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"First Word 'Jail,' Second Word 'Bait'": Adolescent Sexuality, Feminist Theories, and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

Wesley: "And you teach psychology?"
Cordelia: "I take psychology."
Giles: "She's a student."
Cordelia, "It's about time we got some fresh blood around here."
Wesley: "Fresh . . . yes . . . [Cordelia exits.] My, she's cheeky, isn't she?"
Faith: "Uh, first word 'jail,' second word 'bait.'"
"Consequences" (3015)

Buffy: "There's Oz over there. What are we thinking, sparkage?"
Willow: "He's nice. I like his hands."
Buffy: "Mm. Fixation on insignificant details is a definite crush sign."
Willow: "Oh, I don't know, though. He is a senior."
Buffy: "You think he's too old 'cause he's a senior? Please, my boyfriend had a bicentennial."
Willow: "That's true."
"Surprise" (2013)

I. Introduction

[1] A number of articles have debated whether or not Buffy Summers is a feminist heroine (e.g., Siemann, Pender, Daugherty, Playdon), and have praised the show for its realistic portrayal of the problems of growing up and sexually maturing (e.g., Vint, Wilcox, Moss, Zacharek, Daugherty. See also Noxon and Whedon commentaries on Season 2 DVD, Petrie on Season 3 DVD, and Espenson on Season 4 DVD). None, however, has engaged with the ways in which seemingly conflicting feminist theories about teen sexuality can all be at play simultaneously in the series.*

[2] In the episodes before the main characters, particularly Buffy, turn 18 (i.e., 3012 "Helpless"), any sexual activity they engage in is theoretically illegal--it is statutory rape. Statutory rape laws differ across the states: each sets an age of consent, generally 16 or 18, and prosecutes sexual intercourse with an unmarried person under that age if one of the parties is a certain number of years older than the other. In California, the age of consent is 18, and one can be prosecuted as a felony-level perpetrator of statutory rape if he or she is 3 years older than the other; he can be prosecuted for a misdemeanor if he is not more than 3 years older.

[3] When reforming statutory rape laws in the 1970s and 1980s, feminists generally split into three camps in their disagreements about adolescent sexuality. In short, liberal feminists sought to restore some agency and formal equality to young women while also retaining the ability to safeguard them from sexual coercion. They lobbied for gender-neutral language, which would treat males and females equally by protecting both as victims, and charging both as perpetrators (the laws until that time charged only males for having sex with underage females); and they lobbied for the age span provisions mandating that the perpetrator be a certain number of years older than the victim, with the assumption that those close in age were probably engaged in sex that was more likely to be consensual (see, e.g., Bienen, Fuentes). Radical feminists argued that for socially constructed reasons, males and females were simply not similarly situated in modern society; a female was always already the less powerful party in a heterosexual relationship. Gender neutral language, they worried, papered over this problem, and age span provisions presumed that males and females close in age are engaged in consensual activity when they may not be (see e.g., MacKinnon, Oberman). Sex radicals, sometimes referred to as pro-sex or libertarian feminists, were on the opposite side of the debate from the radical feminists. They acknowledged that statutory rape laws had a protective function, but were concerned that they punished potentially consensual sex, painted all young people as incapable of making decisions about their own bodies, and sent a message that nonmarital sex and female sexual agency were wrong and harmful (see, e.g., Duggan and Hunter, Rubin).[1]

[4] In this article, I examine the constructions of gender and sexuality on the show (with most emphasis on Buffy herself but also including other major characters) in light of these feminist debates. This analysis illustrates that the different interpretations of adolescent sexuality are not necessarily mutually exclusive but can coexist, and do coexist on *Buffy*.

II. Feminist Theories and Sex at Sunnydale High School

[5] Liberal feminists would assume that underage males and females are vulnerable and might be manipulated into activity that they might feel uncomfortable about or later regret. They would also assume that the larger the age difference, the more potential there would be for a sexual relationship to be unequal and problematic. In "Reptile Boy" (2005), Cordelia says that college guys are "cool," while the college guys of whom she speaks say that they "love high school girls" because they assume that they are naive. Writer David Greenwalt, in his commentary on that episode, describes their going to the frat party and lying about it as a "bad teenage decision." In "I Robot, You Jane" (1008), Buffy warns Willow not to necessarily trust Malcolm, Willow's new online friend to whom she is getting quite attached, but who is in actuality the demon Moloch: "This guy could be anybody. He could be weird, or crazy, or old." And in "Teacher's Pet" (1004), Xander says that he is substitute teacher Miss French's "absolute favorite guy in the universe" while Willow and Buffy express skepticism about her motives, "She's not what she seems." In each of these examples,

the person who is the younger, and the one hoping to be involved with someone older than they, does not see the potential for manipulation that those around them see more clearly.

[6] Radical feminists would assume the same about the potential for manipulation, except that they would stress that the female party is always the more vulnerable. And they would also not assume that an age difference would necessarily matter; a male could manipulate a female even if they were the same age. For instance, in "Beauty and the Beasts" (3004), the gang is worried that Oz may be responsible for mauling deaths; Buffy is concerned that it is Angel, recently returned from a hell dimension. It turns out to be their classmate Pete, who not only is killing strangers but is psychologically and physically abusing his insecure girlfriend Debbie. But she continues to defend him and protect him to her utmost ability: "It's not his fault. It's me. I make him crazy. He does what he does because he loves me too much." The two are in the same class and therefore roughly the same age, but clearly he is manipulating and harming her.

[7] As a second example, Xander has sex with Faith, who is roughly the same age as the others although not in school ("The Zeppo," 3013). While it appears that Faith is the aggressor here, she can be looked at in a different way: as a vulnerable young woman, psychologically or perhaps even physically harmed in past relationships with men, who has learned to use sex as a tool or weapon. When Angel "captures" her in "Consequences" to talk to her about killing deputy mayor Alan Finch, he says he just wants to talk. She replies, "That's what they all say. Then it's, 'Just let me stay the night, I won't try anything.'" When the mayor first shows her the apartment he has rented for her, she is overwhelmed, jumping on the bed like a child ("Doppelgangland," 3016). She then sidles up to him and purrs, "Thanks, sugar daddy" as she puts her arms around him. But he pushes her away, saying that he is a "family man."[2] In this apartment and in her hotel room, she is almost always alone, and constructed as lonely.

[8] Sex radicals would assume that some if not all teens are capable of making rational sexual decisions, and that an age difference in and of itself is not necessarily cause for alarm. Faith may be a young woman who enjoys sex, and doesn't care how she is judged by others for talking about it and pursuing it, "Isn't it weird how slaying always makes you hungry and horny?" ("Faith, Hope, and Trick," 3003). Doug Petrie in the Season 3 overview says, "She gets to do all the things that Buffy would like to do but can't." One could read her behavior in "The Zeppo" as confident and self-assured: "A fight like that and no kill, I'm about ready to pop. . . . just relax . . . I'll steer you around the curves." Xander says later he thought they "had a connection," but as Buffy tells him, "She doesn't take the guys she has a 'connection' with very seriously. They're kind of a big joke to her" ("Consequences," 3015). Faith does appear to be affectionate with Xander for a minute, facing him and watching his face with a smile as he strokes her arm. Then she says, "That was great. I gotta shower" as she pushes him out the door.[3]

[9] Buffy and Willow, as teens, both talk to one another about their decision to have sex, in the contexts of their relationships with Angel and Oz respectively. Both of the males are older than the females, but neither necessarily acts older. For Willow, there seemed to be only positive effects from her first sexual encounter with Oz; it is made clear that it is not his first time and that she worries about this, but it is made similarly clear that Oz's feeling for her are very strong. For Buffy, though, there were negative consequences, discussed below.

III. Buffy in high school, college and beyond

[10] Angel. Buffy's encounter with Angel can be read through each of the lenses of feminist theory discussed above. Buffy is 16, about to turn 17, when she decides to have sex with Angel, who is 240+ ("Surprise"/"Innocence," 2013/2014). Due to the curse put on him by the gypsy relatives of Jenny Calendar, one moment of true happiness will cause him to lose his soul and become the remorseless torturer and killer he once was. This moment apparently occurs sometime during or after his sexual encounter with Buffy.[4]

[11] As Joss Whedon says himself in his commentary on episode 1007 "Angel," in which we discover Angel is a vampire, "He's 100% the wrong guy for Buffy. So naturally she can't get enough of him." She was much younger than him, and that coupled with him being a vampire and she a slayer "of course emphasized the dangers of sexual encounters, especially with an adult" (Wilcox 4). One could argue that while he certainly never pushed her toward sex in an obvious way, his constant presence and his hesitance about becoming involved with her might have made him even more alluring. Her feelings for him blind her and she uses poor judgment where he is concerned. Particularly after he returns from the hell dimension to which she sends him in "Becoming Part 2" (2022), she lies repeatedly to everyone about her whereabouts and about his existence. Willow says as much to her, more constructively than the others, when they confront her in the library, "I feel, that when it comes to Angel, you can't see straight. . . . This is serious. You need help." Giles is harsher: "You've jeopardized the lives of all you hold dear...Sadly, I must remind you that Angel tortured me for hours, for pleasure. . . . You have no respect for me" ("Revelations," 3007).

[12] After their sexual encounter, and his subsequent intentionally cruel treatment of her, she is devastated. What he says to her is what every person fears being said to him or her. "What, I took off. Like I really wanted to stick around after that...You've got a lot to learn about men, kiddo, although I guess you proved that last night. . . . Lighten up. . . . I should have known you wouldn't be able to handle it." When she tells him she loves him, he says with an artificial smile, "Love ya too. I'll call ya" ("Innocence," 2014). Later, he delivers the final verbal blow after physically knocking her to the ground, "You know what the worst part was? Pretending that I loved you." Over the next several episodes, he kills Willow's fish, leaves drawings of Buffy and her mother in the house, lets her mother know they slept together, kills Jenny Calendar and leaves her in Giles' bed, tortures Giles, and kills a number of other people as well. All of these events seem to point toward what the liberal feminists would fear--that the more powerful older person might harm the younger, as well as toward what the radical feminists would fear--that the more powerful male might harm the female.

[13] But one could simultaneously read the same encounter differently, without necessarily saying any of the above was false. These two people felt that they loved each other, and had a steadily-building relationship over the course of more than a year even as they tried to avoid it. Indeed, Angel felt that he loved her from before they met, when Whistler brought him to Los Angeles to see her ("Becoming Part 1," 2021). They worked together, saved each others lives, and trusted each other. The night of their sexual encounter, her seventeenth birthday, he had given her a claddagh ring to symbolize his devotion to her and had instructed her to wear it with the heart pointing toward her: "It means you belong to somebody. Like this." He holds up his own ring to show the heart pointing toward him.

[14] One could also argue that Buffy was particularly mature for her age, given all of her responsibilities as a slayer, and that vampires' personalities do not necessarily reflect their chronological age either. Willow says of Buffy, "She's 16 going on 40" because of the pressure on her, and Leon writes that the "slayers may be chronologically young, but they mature far more rapidly than their peers" (2). At the same time, vampires may not "fit into normal categories of teenager and adult" (Jenkins and Jenkins; Jenkins IV speaking, 13). In another disruption of gender stereotypes, it is Angel who is protesting what is about to happen, just as he protested entering a relationship with her in the first place. "I love you. I try not to but I can't stop . . . maybe we shouldn't." But Buffy silences him: "Don't. Just kiss me." Sex radicals might say of this encounter that her age and gender were immaterial, and that these were two people who were on an equal footing in their relationship, choosing together to engage in sex.

[15] Even after Angel first loses his soul, Giles remains supportive of Buffy, telling her "I know that you loved him. And he's proven on more than one occasion that he loves you." The two repeat that they love each other in "Becoming Part 2" (2022), right before she says "Close your eyes" and kills him. He returns in "Beauty and the Beasts" (3004) and by "Revelations" (3007) they have kissed. Later, in Amends (3010; and in "The Zeppo" 3013, albeit in a more melodramatic style), they again confess their feelings when Angel says, "I want you so badly. I want to take comfort in you, and I know it'll cost me my soul and part of me doesn't care." He asks what there is for him in this world and she replies, "What about me? I love you so much. . . ."

[16] In other words, all of these interpretations can be true at once. Daugherty writes, "Buffy's challenges, struggles, and relationships represent many of the hazards that face all women, especially those who are young and impressionable" (149). Yes, but it is also the case that Buffy is not necessarily always the more vulnerable party because she is younger and female; at some points she is and at others she is not.

[17] What about the decisions Buffy made once she turned 18? In theory and in legal practice, she became an adult--no longer protected by statutory rape laws.

[18] A number of writers commented on Angel's feeding on Buffy in "Graduation Day" 3022 as a representation of sex (e.g., DeKelb-Rittenhouse). Joss Whedon himself notes in the commentary on that episode that it was "one of our thinner metaphors for sex" and was meant to be "erotic." Buffy breaks a pitcher in her hand and kicks over a table as Angel drinks from her. One could read this encounter as something she goaded him into doing by hitting him until he "vamped out"; one could also say that she was not really "asking for it" and that he could have controlled himself. Saving him could be read as a well-thought-out and positive action for a greater good, for he was apparently sent back from the hell dimension for a reason. Or it could be read as her continued poor judgment where he is concerned--she is willing to kill another human (Faith) to save him, which goes against everything she believes. Buffy also might have been killed herself.

[19] Their relationship doesn't necessarily end when he leaves town at the end of this episode. In *Angel* episode A1008, "I Will Remember You," when he briefly becomes human, he and Buffy have the perfect day and do sleep together once again; this time with no immediately obvious repercussions. But when they encounter a demon, he realizes he's not as strong as he was and can't protect her, so he decides to undo the change in him by asking the Powers That Be to turn back time. He tells Buffy that she won't remember their day; she swears that she will; only he remembers it's happened when the day begins again. When she returns from the dead and he discovers that she is alive, he calls and she immediately goes to meet him ("Flooded," 6004). In "Selfless" (7015), speaking about how it might be necessary to kill Anya, she reminds Xander, "I killed Angel . . . I loved him more than anything I had in this life and I put a sword through him because I had to." And in the Buffy series finale "Chosen" (7022) after fighting together, and kissing, Buffy says about a future with him, "I do sometimes think that far ahead . . . [but] it will be a long time coming. Years, if ever." He replies as he leaves, "I ain't getting any older." The door is left open between them.

[20] Parker was the first person Buffy slept with after arriving at college. Good-looking and apparently quite sensitive and "deep," he seems to be genuinely interested in her. But we find out later he is just interested in freshman girls because he thinks that there is little difference between them and a toilet, as both are things to be used. Writer Jane Espenson, in an interview from the Season 4 DVD, describes Parker as "the guy who doesn't call back"; Buffy waits in vain for him to do so after their encounter. She says to Willow about her night with Parker, "God, I'm such a fool" ("The Harsh Light of Day," 4003). Espenson said that her original lines for this scene were cut for time. She had had Buffy say, "I kept telling myself, look how much I'm over Angel. Look how I'm not even thinking about Angel. Look how I'm going out with this other guy and it's not about Angel. I should have realized that meant it was all about Angel." She is vulnerable, but not necessarily because she is a young teen. The last time we see Parker, in "Beer Bad," she in her regression-to-cavewoman state hits him over the head and knocks him out in retaliation for his treatment of her.

[21] Riley punches Parker when the latter brags about sleeping with Buffy, and at that moment realizes what his friends already know since he told them he thought she was "peculiar"--he is interested in her ("The Initiative," 4007). Riley asks his friends and fellow army men, "What kind of girl is gonna go out with a guy who's all Joe Normal by day and turns demon hunter at night?" In theory, someone like Buffy, who leads the same kind of life. Here is someone who like Angel is fighting the same good fight as Buffy, against demons threatening humans, but who unlike Angel is human and closer to her age (although he is still older than she). When Buffy talks about Riley to Willow, she says "I really like him, I think he cares about me, but I feel like something's missing." Willow volunteers, "He's not making you miserable?" ("Something Blue," 4009). Buffy says she has to "get away from that bad boy thing, but also says she feels that "real love and passion have to go hand in hand with pain and fighting" and asks "I wonder where I get that?" as she stakes a vampire. One could interpret this exchange as showing us that Buffy is entering a healthier relationship than that which she had with Angel (or as foreshadowing her future relationship with Spike). She and Riley have sex for the first time after fighting together in "The I in Team" (4013), and it is their passion that ignites the spirits in the frat house in "Where the Wild Things Are" (4018). As with Angel, they train and work together and it appears that gender and age differences may not necessarily be issues for these two particular people; that they respect each other as equals.

[22] But the relationship with Riley is doomed. He causes her pain different from that caused by Angel. Joss Whedon, in the commentary accompanying "Restless" (4022), says "Their relationship is not entirely stable" because Riley is "not in the same world" as Buffy. Her dream, in which she sees him in his government suit with his cold and rigid demeanor, is her "fear of what he could be." When she kneels on the floor and puts the mud from the bag on her face, she shows the "demon within and Riley can't seem to handle that." Similarly, says Whedon, this shows the clash between the "feminine" mysticism of the slayer versus the "masculine" government--because the Initiative, and to some extent Riley, don't truly understand the value and complexity of the former, it will fail. He does begin to question the military after Buffy is almost killed by Maggie Walsh and then Walsh in turn is killed. But he still remains loyal to them, and in the end goes back to them as she feared he would.

[23] Before each knows of the other's work, Buffy asks him, "You think that boys can take care of themselves and girls can't?" and Riley answers, "Yeah" as if he finds the answer completely obvious ("The Initiative," 4007). His black-and-white assumptions about gender and power feed into his feelings that she doesn't need him because she is the stronger and he is uncomfortable with that; his assumption is that she should need him and want to need him. As Vint points out, this is problematic for many adolescent girls as there may be some fear among boys about girls who compete with them, or even within society at large of such girls as threatening to an established "traditional" order. In a disruption of stereotypes of both gender and age, Riley feels like the weaker party in the relationship.

[24] As early as "Doomed" (4011), he tells her that she has to need other people, and if she weren't "so self-involved [she] would see that"; by "The Replacement" (5003), he tells Xander how much he loves her, but adds matter-of-factly, "She doesn't love me." It isn't long after this that he begins flirting with vampires because he feels that they (unlike Buffy) do need him and he allows them to bite him, although he kills at least one afterward ("Family" 5006-"Into the Woods" 5010). Finally, when shown (by Spike) what is happening, Buffy confronts him. Not persuaded that she loves him, Riley leaves.

[25] Just as Angel did before him, Riley decides to leave town, giving Buffy no say in the matter and no real chance to try to work things out with him--he exerts his power by ending their relationship. He had felt that she had more power vis-à-vis him and was uncomfortable with that. But she, younger and female, could be perceived as the more vulnerable party, who felt she gave him "body and soul" but it still was not enough for him. In a third point of view, this could be seen as a situation in which the two parties' genders and ages were immaterial and in which the two were basically equal in their love and in their insecurities. Again, one can interpret this relationship through the lenses of any or all of the three strains of feminist thought on gender and sexuality detailed above.

[26] It is Buffy's tortured relationship with Spike that becomes the focus of Seasons 6 and 7; some would say this was to the benefit of the show, while others would say it was to its detriment. In Season 4, after he had had the chip installed by the Initiative that would bring him intense pain whenever he tried to harm a human, he had worked with the Scooby Gang at times. After he realized he was in love with Buffy ("Out of My Mind," 5004), he began to work mostly for good, perhaps because he began to see the worth of their fight. Different from Angel who was motivated by his soul and his guilt to fight against dark forces, Spike could be constructed as choosing--against his soulless vampire nature--to do good. He withstands Glory's torture and does not reveal that Dawn is the key ("Intervention," 5018) and is increasingly trusted to take care of Dawn.

[27] Buffy felt that he was the only one who understood her and her alienation throughout season 6; until "Once More With Feeling" (6007) and the spell that forces her to sing what she is really thinking, he is the only one she tells about having been in a paradise and hating to be back in this world. She is able to show him a darker side of herself (a side more akin to the early Faith); he is the only one with whom she connects and for some moments that connection overcomes her feelings of numbness. Throughout season 6, he puts up with her verbal and physical abuse with the assumption that he will prove himself worthy of her. And after he regains his soul in "Two to Go/Grave" (6021/6022), he begins a redemptive journey that Buffy is quick to support--although sometimes she is the only one to support it.

[28] He does offer to leave town about halfway through season 7, but she says she is not ready for him to "not be here," and that she believes in him ("Never Leave Me," 7009). She seems to indicate that she loved him via a Freudian slip in "First Date" (7014) when she asks, "Why does everybody in this house think I'm still in love with

Spike?" After the others kick her out of the house in favor of Faith's being their new leader, it is he who seems to reach her, telling her she is "the one" and holding her through the night to protect her ("Touched," 7020). In the following episode, "End of Days" (7021), he says it was the best night of his life; that he never felt so close to anyone. When he asks her, "Were you there with me?" she replies, "I was" and tells him that he gave her the strength to go out and find the scythe with which to face Caleb. Lastly, it is he in large part who saves the world in "Chosen" (7022) by wearing the amulet brought to them by Angel, that must be worn by a "champion." The implication is that if he were not such a champion, the amulet would not have its intended effect. She tells him as he dies that she loves him.

[29] However, Buffy had said in every season before this that she hated Spike. She, like the other Scoobies, never really trusted him, particularly as he did try to hurt and/or kill all of them at some point or another. He may have chosen to fight on the side of good before he had a soul, but one could also interpret his actions as having nothing to do with good and evil and everything to do with trying to impress Buffy. It is clear that he chose to re-obtain his soul for the purpose of showing her his devotion to her (just as he previously offered to kill Drusilla to show the same, in "Crush" 5014), and hoping that she would be with him again. On the featurette "Spike, Me" on the Season 4 DVD set, James Marsters speaks about his character and his age: "Spike is very immature. He's very young. . . [although] for a human being, he's very old." As with Angel, his age can be interpreted with some flexibility.

[30] From the first of their sexual encounters in "Smashed/Wrecked" (6009/6010), Buffy was disgusted with herself for engaging in it; she knew that she was using him and felt sick about it. She begs Tara not to forgive her, saying "He's everything I hate, everything I'm supposed to be against" and is clearly uncomfortable with the things she allows him to do to her; in the same episode, she beats him until his face is bloody ("Dead Things," 6013). When Riley find them in bed together, accusing Spike of being "The Doctor" and trafficking in demon eggs, she defends him and is deflated when she realizes he is guilty. But he says defensively, "You know what I am. You've always known. You come to me just the same." It is after this that she breaks off their relationship, admitting that she wants him and that being with him makes things simpler, but "I'm using you… I can't love you… And it's killing me… I'm sorry, William" ("As You Were," 6015) There is no denying that he attempted to rape her after this ("Seeing Red," 6019). That he regretted it and was sorry are immaterial. He was using his physical power at that moment to try to force her into doing something she clearly did not want to do, in total violation of any trust or love that might have been between them. His muttering to himself that he was going to make her love him through this act was every feminist's nightmare of the conflation of sex and power and violence. As Buffy says tearfully after the fact, "Ask me again why I could never love you."

[31] As with Angel, her feelings for Spike certainly clouded her judgment. Even after this pivotal event, she not only accepts him in her life but supports him. It is obvious that he has been killing people, but she forgives him and keeps him in the house with them. It also appears that he is perhaps mad and being controlled by the First, but she still keeps him close by and trusts him, to the surprise and horror of the others (7009 "Never Leave Me"-7013 "The Killer in Me"). She decides that having his chip removed, under these circumstances, is the right thing to do because she feels that his soul will point him toward choosing not to hurt people. Along with Giles, who finds him to be a "liability" and who goes so far as to try to have Robin Wood kill him ("Lies My Parents Told Me," 7017), the other potential slayers sense that she is unreasonable where he is concerned. Anya notes bitterly in the same episode: "Spike has some kind of 'get out of jail free' card that doesn't apply to the rest of us." Indeed, Buffy feels that he is the "only one watching [her] back" ("Empty Places," 7019).

[32] In an interview after the end of the series, Marsters gave his interpretation of the last episode: "What the final episode did very well was admit that Buffy really is in love with Angel. That the sexual relationship she had with Spike was unhealthy. That it was unwise . . . Spike was evil" (Butler 1). Other writers on the show were similarly alarmed at fans' positive reaction to Spike and Buffy's relationship, saying on more than one occasion that the relationship was meant to be received as abusive. While in this relationship with Spike, it was apparently Buffy who was the more powerful party, one could also argue that she was not because it was her vulnerability and confusion that motivated her to seek him out even when she knew it to be harmful to her; also, he could have hurt her at any turn as he showed with the attempted rape.

[33] In sum, one could look at Buffy's sexual relationships with Angel, Riley, and Spike from a variety of points of view. Rather than subscribing to one particular branch of feminist theories about adolescent sexuality and about gender, they can all be at play in the complexities of the relationships portrayed. It may be that sexual decisions made by a teen (particularly by a female teen), or by someone who is younger than his or her sex partner, are rash and/or manipulated decisions, as liberal feminists would worry. But they may not be, sex radicals would argue. It may also be that females are generally the weaker party in any heterosexual relationship, as radical feminists would assert, but they may not be. By the same token, it may be that sexual decisions made by adults, male or female, are well-grounded, but they may not be.

IV. Willow and Oz in High School and College

[34] Willow and Oz merit mention here, because the writers and producers of the show purposely used the symbol of the werewolf as a metaphor for teen sexuality. In high school, the two are in a committed relationship and decide to have sex ("Graduation Day Pt. 2," 3022). They are both teens and he is about one year older than she (see quote from "Surprise," 2013 at the start of the paper), but the two are portrayed as equals and as sexual agents. Oz rebuffs her first attempts to seduce him, but Willow says, "He said he was gonna wait until I was ready. Well, I'm ready" and Buffy replies with some foreshadowing, "It's nice, he's not just being an animal." Even after Oz sees her kissing Xander, he forgives her and their relationship starts up again ("Lover's Walk," 3008; "Amends," 3010). That they are teenagers, and of opposite sex, doesn't necessarily point to inequality. They continue to see each other, in a seemingly very supportive and positive relationship, as they enter college.

[35] But as Whedon says, the threat of "the wolf," as a metaphor for "uncontained raw male aggression and sexuality," is always lurking, as some feminists might fear. In the featurette "Oz: Revelations, A Full Moon" on the Season 4 DVD, Marti Noxon says "The whole notion of men who are beasts is a real theme in our show. . . . The tension between the desire to be in a committed, loving, safe union and to just run wild and free.....exists in both men and women, but it's even stronger in men. I feel like men feel like they can't always control it, like they have an animal inside them." She also says that the werewolf is a metaphor for not just male sexuality, but male teen sexuality. This very gendered notion of sexuality, and of male teen sexuality as uncontrolled, is akin to what radical feminists were arguing; that males are the more powerful party in heterosexual sexual relationships and are socialized to believe that their sexuality is difficult to contain. Indeed, females are sometimes made to feel guilty for not having intercourse when males interpret their behavior as "leading" them in that direction.

[36] In this frame, then, Oz cannot help but follow his nature, so we should not be surprised in "Wild At Heart" (4006) when he sleeps with Veruca, also a werewolf but one who embraces the animalistic sex drive that apparently goes along with it (in yet another disruption of gendered stereotypes of sexuality). Willow suspects something between them even before it happens. But she's even more suspicious when Oz rejects her overtures for sex; he does not want her to see the scratches all over his back that Veruca left the previous night. As Whedon says in the commentary to "Wild At Heart," "Whenever two people on Buffy have sex, the reason they shouldn't be having sex will walk into the room." And Willow does walk into the room, finding them together. Oz tries to say that he had to lock Veruca in with him so that she wouldn't hurt anybody, and that he doesn't remember what happens when he is a wolf. He feels he has no choice but to try to find out how to control the wolf inside him

[37] Like Angel (and Riley), Oz leaves town, leaving Willow no say in the matter (Callander 6). When he returns, thinking he can control his wolfish nature, he discovers that Willow is the only thing that breaks that control and brings it out in him (4019 "New Moon Rising"). This first occurs when he is talking to Tara in the hallway and smells Willow's scent on her; later in the Initiative after they have rescued him, he begins to change and tells Willow to get away so that the transformation will stop. He leaves town again, and she returns to Tara's room to resume their budding relationship.

[38] As with Buffy's relationships, one can read Willow's relationship with Oz in more than one way. Liberal feminists might say she was the vulnerable party because she was the younger party; radical feminists might say the same because of the "threat of the wolf," and sex radicals might say she was making well-considered decisions about someone she was very close to. But each of these aspects of a situation can be occurring at the same time. As Moss wrote, "Buffy displays the complexities of decisions that teenage girls must make, the tangled threat of their own sexuality they must learn to negotiate. Not content to be 'good' girls or 'bad' girls, the women of Buffy show teenaged sexuality to be the complex, sometimes strong, sometimes confused thing that it is, and it is the frankest dealing with such ever on television" (4).

IV. Conclusion

[39] A feminist analysis of gender and sexuality on *Buffy* does not necessarily have to subscribe to one theoretical pole or another. We should not essentialize all females as vulnerable and all age-differentiated relationships as harmful, not should we essentialize all females as empowered and all same-age relationships as harmless. Multiple interpretations are possible; multiple "truths" are possible. This type of analysis breaks us out of binaries of whether teen sexuality is "bad" or "good" as portrayed on the show and in general, whether Buffy is representative or disruptive of gendered stereotypes, whether she is destroyer or tool of patriarchy, whether she is coded male or female, etc. It also brings forth the complexities and fluidities of the many seemingly conflicting but coexistent facets of sexuality in general and adolescent sexuality in particular.

Editors' note: see Vivien Burr's essay on transgressive sexuality, "Ambiguity and Sexuality in the Buffyverse: A Sartrean Analysis," *Sexualities* 6.2 (2003).

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[1] Certainly, feminists in general are in agreement that all people should be treated equally, but are not in agreement as to what kinds of tactics should be used to achieve such a goal. The debates over adolescent sexuality were reflective of debates among these feminist factions on other issues at that time. The liberal feminists, well-represented in for instance the National Organization for Women, sought formal equality for women--i.e., to have anti-discrimination laws passed and to make laws on the books gender neutral--along with their other goals. Radical feminists felt that this concentration on the legal sphere and on formal equality would not promote the substantive equality of women, particularly in the realms of sexuality and family, but would merely paper over inequalities by assuming that women would be treated equally if the language of the laws was changed. Some in this group have been accused of asserting that men and women are so unequal that a woman's consent to heterosexual sex is not completely valid. The third group, who often called themselves sex radicals, were those who argued virulently with the radical feminists (whom they felt were not really radical, hence their using the term themselves) over pornography. When the radical feminists joined with religious conservatives to pass anti-pornography ordinances in midwestern cities, the sex radicals took them to task for reinscribing stereotypes of gender (i.e., that women are less powerful than men and are viewed as sex objects) into the new laws and for allying with those traditionally against feminist concerns. Strains of these debates remain among feminists today.

[2] When Faith and Buffy switch bodies in "Who Are You?" Faith uses the opportunity to have sex with Riley, asking him "What do you want to do to this body?" (4016). But his strong feelings for Buffy scare her; all she can think to ask him while he's trying to be physically close to her after the fact and tell her that he loves her, is "What do you want from her?" She stumbles away in confusion. It is apparently only after Angel will not give up on her ("Five by Five/Sanctuary," A1018/A1019), and she chooses to redeem herself by going through her jail sentence and accepting responsibility for her actions that she begins to change. When she has sex with Robin Wood in "Touched" in season 7, her attitude toward it seems quite different and she appears ready to enter a relationship with him.

[3] One could also argue that Faith can be read as coded masculine due to her assertive sexual behavior and her "Get Some-Get Gone" attitude (apparently developed after realizing she was a "loser magnet" with past boyfriends; "Revelations," 3007), and Xander as coded feminine for his physical weakness in battle and his well-displayed insecurities. Joss Whedon notes in his commentary on "Restless" 4022 that Xander is a comfortador, not a conquistador because he's seeking comfort (not necessarily sex) from women. But this article is intended to disrupt such binaries, not only of gender (see Spicer, and Mikosz and Och), but of black-and-white readings of the characters' sexual relationships as well.

[4] I say this because it's usually assumed that the moment of true happiness was Angel's moment of orgasm but the episode doesn't actually tell us this. Instead, Angel wakes up in pain and stumbles outside while Buffy continues to sleep. If it were just an orgasm, it also would have occurred with Darla in Angel episodes "Epiphany/Reprise" (A2015/A2.16). It doesn't; she knows it; and she says the same thing Buffy says to him "Was it . . . was I . . . not good?" One could interpret the moment of happiness, therefore, as the sum package of his and Buffy's finally confessing that they love each other and then consummating that love. This is reflected in Angel episode A4010 "Awakening," when he does again lose his soul.