David Lavery

"I wrote my thesis on you!": *Buffy* Studies as an Academic Cult

Spike, my boy, you really don't get it! Do you? You tried to kill her, but you couldn't. Look at you. You're a wreck! She's stronger than any Slayer you've ever faced. Force won't get it done. You gotta work from the inside. To kill this girl . . . you have to love her.

Angelus in "Innocence" (2004)

I have spoken of a university, with its commitment to rational discourse toward some public goal, as if it too is an agent of the destruction of cults; but I have also admitted its own propensity to cultism. And I have spoken as if, for example, Wittgenstein and Heidegger . . . were clear candidates for a university curriculum, yet I know that each . . . is mainly the object of a cult. None of them is the common possession of our intellectual culture at large, let alone our public discourse. It is possible that nothing is such a possession, that nothing valuable and comprehensible to each of us is valuable and comprehensible to all. And it is possible that every idea of value, like every object of value, must still arise as the possession of a cult, and that one must accordingly hope that some are more benign and useful than others.

Stanley Cavell, "Film in the University" (273)

I

(1) In "Checkpoint," a fifth season episode of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer,* the Watchers Council sends a delegation to Sunnydale to investigate the suspect status of slayage in southern California. Although Giles had been sacked as a Watcher long ago (in "Helpless," episode twelve of Season Three) and Buffy herself had resigned from the Council (late in the same season during the Scooby Gang's final battle with the Mayor), the Scoobies have nevertheless sought in desperation the Council's assistance in their looming confrontation with Glory. Before the Council will share its information (the flabbergasting knowledge that Glory is not a demon but a God), it demands, however, a high price: the WC insists upon (and threatens Giles with deportation as the price for lack of cooperation) a complete review of the policies and procedures of their American renegades. Quentin Travers and his officious minions then proceed to interview (with humorous results) not only the core Scoobies but all of their fellow travelers as well, including Anya, Tara, and, of course, Spike.

(2) At Spike's crypt a female Watcher named Lydia presses Spike in order to understand why it is that he sometimes cooperates with the current Slayer when, in his own bloody past, he has killed two of Buffy's forebears. A clearly flattered Spike replies, "Heard of me, have you?" While two male Watchers ready their weapons in fear of the legendary vampire, Lydia herself, embarrassed as only an academic can be embarrassed, replies, "I . . . wrote my thesis on you!"

(3) When I chose these words for my title, I did so because they represented, in a series both intertextual and self-referential, a wonderful moment in which the Buffyverse seemed almost to acknowledge and even to anticipate the extraordinary field of *Buffy* Studies then just beginning to bud. January 2001—the month in which "Checkpoint" first aired—also saw the debut of *Slayage: The Online International Journal of Buffy Studies,* a venue for serious consideration of *Buffy* originally inspired by the gross of submissions the editors of *Fighting the Forces: What's at*

Stake in Buffy the Vampire Slayer received from *BtVS* scholars around the world hoping to become players in this new academic playing field.

(4) Now, a year and a half after *BtVS* came to its end after seven seasons, *Buffy* Studies is in full bloom. As Emily Nussbaum noted in an article entitled "Sick of 'Buffy' Cultists? You Ain't Seen Nothing Yet" in the *New York Times* in June 2003, the demise of the show could well result in more rather than less posthumous interest in the show, positively encouraging devotees, both fans and scholars, to "live in the past." "If it's sad to have one's favorite show go off the air," writes Nussbaum,

the secret truth is, it's also a relief. A television cult can't really start in earnest until the show has ended. . . . For all its pleasures, appointment TV is also a lot of pressure. There's the anxiety of raised expectations, the friendship-threatening debates over the proper plot arc, the misfiring VCR's, the leaked plot spoilers. Now everything is spoiled, and we can settle in and enjoy—treat the story as one big, satisfying narrative. Few shows reward rewatching as much as "Buffy," a series which might appear campy at first sight, but over time reveals as many layers as Tony Soprano's Oedipal complex.

(5) Thanks to Lydia's academic confession, the international interpretive community of *Buffy* scholars, well-settled in The Slayer's native land, as well as in Canada, the UK, and Down Under, in both Australia and New Zealand; less prominent but nevertheless alive in Germany, Austria, France, Sweden, Italy, Singapore . . . could claim to include among its members a minor character in the text itself. Even in the diegesis of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer Buffy the Vampire Slayer* was being carefully, systematically studied. "Why," Borges writes in "Partial Enchantments of the Quixote," "does it make us uneasy to know that the map is within the map and the thousand and one nights are within the book of *A Thousand and One Nights*? Why does it disquiet us to know that Don Quixote is a reader of the *Quixote*, and Hamlet is a spectator of *Hamlet*? I believe I have found the answer: those inversions suggest that if the characters in a story can be readers or spectators, then we, their readers or spectators, can be fictitious" (46). Disquieted, we all felt that January evening in 2001, when we learned of the existence of a thesis on Spike, just a bit more fictitious.

(6) But little did I know then that we would soon be able to read that thesis [http://www.channelingboards.com/SpikeThesis]. A group of Spike fans, led by "Prime Mover" Taramisu and "Managing Editor" Klytaimnestra and with the assistance of Alcibiades have collaborated to produce it. Almost ninety pages of pitch-perfect abstracts, acknowledgements, appendices, annotated bibliographies, and imaginative pedantry, the actual existence of this extraordinary parody/paratext only confirms my original intent in speaking to you today. Primarily the work of fans, *Lydia Chalmers' Thesis on William the Bloody* will not earn anyone an advanced degree or pad a *vita* in the pursuit of a teaching position or securing tenure. The painstaking scholarship of the late Miss Chalmers (you will recall that she died in the demolition—by Caleb—of the Watchers Council Headquarters in "Never Leave Me" [7009]) draws on a wide variety of source books including "Angel/us Un/Souled: Monster, Man, Metaphor" published by "Postmodern Pansy Press," "Changing with the Times" by one "C. Lee," published by "Hammer Press," and another on Drusilla issued by Antwerp's "Morbid Press." A variety of articles in *Vampire Quarterly* have been consulted. A phone interview with F.B.I. Special Agent Fox Mulder provides significant information. Access to the diaries of both Rupert Giles and Buffy Summers was granted. Chalmers' research—conducted, by the

way, with the help of the "Wyndham-Price Fellowship"—offers much to learn. Who knew, for example, that it was Spike in Forrest Gump mode and not Hells Angels who killed that fan at Altamont while The Rolling Stones rocked on or that William the Bloody once bent it with his pal David Beckham? *Lydia Chalmers' Thesis on William the Bloody* might well be included in *Teleparody: Predicting/Preventing the TV Discourse of Tomorrow,* a collection, published in 2002 by Wallflower Press in London, sending up the serious study of television, full of metatexts, including reviews, scholarly references to, and a "faux bibliography" of over one hundred non-existent essays and books.

(7) I said this faux treatise is the work of fans. But it would, no doubt, be more accurate to deem its ingenious authors "fan-scholars," implementing a distinction Matt Hills insists upon in his consistently brilliant *Fan Cultures,* a book which ends with "a call for *impassioned thought* rather than the parroting of academic discursive mantras," a summons to "'affective reflexivity' which admits its own neoreligiosities, its own fandoms, and its own 'reflexive pre-reflexivities' or self-absences" and for "academic commitment . . . modeled on fan commitment" (184). *Buffy* Studies at the beginning of the 21st century, concerned as it is with perhaps the one text in all the world with the requisite strength and skill, the subtext, metatext, and intertext, the diegesis and the "hyperdiegesis" (Hills 134), to engage in battle with the forces of the academy, seems to this observer at least, a "scholar-fan" (in Hillsian parlance) so obsessionally immersed in the Buffyverse that he has succeeded in annoying both his colleagues and his wife in the same way, may well be perfectly positioned—would "chosen" be too strong a word?—to answer Matt's call.

(8) In a much-quoted exchange in the *Onion AV Club* interview, *Buffy's* creator Joss Whedon, asked to comment on the passion the series inspired in its followers, openly admitted his intentions towards his creation. Allow me to quote it again.

I designed the show to create that strong reaction. I designed *Buffy* to be an icon, to be an emotional experience, to be loved in a way that other shows can't be loved. Because it's about adolescence, which is the most important thing people go through in their development, becoming an adult. And it mythologizes it in such a way, such a romantic way—it basically says, "Everybody who made it through adolescence is a hero." And I think that's very personal, that people get something from that that's very real. And I don't think I could be more pompous. But I mean every word of it. I wanted her to be a cultural phenomenon. I wanted there to be dolls, Barbie with kung-fu grip. I wanted people to embrace it in a way that exists beyond, "Oh, that was a wonderful show about lawyers, let's have dinner." I wanted people to internalize it, and make up fantasies where they were in the story, to take it home with them, for it to exist beyond the TV show. And we've done exactly that. ("Joss Whedon." *The Tenacity of the Cockroach* 375)

Now, as Hills (and others) have noted, the conscious creation of a cult is not without its metaphysical pitfalls. It is possible, even likely for a given program to be "too pre-progammed," to "not leave enough space for [the] subjective 'creation'" so essential to the formation of a cult" (Hills 136). But time does not permit full exploration of that issue here. I want to ask a different but related question: did Whedon imagine that academic "scholar-fans" would be part of *Buffy*'s cult audience, imagining themselves, quite unprofessionally, in the story?

(9) We know from a Q and A with the *New York Times* just before the US airing of the series finale, what Whedon thinks of the interest of scholars in his show. *"What are your thoughts," the Times wanted to know, "on the academic community's use of the show, from the humanities to the sciences, to debate and analyze everything?"* "I think it's great that the academic community has taken an interest in the show," Whedon replied.

I think it's always important for academics to study popular culture, even if the thing they are studying is idiotic. If it's successful or made a dent in culture, then it is worthy of study to find out why.

"Buffy," on the other hand is, I hope, not idiotic. We think very carefully about what we're trying to say emotionally, politically, and even philosophically while we're writing it. The process of breaking a story involves the writers and myself, so a lot of different influences, prejudices, and ideas get rolled up into it. So it really is, apart from being a big pop culture phenom, something that is deeply layered textually episode by episode. I do believe that there is plenty to study and there are plenty of things going on in it, as there are in me that I am completely unaware of. People used to laugh that academics would study Disney movies. There's nothing more important for academics to study, because they shape the minds of our children possibly more than any single thing. So, like that, I think "Buffy" should be analyzed, broken down, and possibly banned. ("10 Questions for Joss Whedon." *New York Times*: http://www.nytimes.com/2003/05/16/readersopinions/16WHED.html)

Whedon's receptiveness to *Buffy* Studies should not surprise. As I have elsewhere suggested, Whedon may represent the advent of "the film studies auteur, just as likely to be familiar with critical schools and narratological theory as with lenses and filters and aspect ratios. Perhaps this is why *Buffy* scholars feel so strong an attraction to the show" (http://slayageonline.com/essays/slayage7/Lavery.htm). But is having the sanction of the creator enough to justify the existence of all this BS—*Buffy* Studies, that is.

II

(10) In *White Noise* (1984) Don DeLillo introduces us to the College-on-the-Hill, a quintessentially mediocre American institution of higher learning, and home to Jack Gladney, a professor of "Hitler Studies," a division within "the popular culture department, known officially as American environments." Gladney finds his department "a curious group . . . composed almost solely of New York émigrés, smart, thuggish, movie-mad, trivia-crazed." Gathered together in order "to decipher the natural language of the culture," the faculty's specialities include such diversely arcane subjects as bubble gum wrappers, detergent jingles, and soda pop bottles, but they present a uniform appearance: all "are male, wear rumpled clothes, need haircuts, cough into their armpits. Together they look like teamster officials assembled to identify the body of a mutilated colleague. The impression is one of pervasive bitterness, suspicion and intrigue." As one who once attended a popular culture conference that actually shared a hotel with a Teamsters convention and found it difficult to pick my colleagues out of the crowd, I can attest to the accuracy of DeLillo's characterization of PCers. But BSers? I will not be drawn into such ad hominem considerations.

(11) *White Noise*'s erstwhile hero Gladney has distinguished himself from this motley crew by building a reputation for his own curious

specialty. As a colleague who aspires to do the same for The King that Gladney has done for Der Fuhrer tells him:

> You've established a wonderful thing here with Hitler. You created it, you nurtured it, you made it your own. Nobody on the faculty of any college or university in this part of the country can so much as utter the word Hitler without a nod in your direction, literally or metaphorically. This is the center, the unquestioned source. He is now your Hitler, Gladney's Hitler. It must be deeply satisfying for you. *The college is internationally known as a result of Hitler studies.* It has an identity, a sense of achievement. You've evolved an entire system around this figure, a structure with countless substructures and interrelated fields of study, a history within history. I marvel at the effort. It was masterful, shrewd and stunningly preemptive. It's what I want to do with Elvis. (11-12; my italics)

At this point you are no doubt wondering why I have bothered to take you on this side journey to DeLillo-Land. Because the always prescient postmodernist had identified a trend in *White Noise*. By the end of the 1980s Hitler Studies and Elvis Studies had begun to metamorphose. We had begun to hear, in the real world, not in a novel, talk of Madonna Studies.

> (12) And now we have Buffy Studies. Now we have a regional institution of higher education, in an American state with a second rate university system, a state better known for the spawn of Graceland and as the home of country music, *internationally known as a result of* [*Buffy*] *studies.*

(13) What exactly is *Buffy* Studies? If we set out to categorize existing scholarly writing on *BtVS,* as I have done in a bibliography now available on the *Slayage* website [http://slayageonline.com/EBS/buffy_studies/buffystudiesbibliography.htm] , we discover that *Buffy* Studies currently comprises at least fifty (**fifty!!**) disciplines, methods, and/or approaches:

Aesthetics	Genre Studies	Political Science
American Studies	Humor	Postcolonial
Auteurist	Intercultural Communication	Postmodernism
Body Studies	Lacanian/Zizekian	Psychology / Psychiatry / Psychoanalytic
British / English Studies	Legal Studies	Queer Studies
Business Ethics	Library Science	Religious Studies / Theology
Classical Studies	Linguistics / LexicographyLiterary Studies	Science Studies
Computer Science/Information Systems	Marxist / Foucauldian / Ideological	Sex/Sexuaity

Cosmology	Media / Television Studies	Slavic Studies
Criminal Justice	Media Ecology	Spike Studies
Cultural Studies	Military Science	Structuralist/Poststructuralist
Ecological	Musicology	Textual Criticism
Education/Pedagogy	Mythic/Jungian	Time Studies
Family Studies	Narratological/Character Studies	Vampirology
Fandom	Pedagogy	Xander Studies
Feminist	Performance Studies	
Folklore	Phenomenological	
Food Studies	Philosophy/Ethics	
Gender Studies	Physics	

(14) This under-construction and admittedly arbitrary classification scheme includes published essays in print and online journals and published and forthcoming collections, essays submitted for consideration to *Slayage*, a few theses and dissertations, books on *BtVS,* and papers given at conferences such as Blood, Text and Fears, Staking a Claim, and last May's *Slayage* Conference. (In a few cases titles are included under more than one category.)

(15) No serious, media literate viewer of *BtVS* is likely to be surprised by many of the territories *Buffy* Studies has colonized. Of course *Buffy* would attract the attention of those interested in vampirology, music, fandom, philosophy and ethics. And any acute observer of the contemporary critical scene would find the marriage of *Buffy* with a wide variety of disciplines/approaches if not made-in-heaven, at least predictable conjoinings.

(16) Of course American Studies, not to mention British/English Studies, would find the series full of significance for two nations "separated by a common language."

(17) Of course auteurists would want to revisit the question of authorship in a rich television text with a strong, identifiable creator like Whedon (and a score of important collaborators as well).

(18) Of course folklorists would find themselves attracted to a series rich in fairy tale monsters and ripe with legend.

(19) Of course cultural studies investigators and gender critics and postcolonials would find *Buffy's* problematic depictions of race, male and female relations, and the body controversial and provocative.

(20) Of course library scientists would find themselves agog with a series that offered not only a library as its primal scene (at least for the first three seasons) but a sexy librarian as well.

(21) Of course, given *BtVS'* complex plotting and attenuated story arcs, narratologists and mythic/Jungian critics would find the series a powerfully attractive test case.

(22) Of course linguists and lexicographers would be drawn to *Buffy's* verbally rich text and ingenious use of language.

(23) Of course queer studies would find a home in Sunnydale, as would the postmodernists who would likewise find it their kind of town.

(24) But who would have predicted that *Buffy* would attract the attention of a Stanford University population ecologist, applying mathematical formulae to a consideration of vampire demographics in Sunnydale?

(25) Who could have foreseen that classicists would find enough material in the series' "little Latin and less Greek" to bring their splendid erudition into play?

(26) That a series only seven years old would generate debates about the validity of the existing text among TV "textual" scholars?

(27) That investigators into legal studies or criminal justice would take *Buffy* to court?

(28) That a prominent military expert would name a new "paradigm" in biological warfare after *Buffy* in a paper written for a think-tank?

(29) That computer scientists, cosmologists, professors of education, information systems, business ethics, physicists, and adolescent psychologists, Foucauldians, Marxists, and Zizekians, would find a television program on a minor netlet (make that two minor netlets) worthy of their professional interest?

(30) Who knew that *Buffy* would provoke so much serious consideration by scholars of religion and theologians?

(31) By next year at this time, at least thirteen book length studies of *Buffy* will be in print. In addition to Roz Kaveney's new edition of *Reading the Vampire Slayer and Angel* and Wilcox and Lavery's *Fighting the Forces,* James South's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Philosophy,* Michael Adams' *Slayer Slang: A Buffy the Vampire Slayer Lexicon,* Glenn Yeffeth's *Seven Seasons of Buffy,* and Jana Riess' *What Would Buffy Do? The Vampire Slayer as Spiritual Guide* and Greg Stephenson's *Televised Morality: The Case of Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, already in print, we will need to be reading Paul Attinello and Vanessa Knights' *Sounds of the Slayer: Music and Silence in Buffy* and *Angel*, Lisa Parks and Elana Levine's forever forthcoming *Red Noise: Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Critical Television Studies*, Claire Thomson, et al's selection of the best from 2002's University of East Anglia conference Blood, Text, and Fears: Reading Around *Buffy The Vampire Slayer*, Lorna Jowett's *Sex and the Slayer* (to be published by Wesleyan University Press at Joss Whedon's alma mater), Rhonda Wilcox's *The Art of Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (to be published by I. B. Tauris), monographs by Matthew Pateman and Jes Battis

(32) No doubt there will be others, and I am not even listing all the "paratexts," official and unofficial Watcher Guides, *The Monster Book*, script books. The afterlife of a television series which did for librarians what the Indiana Jones films did for archaeologists will transpire not just on DVD and in syndication but on bookshelves.

III

(33) Though growing by leaps and bounds, *Buffy* Studies has not been without its detractors; the "brainy bloodsuckers" (as *Entertainment Weekly*

once referred to them in what was presumed to be a compliment) who engage in BS have come under attack from a variety of angles. At the final plenary session of the Blood, Text and Fears Conference in Norwich, England, one of its organizers (Prof. Scott MacKenzie) and a member of the panel (Prof. Peter Kramer) both voiced their surprise at a certain lack of objectivity in the conference presentations, almost all of which were given by academics. The *Buffy* scholars gathered there, they suggested, seemed hesitant to ask the same kind of hard questions—about the industry, narrative structure, television flow, merchandizing, demographics, advertising, influences—that have come to be expected in media studies.

(34) Closer to home, since Rhonda Wilcox and I were singled out as culpable, Levine and Schneider, in an essay in James South's *Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Philosophy* collection, accuse *Buffy* critics in general and us in particular of grossly overestimating the series' significance, suggesting that "*BtVS scholars* are, in psychoanalytic parlance, repressing, projecting, and 'acting out' their own fantasies in relation to the program. They love *BtVS*" (299). In "attempting to bring scholarship or serious discussion to bear on *BtVS,*" scholars "evince their own lack of understanding of, and insight into, the show, and perhaps more importantly, into the kinds of tasks, purposes, and methods that cultural theorists and others who engage with popular culture set for themselves and employ (299). "It is *BtVS* scholarship that warrants study at this point, not *BtVS* itself" (301).

(35) And then there's the letter Rhonda Wilcox and I received recently—the one that insists that "academic wasteland that is Slayage" and the "treatise-cum-doorstop that is Fighting the Forces" are "Full of sound and fury and signifying nothing." Buffy Studies, claims the letter's author, who did not have the courage to provide a return address, "pretend[s] to elevate the medium of television to some higher plane." But the task is doomed from the outset, because "academia . . . only appeals to academics." Academics "don't honestly create anything; they merely analyze, ad nausem, the creative efforts of others." Mixing metaphors right and left but with unmistakeable disdain, the author continues to fulminate:

> Much like pulling the wings off of flies, this is hardly a worthwhile use of one's time, let alone the meaningful contribution to society that you would have it be. You take the best, most creative and inspired concepts on television and analyze them to death. Similar to vultures, or perhaps to the vampires you write about, you tear apart and devour vibrancy and creativity until all that is left is the pile of bleached and useless bones you call your work. Must you 'scholars' siphon the life force out of brilliant television by putting it under the microscope of so-called higher learning until it is reduced to yet another unwieldy and arduous thesis? In doing this, you are trying to stake an academic claim to something you were never meant to call your own.

But even then the author is not finished upbraiding us.

> Art, regardless of whether or not its medium is television, is meant for the masses. There's a reason that famous paintings are now housed in public museums rather than in the mansions of the elite: art is proletarian by its very nature. It was never meant to be governed by the narrow little world of academia. Art is the life blood of the people, full of inspiration and meaning, and you are reducing it to mere fodder for graduate seminars in which, no doubt, the word 'paradigm' will be used to the point of madness.

> You dissect art, suck it dry and dress up its corpse as academic achievement. Your work is appreciated by our limited scholarly population but the idea that it has importance in the real and much larger world outside of university classrooms, is made all the more laughable by the fact that you and those at Slayage take yourselves so very seriously. Fortunately a creative and cultural phenomenon like Buffy the Vampire Slayer cannot truly be defined by scholars, well versed in abstracts and proposals while lacking both passion and originality, nor can it be confined to stuffy lecture halls neither physical nor virtual, In ignoring these facts you have, as Buffy the Vampire Slayer would undoubtedly put it, *so missed the point.*

If Mr. Krye had gone on record, we would have invited him to Nashville last May so he could have seen those 390 joyless, blood-sucking Buffy scholar/fans and fan/scholars having the time of their lives talking about, dissecting, and singing about a show they loved beyond the possibility to describe.

(36) "[S]cholar-fans," Matt Hills comments in *Fan Cultures,* "are typically looked down on as not being 'proper' academics, while fan-scholars are typically viewed within fandom as 'pretentious' or not 'real' fans" (Hills 21), In the complaints of the Blood, Text and Fears respondents, Levine and Schneider, and "Kenian Krye," the author of the letter I just quoted, *Buffy* Studiers come under attack from both directions. We are, it seems, not serious enough, not sufficiently aware of the modes of production of *BtVS.* Our objectivity is so deficient we cannot take back our projections from a series which has inexplicably mesmerized us, "Bewitched, Bothered, and Bewildered," infatuated with a phenomenon that is in fact nothing special. But we are as well vampires, "brainy bloodsuckers" (now definitely not a complement), draining our prey of its life and imagination. We lack "both passion and originality," "taking [ourselves] far too seriously."

> (37) Those of us who have put television studies on our intellectual agendas are accustomed to having to defend ourselves. The ugly e-mails and voice-mails of Italian-American defamation zealots ready to have me whacked just for doing a book on *The Sopranos,* the snickers of English Department colleagues who considered me a profession-ruining sellout even when I was primarily doing far-more prestigious film studies—even before I had achieved my current status of a "high-functioning schizophrenic" (to quote Amanda in "Potential) who has totally lost my mind (and his soul) to TV—should not go unchallenged.

(38) Buffy in Love. "The proper model for the relation of the critic to the work he studies," the esteemed American literary critic J. Hillis Miller wrote over thirty years ago, back before he caught the French disease and became a deconstructionist,

> is not that of scientist to physical objects but that of one man to another in charity. I may love another person and know him as only love can know without in the least abnegating my own beliefs. Love wants the other person as he is, in all his recalcitrant particularity. As St. Augustine puts it, the love says to the loved one, "*Volo ut sis.*" "I wish you to be."

When Levine and Schneider accused scholars-fans of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* of having fallen for *Buffy* they were thinking eros when they should have been thinking agape. Loving *Buffy* need not be a swoon. It may be the means to really know the show, know it as only love can know. And if I can

be allowed a moment of counter condescension, rival ad-hominem, Levine and Schneider's essay demonstrates in nearly every paragraph a near total lack of knowledge and or understanding of the very series they pretentiously claim to understand better, and more rightly, than hundreds of others.

(39) "Spike, my boy," Angelus lectures his rival vampire in "Innocence," "you really don't get it! Do you? You tried to kill her, but you couldn't. Look at you. You're a wreck! She's stronger than any Slayer you've ever faced. Force won't get it done. You gotta work from the inside. To kill this girl . . . you have to love her." Recognizing, of course, that it may be dangerous to take our cue from an evil monster, do we not find in Angelus' method the model for our own. *Buffy* Studies gotta work from the inside. We will understand (not kill) *Buffy* best when we love her, without shame.

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