You know...that THING on her FACE?"



In character artwork, the older a character is, the higher their features tend to sit on their face. For adults, the eyes tend to sit exactly on the half way mark; for adolescents and teens, that number is closer to a third. Again, Gellar as Buffy captures an adolescent quality—her face splits the difference.

So her eyes are big and rounded—so what? Illustrators discovered long ago that large, rounded eyes stimulate our nurturing instincts. Babies, puppies, even Astroboy: we're biologically hard-wired to want to love 'em.⁵

Observe the difference when her eyes are moved up to the halfway mark on her face. It loses some of its "cuteness" and her expression seems more serious. This is a facial proportion more typical of an adult.



"I've got Sarah Michelle Gellar down pretty well and I've got Xander (Nicholas Brendon) down. Dawn (Michelle Trachtenberg) is presently the one that's giving me some trouble. She has such a pretty face and is so simply beautiful. There's not a distinctive characteristic like an eye-patch or like with Sarah Michelle Gellar, her nose."⁶

— Georges Jeanty, primary artist on Buffy's "Season Eight" Comics

A blue-eyed Buffy versus a green-eyed Buffy could represent an artistic choice, but it could also simply be a mistake. Eyes can seem to shift color based on light and what color the person is wearing, and it's easy to mistake eye color—doubly easy, perhaps, through a television screen.

Sarah Michelle Gellar's nose represents a much more concrete point of comparison between the primary and secondary texts. Gellar's nose is very unique because it is very noticeably crooked. A secondary text image of Buffy that emphasizes this trait is direct evidence that one secondary author (the illustrator) has chosen to yield to another secondary author (Gellar). Conversely, a secondary text Buffy with a perfectly shaped nose shows that the illustrator has chosen to ignore at least part of Gellar's physicality.



"What are you fighting for, minuscule blonde one?"



Look closely at this panel, for this Buffy has two significant differences from Sarah Michelle Gellar's Buffy. The color of her eyelashes seems to imply that Buffy not only does not wear mascara, but also is a natural blonde.

Neither of these things are true of Gellar's Buffy.



EVEN IN COMICS WITH A "REALISTIC" STYLE, BUFFY'S HAIR FALLS SAFELY ON THE YELLOW SIDE OF BLONDE.

Is Buffy, unlike Gellar, a natural blonde? Consider how often Spike's bloneness is described as artificial—Spike is called "Captain Peroxide" and Glory is taunted as being the god of "bad home perms."⁷⁻⁸ Yet never once, in my research or my casual viewing, have I run across any in-text accusations that Buffy colors or chemically alters her hair, despite its very visible changes.



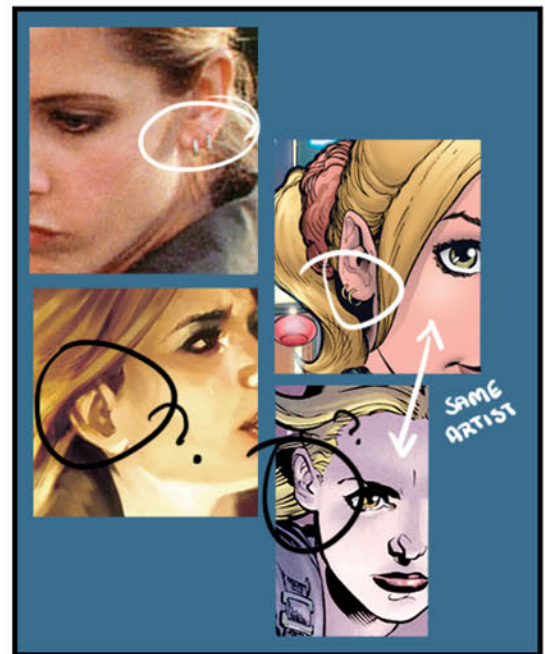
Let's explore other "altered" aspects of Buffy's body.

As you have probably noticed, Gellar has multiple ear piercings. Whether they are present or not in comic book images seems to be a toss-up. This may seem inconsequential, but ask yourself what our culture's view of body piercings are, and then contemplate if the vanished earrings could feasibly be an artist's willful omission.

David Boreanaz's existing tattoos were incorporated into the character history of Angel, but the same was not true for Buffy. The only tattoo Buffy ever had was given to her by Ethan Rayne, and was removed swiftly.⁹ Comic book images of Buffy's nude back and legs reveal that she does not have the tattoos that Gellar does. Again: "What is the significance of tattoos versus no tattoos? What is inherently un-Buffy-like about them?"



I would argue that piercings and tattoos are associated with bad judgment, for they "mar" a naturally perfect body, which Buffy has been given by most illustrators.



"She's pretty, Angel... a little skinny..."

It's not just Sarah Michelle Gellar's hair that changes. Her weight changes considerably through the run of the television show.

Gellar's first-season body still has so-called "baby fat," particularly in the face. Some weight loss can be expected as a young woman ages. Gellar's hectic schedule, plus her stunt-heavy role as Buffy, also likely contributed to significant weight loss. But overall Gellar appears to have dropped around 10% of her total body weight during the course of the show, and an actress in such an image-conscious industry would hardly do this unintentionally. Changing standards of beauty, the addition of film work, and other pressures could very well be equally responsible.

Age
20



Age
27



Notice the roundness of Gellar's face in season one versus season seven.

Now compare the width of her upper arms, and the size/placement of her breasts.

As a self-identified feminist, it makes me squeamish to scrutinize an actress's body so closely, but Buffy's extremely feminine appearance and mannerisms are the core of many feminist challenges of Buffy the Vampire Slayer.

"Cultural critique that juxtaposes style and substance in an hierarchical and mutually exclusive relation will always end up stuck with an outmoded and impossible model of feminist agency. If Buffy's form and Buffy's content are upheld as distinct and incompatible categories, then the inexorable logic of the binary will dictate, with awful irony, that Buffy cannot be a feminist because she has cleavage."

"I'm Buffy and You're ... History': The Postmodern Politics of Buffy the Vampire Slayer" ¹⁰

"How can women be as thin as we are? We have personal trainers to work us out. We have specially prepared meals."

"I don't smoke, don't drink much, and go to the gym five times a week. I live a healthy lifestyle and feel great. I can run a marathon, you know."

"I like food. I like eating. And I don't want to deprive myself of good food."

"I have no idea what my body feels like when it's not bruised, sore or stiff..." ¹¹

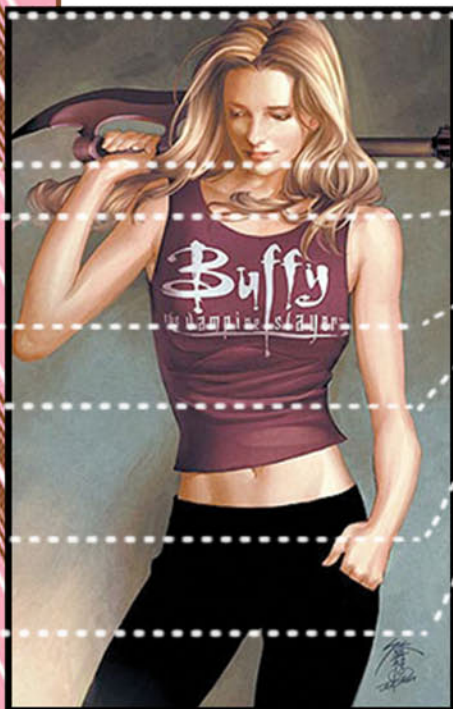
GELLAR'S PHYSICAL ACTIVITIES:

Kickboxing
Basic street fighting
Cardio/circuit cross-training
Trampoline work
Ice-skating
Water-skiing

Tae Kwon Do
Gymnastics
Pilates
Yoga
Rollerblading
Cliff-diving ¹²

Gellar's attitude towards athleticism could hardly be described as recreational. She almost achieved the level of a brown belt in Tae Kwon Do, and was ranked third in the New York State regional championships for ice-skating.¹³ Her intensity in this field is an important facet of her contribution to the authorship of Buffy.





Comparing these two iconic images, we see the following discrepancies between one example of a secondary text Buffy and the primary text Buffy:

Much broader shoulders
Much thinner hips
Much longer torso
Larger breasts
Thinner waist

Also worth noting are the title stamped across her chest (and thus drawing significant attention there) and the exposed midriff, something the primary text Buffy displayed rarely, especially so in later seasons.

Follow the lines from Gellar to Jo Chen's painting of Buffy, and you'll see the discrepancies quite clearly. If you look carefully, you'll see that in the first image, Buffy's hips are smaller than her breastbone. This is almost unheard-of in adult human females.

One fan's reaction to this image:

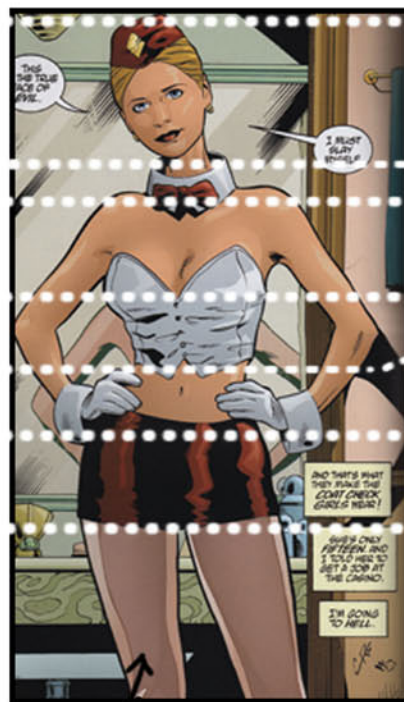
"This girl doesn't look like Sarah Michelle Gellar. Totally skinny, thin arms. Ok I get it - Catwalk-Buffy. Yeah Right. Great. Anorexic Buffy. Superb. Totally unnatural and that's what 99% of Buffy was for me - a down to earth girl with her down to earth friends doing things totally out of this world on a daily basis without being able to tell anyone about it."

— "Bash," www.tvsquad.com ¹⁴

Let's take the exact same image and compare it to a different comic book image by a different artist.

Slightly smaller head
Matching shoulders
Same size bust
Same size hips
Same general proportions
Overall very accurate physical likeness
(...Except for the blue eyes)

This is an excellent example of two things. First of all, different artists are like different staff writers; they have their own styles and their own interpretations. Secondly, the previous image was a cover; this one is a panel. This certainly furthers the theory that exaggerated physical attributes are a marketing ploy. (More on this later.)



THE OUTFIT IS PLOT-RELATED.

Keep in mind that Primary Buffy's shirt isn't skin-tight, nor is she revealing her midriff. Her waist may look wider than it actually is.



"Truth is, I thought you'd be taller, or bigger muscles and all that."

"Uh, traditionally, one wears something over this."
—"First Date"

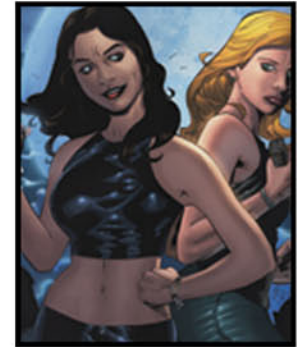


Comic books that were released earlier seem to portray a "buffer" Buffy. There could be several reasons: artist's interpretations of the textual "strength" of a slayer; a muscular reflection of Gellar's thicker season one/two body; and shifting trends in both comic books and image culture.

Buffy has always been notably bustier than her live-action counterpart, who has small-to-average sized breasts. Even when not enlarged, they are often visually enhanced by thick black lines, prominent positioning, or tight clothing. Large breasts may be a ploy to get teenaged boys to prefer Buffy over such busty blonde rivals as Super Girl and Power Girl; comic books are a notoriously boy-powered medium. (More on this subject later.)



Despite the fact that Gellar is 3-4 inches shorter than Dushku—AND the fact that she is in the background, and should thus appear smaller—Buffy is depicted as being the same height as Faith.¹⁵



Marsters is 5'10".¹⁶ Blucas is 6'2".¹⁷ Is Buffy standing on an apple box? Because both of these compositions are impossible for the 5'2" Gellar.

Observe the black lines along the arm: indicative of hard muscle. Look at the way that her jeans bulge around her leg muscles. Do you have tickets to this gun show?



Use your imagination to take the "Buffy" title off and the stake out of her hand, and ask yourself: is this recognizably Buffy? If it isn't, then where did this Buffy come from? If it is, how do you reconcile the fact that these two women look nothing alike?

NOTE HER WAIST.



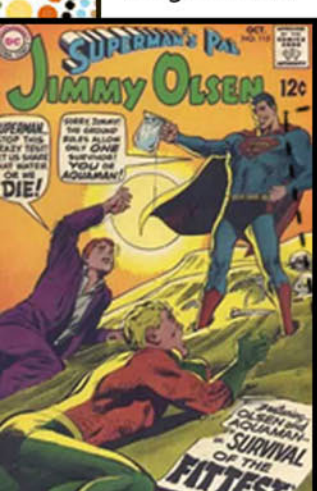
While Gellar is incredibly thin, she is also certainly athletic. Yet her body is not "beefy"—she has very lean muscle, giving her body an overall appearance of youth and firmness without coming off as a female body-builder. Buffy, on the other hand, is sometimes (again, especially in earlier comics) less waif and more She-Hulk.

"It's not like in the comics."

Having explored the primary text image of Buffy as Sarah Michelle Gellar authors her, let's examine some secondary text images of Buffy and how the comic book format affects representations of her.

Cover artwork was once a comic's only—ONLY—marketing tool. Cover artists resorted to gimmicks to pull readers in. Superman was famous for depicting bafflingly absurd situations intended to make a potential buyer curious; other comics display their most appealing characters for their target demographic in their most appealing context (often outrageously proportioned female superheroes in tight outfits, surrounded by sexually suggestive imagery or posed in a sexually explicit manner).

Buffy cover artwork has employed both of these techniques. However, it should be noted that approaches to cover artwork are in the middle of a transition period. The rise of the "Quality" graphic novel, as well as increased availability of publishing information for the consumer, has begun to shift cover artwork towards the more artistic. Cover artists are still paid big bucks to pull readers in, but the level of artwork they must create can no longer rely exclusively on gimmicks.



Actor likenesses are strong throughout most Buffy comics, but they are overwhelming on covers. The star power of such actresses as Sarah Michelle Gellar, Eliza Dushku, and Alyson Hannigan is still being used as a marketing tool. But while their faces may be intact, their bodies are often exaggerated in their "perfection," and they often appear to have misplaced major articles of clothing on their way from the small screen to the comic book cover.



If you are at all tempted to label Buffy's covers as being too exploitative or even trashy, slow down. Here are some examples – for comparison's sake – of the non-Buffy mainstream blonde superheroines that Buffy comics compete directly with:

Powergirl

Ms. Marvel

Supergirl

Black Canary

White Queen



"Sometimes a cigar is just a cigar..."

(But that's CLEARLY no cigar.)

"It's [really] not like in the comics."

A Brief Note on Guest Art

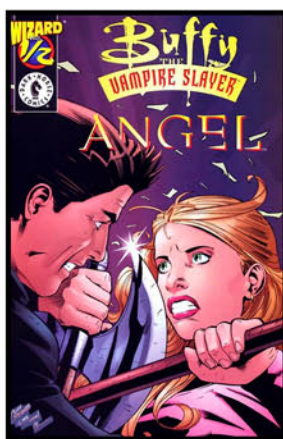
Guest Artwork is indistinct from "fanart" except in that (A) it is done by industry professionals and (B) it is published, either by the illustrator or the publishers of the subject. Sometimes, as in the sexually playful "Buffy vs. Vampirella," this is done lovingly, as a gesture of goodwill between artists or an expression of admiration. Other times, Buffy's fighting the Master in gogo-boots and lacy red under-pants. This artwork is distinctly non-canon.

AMUSING

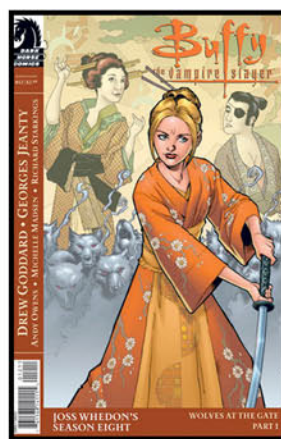


Interior panels are a completely different animal. They function as the "bread and butter" of the comic itself: the cover or the title lures them in, and the interior artwork must now tell a story good enough to bring them back for another volume.

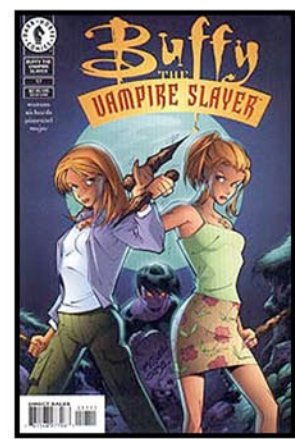
Let's look at samples of three prolific Buffy pencilers: Cliff Richards, Georges Jeanty, and Jeff Matsuda. You'll find examples of their interpretation of Buffy, alongside other feminine images from their careers. This is meant to show the type of female body the artist enjoys drawing, and how they either alter or don't alter that image to fit Buffy.



Cliff Richards
"Viva Las Buffy"
"Slayer Interrupted"
"Anywhere But Here"



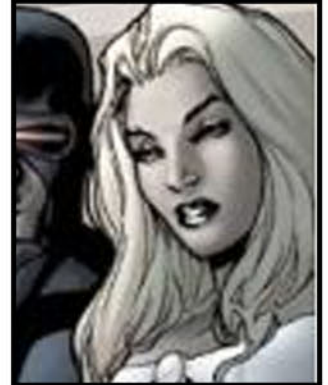
Georges Jeanty
"Time of Your Life"
"No Future for You"
"Wolves at the Gate"



Jeff Matsuda
"Tales of the Slayers"
"Reunion"
"Angel" Miniseries



Cliff Richards's Buffy is definitely influenced by Sarah Michelle Gellar, as you can see by the large eyes, deeply curved lower eyelid, and multiple piercings. His drawing of Huntress shows a preference for curvier bodies, but interestingly Huntress's face has a lot in common with Buffy's. The shape and placement of the lips, the size and shape of the eyes, and the rounded face shape are all very similar. Richards pays attention to the nuances of Sarah Michelle Gellar's body and face, and makes a clear attempt to integrate her features into his rendition of Buffy; but he also does not visibly alter or compromise his personal style in doing so.

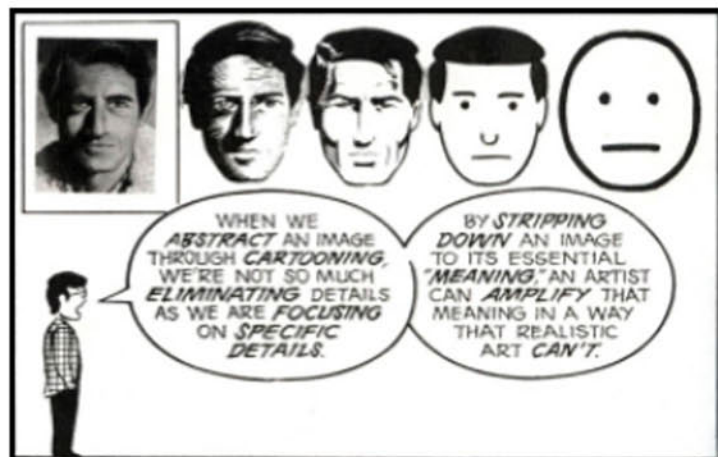


Compare these sets of images and note that unlike Richard, Jeanty completely alters his normal style for Buffy. The two images on the right show women who are perfectly symmetrical, muscular, buxom: a more typical mainstream comic book heroine. The two images on the left demonstrate a dedication to capturing actor likenesses and portraying their bodies with realistic and natural proportions. He has altered his style significantly to be faithful to the primary source Buffy. Jeanty has been interviewed extensively on his methods. (More on this later.)



Amazingly, all five of these Buffies are by the same artist. This is an example of an artist whose style is incredibly fluid: Buffy's look changes depending on the tone of the story. She is quirky and cartoony in the prologue for "Tales of the Slayers," and more realistic (though still heavily stylized) in the darker "Reunion." Jeff Matsuda's artwork is as versatile as Buffy herself, though Gellar seems to have been ignored as source material: with their sharp blue eyes, angular faces, and large breasts, none of them bear her more than a passing resemblance.

"What is the secret of the icon we call 'the cartoon?'"



So why do some artists feel compelled to portray Buffy in secondary texts with a great deal of realism? Why do other artists choose to whittle down Sarah Michelle Gellar's features to the point of minimal resemblance?

Scott McCloud's "Understanding Comics" purports that because we process the faces of other people with vivid detail, we will process any highly detailed drawing as an "other." Conversely, the simpler the image the more closely it resembles our mind's understanding of our own features, making a cartoonish non-realistic image easier for us to project ourselves upon.¹⁸



What makes the secondary texts worthy of close study are the truly revealing features that author has selected as part of Buffy's "essential meaning." For some illustrators, the icons of big blue eyes and large rounded breasts are part of Buffy's essential meaning. For others, blondness and an athletic build are her essential meaning. For still others, it's a slightly crooked nose and rounded lower eyelids. The illustrated image of Buffy forces the reader to either agree with these "essential" features and accept the text, or preference other features as being "more essential" and reject the text.

Interestingly, this conflict further facilitates the active author/audience feedback loop that Buffy the Vampire Slayer (the TV show) so famously employs.

A Step Towards Perfect Authorship?

Joss Whedon is undoubtedly the godhead of the Buffyverse, yet he is nowhere near a "perfect author." A script penned by Whedon must be vetted by the network, reigned in for budget, re-arranged for scheduling conflicts, relocated for weather and set availability, and then interpreted first by the art team, then the electrical team, then the actors, then the director of photography, then the editor, then the sound mixer... There are literally dozens—if not hundreds—of people contributing to the episode before it is finished.

"For years now, when I have thought of the art of a television series, I have thought of the master builder of a cathedral and his workers: a cathedral is a creation which is certainly accepted as art, but which was worked on by many differing people over many years (far more than the seven seasons of Buffy). ... Buffy itself... has taught me to envision the interaction in a much livelier and less one-way, top-down fashion."¹⁹

—Rhonda Wilcox, "Why Buffy Matters"

For a secondary text like a comic book, much of the middle-men are cut out. Actors, directors, cinematographers, camera operators, wardrobe, makeup, set designers, editors, and producers are all collapsed into one author, one penciler, one inker, and one colorist (occasionally the same person). Add in a cover artist, a publisher, the television network, and the creator, and you are down to less than a dozen people creating a finished text. The most powerful players are the author and the penciler. The author, as we have heard, is often Whedon himself. This leaves one man or woman to take Buffy from a storyboarded sketch to a nearly finished product. Though not perfect authorship, it is miles closer.

The comic book medium can be an extremely freeing form for Buffy the Vampire Slayer. The Season Eight comics in particular have brought Buffy to a new headquarters at a Scottish castle, seen her parachuting out of a helicopter, battling new villains while flying through the air—things that would never work in a television format.²⁰ Eliminating the constraints of budget, technology, safety, and even the laws of physics is the same as eliminating lines and shadows on a face: the simpler the process is made, the closer it comes to revealing its essential meaning.

Another way to look at it: if Oz's television werewolf costume sometimes excites titters of laughter due to the constraints of actors, wardrobe, and budgeting, while his comic book werewolf form is actually quite alarming, which then better serves the text that demands he look terrifying?



IN THIS EXAMPLE,
FORTUNE FAVORS
THE 2-D.



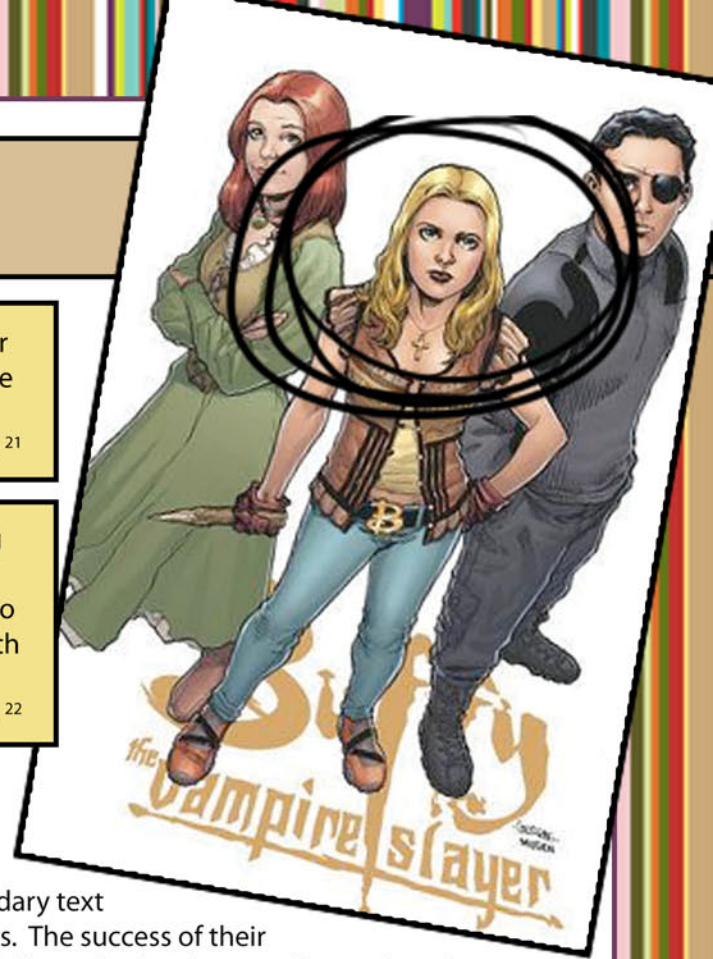
Conclusions

"Since TV and comics are different kinds of media, sometimes the character is too real, and it doesn't work as well in the comics as in the TV show, so we have to manipulate some details a little."

— Cliff Richards ²¹

"I really sweat over [actor likenesses], but Joss Whedon told me something that really set me on the right path. He said he didn't want the characters to look like photographs and have that stiffness. He said I don't want you to draw Sarah Michelle Gellar, I want you to draw Buffy. Which just clicked with me. I still struggle, but not as much."

— Georges Jeanty ²²



No three-dimensional actor can ever be captured perfectly by a two-dimensional illustration, and Sarah Michelle Gellar is no exception. A secondary text Buffy will never be physically identical to the primary text Buffy. How the authors of the secondary text approach this inevitability varies, and thus produces varied results. The success of their approach is determined by the audience's own expectations of Buffy—whether they are disappointed by a less-than-perfect likeness, or feel disconnected from the rigidity of portraiture.

Just as Sarah Michelle Gellar posing provocatively in Maxim could be seen as a patriarchal warp on Buffy's ostensibly feminist foundation, Comic Book Buffy can be (and has been) hijacked by illustrators who depict her, indulgently, in their own uninfluenced style. However, I find this to be an overall boon to the reader rather than a detriment. These images assist in developing a critical eye while still serving the most basic function of storytelling.

(Re)Consider Sherryl Vint's

"Killing us Softly"? A Feminist Search for the "Real" Buffy:

"...the multiple and contradictory readings of Buffy are also a place where young women might begin to develop a critical consciousness about the construction of female identity and sexuality. Buffy may be a way to make feminism fun: a critical interrogation of the disparity between the magazines' readings of Buffy and their own is a way for young women to recognize the issues they will face as women in patriarchal culture."

I am inclined to agree with Vint's conclusions regarding a viewer's role in discerning dueling images. The audience is either savvy enough to understand what a large-breasted, too-leggy blonde girl is doing on the cover of Buffy, or should be exposed to the conflicting images in hopes of developing that skill. We are used to reading illustrations symbolically, and our brains do not shut down when confounded by a green-eyed Buffy and her Bizarro-land blue-eyed counterpart. Secondary authors aren't ignoring Gellar's contribution to the character. They are simply choosing not to preference the realism, and in doing so are minimizing the "otherness" of Buffy.

Even when she fails to capture Gellar's likeness, Comic Book Buffy's illustrated face still defines what works about Gellar's face for Buffy: a quirky, pretty, expressive face that straddles the line between adulthood and adolescence with both charisma and gravitas. This, rather than bloneness or thinness or green eyes or pierced ears, is what I find to be the essential meaning of Buffy's physical identity.

"The comics creator asks us to join in a silent dance of the seen and the unseen. The visible and the invisible. This dance is unique to comics. No other art form gives so much to its audience while asking so much from them as well. This is why I think it's a mistake to see comics as a mere hybrid of the graphic arts and prose fiction. What happens between these panels is a kind of magic only comics can create."

—Scott McCloud, "Understanding Comics"

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A Note on Body Estimations

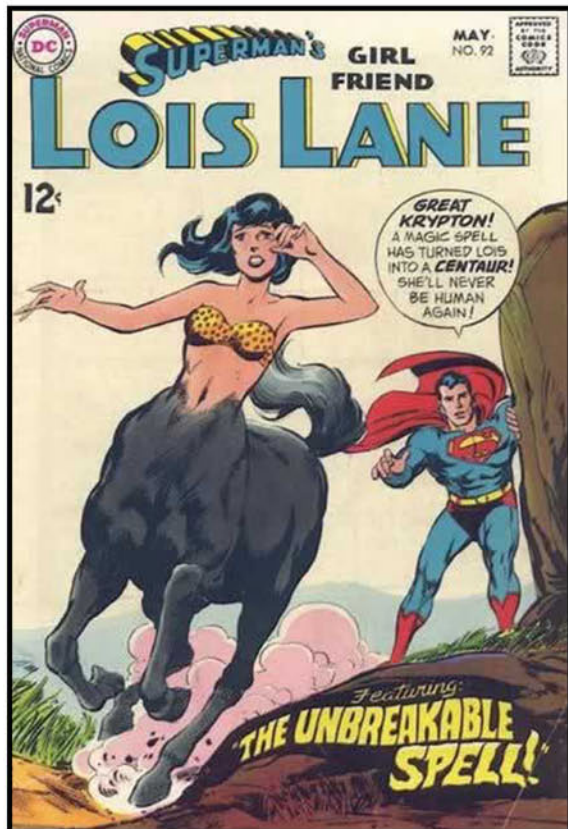
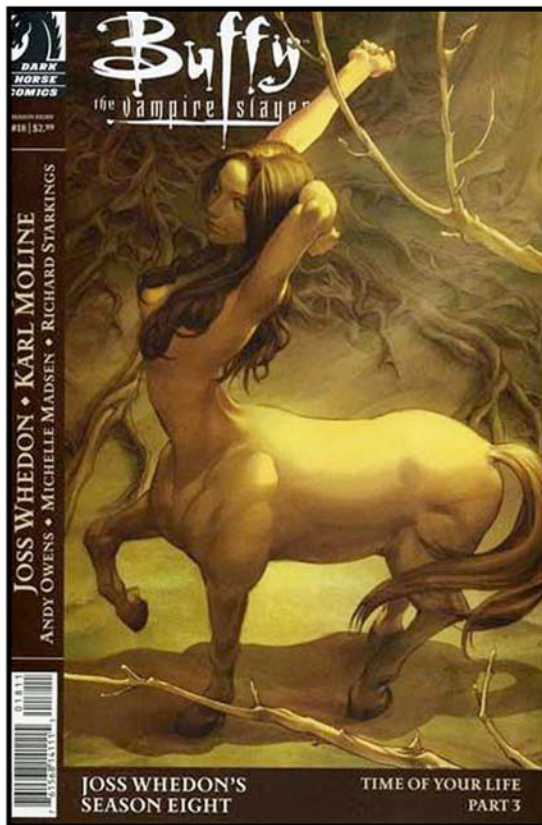
In the interest of full disclosure, I'd like to be transparent about how I've arrived at my weight and body measurements figures. Naturally it's impossible to find solid data detailing how an actress's body changes over the course of eight years; actors are often reticent regarding such statistics, and a young woman's body weight can fluctuate fairly substantially on a day-to-day basis anyway. So I had to estimate.

I am loathe to include celebrity gossip next to shining examples of academia in my bibliography, but sometimes one must make a deal with the devil. I first estimated independently, using my experience as an artist (and as a 22 year old, 120lbs female) to observe and gauge the changes in Gellar's body. In particular, I noted changes in the areas where slender women tend to hold subcutaneous fat: the face, upper arms, thighs, and breasts. I then checked multiple celebrity weight databases (which exist, to my horror) and found that my estimates closely matched their own, leading me to believe my estimates were reasonable.

Do I wish there was a better, more empirical way to obtain these figures? Of course. And I would love to revisit these sections if new data does present itself. In the meantime, I do feel confident that they are reasonable estimates for the purposes of the arguments this essay has sought to make.

*"This time I'm ready for you. No 'F' for Xander today.
This baby's my ticket to a sweet D-minus!"*

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