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A Vampire is Being Beaten: DeSade Through the Looking Glass in Buffy and Angel

[1] This paper is about the relationship between the BDSM (bondage, discipline, dominance, submission, sadism, masochism) inflected text/subtext of both Buffy and Angel and the proliferation of associated online fan-fiction in a "kinky" register. I would like at this point to add the customary WARNING: CONTAINS GRAPHIC MATERIAL, and stipulate that no vampires or victims were actually harmed during its production. My intention is to explore the Buffyverse as the active progenitor of the internet's largest emergent post-phallocratic pornographic space.

[2] Something about the Buffyverse in particular incites fan-fiction of all varieties, kinky and vanilla, explicit and non-explicit. For audience viewing figures on average half the size of Enterprise, there are four times as many fan-fiction hits on the internet. In March 2004, I found eight hundred and thirty thousand for Angel and Buffy combined. In large part this is because, as Linda Rust writes, 'from the outset the producers and writers of Buffy were determined to always make sure that fans played an active role in the show's development.' [1] Loose ends are often deliberately left in the script, acting as proverbial carrots for fan-fiction writers.[2]

[3] Most people involved in writing about popular television are now familiar, to some extent, with fan-fiction and its codes. Slash fiction, involving the emotional or sexual pairing of male characters, in particular has been publicised by a number of academic treatments. Kinky fan-fiction however is perhaps still somewhat closeted. "Kink-fic" borrows its staging and its equipment from real-world BDSM practices. It commonly involves ingredients such as chains, whips, paddles, strap-ons, gags and restraints, and invariably belongs to the more pornographic end of the fan-fiction register, although stories may vary in intensity and focus. A typical Buffyverse kink-fic scene might involve, for example, Wesley in a small lace apron being dominated by Cordelia with the assistance of a riding crop and a dildo.[3] This scene could either comprise the entire focus of the narrative, a type of sexually explicit fan-fiction known as "Plot, What Plot?" or appear as an episode in a broader story arc.

[4] Kink-fic comes in all flavours – het (heterosexual), slash, femme-slash (girl on girl) and indiscriminate, with websites specialising in various combinations. Some Buffyverse fan-fiction sites with a kink include Spanking the Slayerettes (femme-slash), Xander Xtreme (slash) and Buffy's X Adventures (het and slash). [4] Kink-fic is also that genre of pornographic fan-fiction which most strongly disrupts eroticism as dyadic, as coupling. Threesomes, foursomes and othersomes abound in the kink-fic universe. This is particularly illustrated by the femme-slash Buffyverse kink-fic site Triality: A Wuffara Archive, which is entirely devoted to Willow/Buffy/Tara BDSM threesomes. [5]

[5] Whilst kink-fic is not exclusive to the Buffyverse, it is far more prevalent than in other fan-fiction universes (the Xenaverse comes in second place). It also ventures into more extreme territory, including snuff stories, "non con" (non-consensual), graphic torture, incest, blood play and rape. There are a number of reasons for this. Vampire narratives "have always been used as a vehicle for more or less encoded articulations of sexuality and desire." [6] In particular those ancestral kinks, active female sexuality and homosexuality, have traditionally been staged within the vampire genres as objects of

simultaneous horror and fascination. The Buffyverse plays with this history, making these "kinks" major lynchpins of the eroto-politics of the show. Its cognizant and inflected sense of kink, which includes the "permission to play" afforded by the preternatural resilience of vampire and slayer bodies, has provided fertile ground and encouragement for inciting the imaginations of fan-fiction writers in explicit and kinky directions.

[6] There appears up to now to have been a certain reluctance on the part of academics to address the explicitly pornographic imagination of fan-fiction. In his seminal study of fan-fiction, *Textual Poachers*, Henry Jenkins proposes that slash "…is not so much a genre about sex as it is a genre about the limitations of traditional masculinity." [7] Camille Bacon-Smith comes to a similar conclusion in her book *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth* (1992). [8] Although these analyses have much to recommend them, I doubt (in putting the sexual under erasure) if they were ever entirely valid propositions. Similarly Esther Saxey, in her discussion of Buffyverse slash, elides the established genre of "hurt-comfort" fan-fiction (which is indeed produced by Buffyverse fan-fic writers) with Buffy and Angelverse kink-fic. [9] In fact hurt-comfort and kink-fic are generically distinct. In hurt-comfort one of two protagonists is generally injured either physically or emotionally by a third party and then comforted by the other protagonist. This comforting usually leads to the revelation of emotional connection and/or to sex. In "kink-fic" on the other hand the injury to the protagonist always contains a physical element, from spanking to torture, and is carried out in the context of an erotically charged scene staged between protagonists (not necessarily only two of them). The "injury" is also often (but not always) consensual. By not picking up on this distinction between sexual angst and sexual play in the story-telling, Saxey, like Jenkins and Bacon-Smith, chooses to focus her attention on the emotional nexus of sexualised fan-fiction rather than on its visceral erotogenics – its pornographic imagination.

[7] Porn of course has a long history of being associated with "bad art" by those with cultural capital, so it is unsurprising that attempts to "elevate" fan-fiction as an object worthy of serious study have fought shy of its more orgasmically oriented realms. A recent pro-fan-fiction article in The Daily Telegraph illustrates this:

> Fan-fiction has millions of people in its grip… some [pieces] are barely literate. A fair few are pornographic. Others are impassioned well-written slow-wrought works of the imagination. [10]

In fact pornographic fan-fiction is as committed to detailed characterization as its non-masturbatory counterpart, and has its own narrative and imaginative structures. Not all sexually graphic fan-fiction is kinky of course. What kink-fic does, in parallel with BDSM real world practices, is to explicitly enact sexual and emotional power dynamics.

[8] BDSM is positioned in the Buffyverse canon as morally wrong yet illicitly delicious, through the knowing humour of a semiotic tension between ostensible (verbal) condemnation and latent (visual) celebration. All the best clothes in Buffy and Angel (that is, those with a fetish-wear twist) belong to the wicked. 'Well, judging by the outfit I guess it's safe to come in. Evil Angel never would have worn those pants,' says Cordelia, with a sartorial sniff, in "Eternity" (Angel 1014), proving that our vampire-with-a-soul hero's wicked half is indeed the one with the better catwalk swagger. Black leather and a

penchant for torture and bondage sweep, leash in glove, down the demon-infested streets of the shows' sets in Sunnydale and Los Angeles. But, unlike that earlier dungeon master John Milton, Joss Whedon is clearly and deliciously aware of being of the devil's party. Whedon himself has mischieviously commented:

Censors. Don't love 'em. But I did want to clear something up. I may push the envelope a tad, I may make fun of the Standards and Practices guys, but I'm not actually out to stick it to them. We've actually had a pretty good relationship over the years, and I like that. They have a family audience to think about and I have a commitment to porn, and between the two – oh god. I didn't just say porn did I? I don't know where that came from. I meant art, of course. That's so weird. [11]

[9] Whedon's "commitment to porn" is informed by a particular (culturally and historically situated) set of sexual ethics and politics. In the kinky register of the Buffyverse canon the show's queer and feminist sensibilities stage and eroticise the bodies of the tortured and dominated as almost exclusively male, whilst positioning participating women almost exclusively on top. Beautiful bloodied male torso is frequently served up in conjunction with aggressive female power (although not all torture scenes are heterosexualised). This produces a curious (and deliberated) Sadeian through-the-looking-glass world, since the two most frequently tortured bodies are those of the shows' male vampire stars, Angel and Spike, whose bodies, like those endlessly plastic women in *Justine*, are able to sustain impossible amounts of damage and then heal up again just in time for more. Over the course of the shows, our vampire heroes have been, between them, in deliberated torture scenes; chained up, staked, amputated, run through with iron bars, cut with knives, turned inside out, beaten to bloody pulps, stabbed with scissors, and burnt with matches, holy water and crosses. This canonical subtext, which plays with the eroticism of the dominatrix and her male submissive at the juncture of a shifting late twentieth-century gender, sex and sexuality matrix, provides the psycho-geographical ground on which the edifice of Buffyverse kink-fic is erected.

[10] Kink-fic appears most frequently to springboard from canonical character relationships organised around power differentials which contain a recurrent element of conflict. For example, Captain Janeway and Seven-of-Nine from Star Trek's *Voyager* and Skinner and Mulder from *The X-Files*, are the paired subjects of recurrent kink-fic. Their canonical relationships lend themselves to this not simply by being those of superiors and subordinates but also because on-screen interactions between them involve obedience and disobedience, affection and disaffection. Kink-fic production, in other words, is erotically attracted to the canonical disruption of conventional power hierarchies. More than most serial sci-fi/fantasy, the Buffyverse champions anarchistic rather than hierarchical power relations. Thus the disruption of established power structures is particularly strong, leading accordingly to the proliferation of associated kink-fic. Relationships between the heroic characters Buffy, Faith, Angel and Spike, in various combinations, are characterised by struggles for dominance and love/hate attachments. Such struggles also occur amongst regular supporting characters, as between Wesley and Gunn or Willow and Giles, spawning innumerable kink-fics in het, slash and femme-slash combinations.

[11] Unlike other fanfic'd shows, the Buffyverse has an overt BDSM subtext, and a fetish flavour recurrent over the story arcs. This is enacted on a number of levels. I have already discussed the visual level of dress code. Black leather is sported by Angelus, and

also by Spike and Faith in their evil phases. It is worn by Buffy's first major vampire adversary the Master and by her last, the uber-vamps of Season Seven. In the alternate universe of "The Wish" (Buffy 3009), Buffy's vamped friends Willow and Xander come bedecked in very fetching leather corset and pants. Buffy herself is often seen clad in leather when her calling takes her into dangerous emotional territory, and increasingly so in Season Five and Season Six as she wrestles with her dark side.

[12] In more recent Buffyverse episodes on *Angel*, BDSM has surfaced at the level of knowing comedy. In "Life of the Party" (Angel 5005) the demon aristocrat Archduke Sebassis and his minion Artode (Antonin Artaud being well-known as the author of The Theatre of Cruelty—editors' note)come complete with a chained and collared slave demon, who uncorks his wrist to provide drinking blood and becomes inordinately excited by the smell of urine (known to fans as Mr. Pee Pee). In "Conviction" (Angel 5001) Angel visits a dubious mystic named Spanky whose home is adorned with a wall-full of paddles and whips. Spanky proves to be a little homophobic as well as uncooperative, and is duly dispatched by our hero who declares he has "no problem spanking men."

[13] Most directly, there have been a number of explicit torture, bondage and domination scenes in episodes from both shows. Some characters, Angel and Faith in particular, display unequivocal familiarity with BDSM etiquette. In "Consequences" (Buffy 3004) Faith in her evil phase initiates some aggressive foreplay with Xander, and demands to know whether he would prefer "kinks or vanilla." Later, after Angel has rescued Xander in the nick of time, the pvc-clad Slayer and our vampire hero have a sharp exchange about the proper use of "safety words." In "Enemies" (Buffy 3017) Angel, in a double bluff intended to make off-the-rails Faith reveal her plans, pretends to be his evil self, and in a spot of character acting remarks to Buffy; "You know what I just can't believe? All of our time together and we never tried chains."

[14] "Sadism," writes Foucault in Madness and Civilization "is not a name finally given to a practice as old as Eros, but a massive cultural fact which appeared precisely at the end of the eighteenth century and which constitutes one of the greatest conversions of Western imagination." [12] It was in this period of course that the vampire was also was born into European literature. It is no Buffyverse accident that the most sadistic character, Angelus, who delights openly in torture and whom Doyle describes in "City Of…" (Angel 1001) as "The meanest vampire in all the land," was also born ("sired") in the eighteenth century. In a correspondence too perfect to be coincidence, our other vampire hero Spike proves to be the most masochistic character in the Buffyverse. Masochism was engendered in the nineteenth century, which saw the publication of Leopold Von Sacher Masoch's classic masculine fantasy of the dominant woman, Venus in Furs (1869). Spike is a vampire child of the nineteenth century, sired in 1880. Thus critics such as Thomas Hibbs are missing the point when they bemoan 'Buffy's sado-masochistic sexual relationship with Spike… as the most demoralising subplot in the sixth season.' [13] Clearly, kink is written into the deep structure of the show and the Buffy/Spike 'subplot' is an essential part of the eroto-politics of the Buffyverse.

[15] Buffyverse kink-fic, like its parent text, is highly conversant in BDSM codes. Stories such as "Safe Word" by Chris Lee [14] and the Lilah/Faith "Plot, What Plot?" story "Switch" by Amy attest to this [15] . Ozmandayus's "Ferocious Intent", an Angel/Faith consensual switch story, is actually set in the "Puffy Kitten Playhouse – a Demon S/M Sex Club" [16] . Kink-fic associated with the shows runs the gamut from light to extreme and from consensual to non-consensual (no necessary correspondence here). In "Chocolate

and Chains" by Atara, Spike chains up Giles and tortures him by forcing him to watch Bill and Ted's Excellent Adventure. [17] This torture (the tweedy Giles is not a fan of popular culture) is offset by a rather delicious chocolate and fruitcake fondue, which somehow ends up covering most of the chained librarian's body, and must of course be licked off by the wicked vampire torturer. The show's self-aware tongue-in-cheek sense of humour here happily migrates into the kink-fic universe.

[16] Whilst in the shows' associated kink-fic, many "scenes" are consensual and good-humoured, the canonical uber-text has to contend with Standards and Practices; thus all torture and bondage scenes are written in absolutes. By which I mean, that they are non-consensual, with characters "topping" coded as evil, and characters "bottoming" coded as good. Some characters (continuing the text's covert celebration of BDSM themes) "switch", being torturers when evil and torturees when good. Whilst ostensibly condemned, however, these torture scenes are, in fact, designed as pleasurable viewing experiences. They are eroticised visually, as we have mentioned, through motifs such as the heaving naked torso of the tortured hero and the stylish leather garb of the torturer, and through the sexualised intensity of the "top", who invariably appears to derive some form of kinky pleasure from the proceedings. The torture scene from "The Wish" (Buffy 3009), in which vampire Willow tortures Angel, is a perfect example. She does so purely for pleasure, whilst her lover, vampire Xander, participates as voyeur. She refers to the torture as "play" and to Angel as "the puppy." "Puppy play", in which one person takes the role of a puppy and others the role of trainer, is an established form of BDSM role-play.

[17] The relationship between ur-text and kink-fic is a complex one, charged with the fort/daback-and-forth of the parent/child relationship. In a canonical nod to fan-fiction, "The Wish" is set in an alternate universe, "AU" being a specific fan-fic genre. This AU, which encompasses two episodes from Season Three, "The Wish" and "Dopplegangland", has become known amongst fans as "The Wishverse". The Wishverse in turn has spawned a particular kink-fic universe, known as "The Puppyverse", which incorporates stories in which puppy Angel is "played with" BDSM style by any combination of other characters. As the "Puppyverse" illustrates, canonical erotics, ethics and power relationships are very clearly reproduced in Buffyverse kink-fic – Angel always bottoms in the Puppyverse. However they are also frequently overturned, displaced and played out in infinite explicit variation.

[18] The canon is, as I have mentioned, "kinked" in particular, ethically specific ways. It is only in the historical flashbacks, what we might call the Sadeian patriarchal past, that major male characters (in particular Angelus, the Sadeian libertine) are seen dominating bound or tortured women. Indeed, it is clearly implied at a number of points in the Buffyverse that during their evil vampire pasts both Spike and Angel were rapists, something the attempted rape of Buffy by Spike in "Seeing Red" (Buffy 6019) actualises. In "Never Leave Me" (Buffy 7009) soul-having Spike, chained up in the basement after being reanimated as a controlled killing machine by the First, tries to convince Buffy to kill him by referring to this past; 'Do you know what I have done to girls Dawn's age?' In "Hearthrob" (Angel 3001) we see Angelus in historical flashback taunting Holtz about the murder of his family, again with the implication of rape. "Tasty lot, especially the little ones… Your wife, she kept repeating on us. Of course, you know, I repeated on her a few times myself." In "Five by Five" (Angel 1015) we are shown the historical moment when

Darla gives Angelus the gypsy girl who is to result in his curse and the restoration of his soul. Angelus pushes up the skirt of the bound and gagged young woman, and leans in to bite her on her upper thigh in a manner which gives us every reason to think she will not simply be drained but also "played with", i.e. raped and tortured. This historical, patriarchal past, which the canon condemns and (almost) does not eroticise, provides the broader ethical context for the depiction of both Faith's and Buffy's sexual violence.

[19] Faith's behaviour is condemned by the story arc, and yet the camera loves her. The strangulation scene in "Consequences" (Buffy 3015) is shot in intense close-up, a reversal of every eroticised horror movie shot of woman-as-victim, from the shower scene in Psycho onwards. In "Five by Five" (Angel 1015) Faith tortures Wesley. Tying him to a chair, she spends hours working on his body with a shard of broken glass and a flamethrower in order to provoke Angel into killing her. This scene too is eroticised. Faith straddles her bleeding ex-watcher and accuses him of desiring her. The camera (in characteristic early Angel cut-up style) makes this torture scene cinematically gorgeous. Furthermore, whilst the popular filmic representation of the dominatrix as evil is drawn on in the depiction of Faith, (Basic Instinct and Body of Evidence spring to mind), it is overturned by the completed narrative. Faith gets to live, to be redeemed, and most importantly to keep her preference for being on top. In "Dirty Girls" (Buffy 7018) Faith, now rehabilitated in terms of the epic battle between good and evil, firmly describes herself, during a moment of sexual banter with Spike, as willing to play games with the boys "just as long as they don't forget who's on top."

[20] There has been much discussion of the violent relationship between Buffy and Spike. She regularly beats the crap out of him, yet he is often seen to enjoy it. "Crush" (Buffy 5014) anticipates this dynamic. "Honey," says Joyce on hearing that Spike has declared love for her daughter "… did you… somehow unintentionally lead him on in any way? Uh, send him signals?" "Well," Buffy replies, "I…I do beat him up a lot. For Spike that's like, third base." The camera regularly grants their violent sexual encounters a certain visual eroticism. The first of these in "Smashed" (Buffy 6009) begins during a fight, in which Buffy and Spike tear apart a warehouse as well as each other. Since slayers are stronger than vampires, this puts Buffy firmly "on top" [18] . She has the upper hand in this fight scene and the last shot is of her on top. In the following episode, "Wrecked" (Buffy 6010), we see them lying in the rubble the morning after. Spike, who is naked of torso, is in particular covered in welts, cuts and bruises. Their relationship is depicted as "unhealthy" by the story arc. Buffy is portrayed as continually ashamed and disgusted with herself for enjoying these assignations. However, the camera tells a different story. It continually lingers on the unzipping and re-buckling of black leather. The superhero/supervillain kick-fight of "Smashed" is shot in the deep mood creation of blue light, a light which subsequently stands for the conflicted intensity of the Buffy/Spike bond in the crucifix scene in "Beneath You" (Buffy 7002) and at the beginning of the "cookie dough" scene in "Chosen" (Buffy 7022) when Angel quizzes Buffy about her relationship with his vampire rival. There is no doubt that the erotics of the camera are bound up with the show's ethics. In "Seeing Red" (Buffy 6015) the scene in which Spike tries to rape Buffy is shot in bright white light, depicting this encounter (in which no one wears leather) as entirely outside the show's BDSM imaginary.

[21] It is at the specific post-feminist late twentieth-century cultural moment of the Buffyverse's production that it becomes permissible to show women violently

dominating men, in the way Buffy and Faith do, in a television show for teens. As we have seen, the show itself attempts to contextualise this depiction historically as part of its feminist ethics. Indeed in a broader context it continues to remain far more common to see on-screen eroticised sexual violence directed towards women. Gaspar Noe's "art house" film Irreversible (2003) with its nine minute rape scene of actress Monica Bellucci and its attendant homophobia (the rapist is a gay man) is simply one, albeit especially unpleasant, example.

[22} What does the kink-fic universe do with the eroto-politics of the canon? How does the sexual violence of our two slayer heroines play out in cyberspace? Kink-fic which adopts canonical power dynamics does seem to be more prevalent than kink-fic reversing them. There is an entire Buffyverse kink-fic site, Whips and Chains, devoted to heterosexual kink where the girls are on top, and no equivalent site in which Buffy, Willow, Faith and o. play submissives. [19] Faith stars as a "top" in innumerable stories, paired with Buffy, Angelus/Angel, Spike, Willow, Wesley, Lilah, Xander and others. However, there are a significant number of BDSM flavoured stories out there in which Angelus ties up, rapes and humiliates Buffy and/or Faith, but particularly Buffy. The Sadeian torturer whom, in present time, the canon never allows to successfully (ultimately) dominate women is, in the kink-fic universe, unleashed once more. "Common Enemy" by Harpy, for example, re-writes the scene in "Enemies" (Buffy 3017) in which Faith and Angel (pretending to be Angelus) prepare to torture a chained Buffy. [20] Harpy's narrative plays out as if it truly were Angelus who was involved. Inevitably (in keeping with his canonical character) he tortures Faith and rapes Buffy. Buffyverse het kink-fic such as this story, which puts the boys back on top, engages with the Sadeian patriarchal past of the historical flashbacks, but does not simply represent a return to it. Angelus may be loose, but ultimately he serves the pleasure of the largely female kink-fic mistresses who write his het and slash misdeeds.

[23] Like many other stories "Tooth and Nail", a Buffy/Spike kink-fic by K. J. Draft, is canonical in that Buffy mostly tops, referring to Spike as "my cute little masochist." [21] "No Angel," however, by Mint Witch, has Spike returning to Sunnydale with his soul to complete the unfinished rape of "Seeing Red" (Buffy 6019). In this story Buffy submits to Spike with an abject mixture of self-loathing and desire. It is notable that in stories like "No Angel," which play out the rape of Buffy by Spike, kink-fic writers often preface their work with a discussion of the issues. Mint Witch writes:

I wish I hadn't written this. I really do. Apparently I am far angrier with ME than previously suspected. The only reason I'm posting this is because misery loves company. Flame me, I deserve it. This fic is foul. [22]

"Angelus as rapist" stories (het or slash) tend not to involve this level of disclaimer. This is because by splitting our Irish vampire hero into Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde (Angelus and Angel) the canon "permits" Angelus, as the personification of the evil past and a version of masculinity incapable of true love or friendship, to be a rapist. Spike's character is not so bifurcated, but straddles the grey area of our more ordinary experiences of ethics. The soulless version of Spike not only evidences a very human tenderness towards Drusilla but falls in love with Buffy. "Spike as the successful rapist of Buffy" stories therefore deal less in fantasy rape and more in actualised trauma. Thus fan-fiction containing sexual violence, which reverses the gender/power dynamics of the Buffyverse canon, continues

to be framed by the feminist politics of the parent text. The Buffyverse provides an ultimately "female positive" space for the safe expression of female subjection as well as female dominance, in the associated BDSM fan-fiction; whether as sexual exploration and empowerment, or as therapy.

[24] In addition to the feminist erotogenics of Buffyverse torture scenes, the BDSM subtext in Buffy and Angel is sometimes also used to subvert the heterosexual imperative of heroism (heroes must be straight) by becoming a coded way for the show to stage boy on boy and girl on girl action involving central heroic characters. [23] This is, of course achievable only though a number of displacements (the creation of heroes with good and evil halves being the most obvious of these). The sexual subtext in same-sex torture and bondage scenes is more subterranean than it is in like-flavoured heterosexual scenes; nevertheless, it is apparent. In "In the Dark" (Angel 1003) Spike hires vampire pedophile Marcus to torture Angel into revealing the whereabouts of the gem of Amarra. Spike watches with obvious satisfaction as his grandsire's chained and naked torso is run repeatedly through with red hot iron bars by a minion for whom Angel's intended mental breakdown is clearly erotic. In "Just Rewards" (Angel 5002) the evil necromancer Hainsley pushes his hand mystically into the exposed navel of a pinned and helpless Angel and attempts to funnel Spike's soul into the opening. Both these torture scenes enable the effective penetration of Angel by Spike (at one remove). Kink-fic has taken this undercurrent of sexual tension and run with it. Legions of Spike/Angel and Spike/Angelus kink stories inhabit cyberspace. In a nice example of canon/fan-fiction reciprocity, Season Five of Angel has itself had increasingly overt fun developing the Angel/Spike homoerotic subtext. Often it achieves this BDSM style, by using physical duress to represent intense connection, for example during the fight scene between our heroes in "Destiny" (Angel 5008), where blow after bloody blow is shot in emotive and leather clad slow motion.

[25] A further illustration of the interplay between BDSM text/subtext and kink-fic in the Buffyverse is provided by the slash kink-fic site Xander Xtreme. In the canon, Xander is involved in two explicit bondage/torture scenes over the course of the show. The first, "Consequences" (Buffy 3015), in which he is sexually assaulted by Faith, we have already mentioned. In the second, "First Date" (Buffy 7014) Xander is tied up, carved up and prepared for sacrifice by Lissa, the demon woman he picked up in a hardware store. Both of these episodes are clearly coded as kink scenes in a number of ways – ropes, leather, BDSM language, sexual desire and female domination. Apart from these incidents Xander is positioned as a submissive by the story arc in other ways, notably via his status as "most rescued" Scooby. Xander Xtreme is a slash site containing two portals, "Submissive – For the Xander Who is at the Mercy of Others" and "Dominant – For the Xander Who is in Complete Control". Hence the kink-fic archived here plays with the canon in a number of ways. Xander's on screen "scenes" are heterosexual, whereas on this site he is mostly paired with Spike or Angelus. Furthermore, uncanonically, in the stories through the "Dominant" portal, he gets to be on top. Nonetheless, as elsewhere, the canon continues to provide an enduring frame. Homoerotic undercurrents, as I have illustrated, are already in place in the Buffyverse, and the power dynamics of the text are played with but never discounted. There are many more stories on the "Submissive" part of Xander Xtreme than on the "Dominant", and on the "Dominant" side Xander-as-top is always represented as a surprise, as the

overturning of a natural order, involving the delightful and reluctant submission of a usually dominant Spike or Angelus.

[26] To conclude, the kink-fic universe which the BDSM-inflected text/subtext of the Buffyverse has engendered is a pornographic space unlike other pornographies. It is non-commercial and female-dominated. The distinction between producers and consumers is elided. It is polymorphously perverse. To some extent, it degenitalises eroticism by focusing on a range of body parts and sensations. Deep emotional attachment (of writers and readers to the characters and, in the fics themselves, between characters) is a prerequisite for its erotogenics. It engages with itself ethically, through associated discussions in writers' prefaces and beta-readers' commentaries (fan-fiction reviews). This last characteristic is apparent in the show's kink-fic far more than in its vanilla-fic because BDSM brings an explicit awareness of power dynamics into the realm of desire.

[27] Deleuze has warned us of the emptiness of essentialising and romanticising perverse and transgressive identities as a revolutionary project. [24] Rather, it is important to be aware of the situated and contingent nature of identities and desires, and to commit to the process of their ethical becoming. The world of Buffyverse kink-fic is not in any sense a utopia. Its value lies in the fact that it exists in conversation with culturally and historically dominant pornographic imaginations. Nonetheless, underpinned by the queer and feminist eroto-politics of the canon, Buffyverse kink-fic is an emergent post-phallocratic space.

[28] Chris Woods' kink-fic site Mistress Kitten Fantastico is an example of its emergent possibilities. Devoted to Willow and Tara B/D (bondage and domination) stories, the web page is prefaced with the following remarks:

D/S in no way involves the submissive partner being demeaned… The stories on this site should depict a mutually loving, mutually empowering relationship. [25]

The entry of young male writers like Chris into the femme-slash genre is very new (femme-slash itself is relatively recent) and has been pioneered in particular in the Buffyverse. The configuration of interaction and desire present in this context is entirely different from the straight male market's conditioned consumption of girl on girl magazine spreads and porn movies. As with most femme-slash, Mistress Kitten Fantastico's fan-fiction writers are largely women. Their stories and comments happily interact with Chris's. Shared identification with and attraction to lesbian BDSM, in an intimate, respectful and erotic frame, across gender boundaries, is a definitively post-patriarchal kind of pornography, and a small but significant manifestation of the broader effects of the show.

[29] In the world De Sade railed against and masturbated over in his writings, two things (which he and his era consequently feared and desired) were not permitted – female sexual power without prostitution and condemnation (whether in the brothel or the marriage bed), and homosexuality without shame and corruption. The Buffyverse, with the help of a little sub-textual smoke and mirrors for the benefit of the Standards and Practices guys, manages to stage both. Furthermore it incites and invites a body of kinky fan-fiction not only to come out and play, but to think ethically about its erotics. De Sade through the looking glass for popular "youth" television? I think Buffy and Angel

have, just as De Sade did, made a significant intervention into the collective sexual imaginary – gesturing with substance towards the proliferation of post-phallocratic desiring subjects.

Notes

[1] Linda Rust. "Welcome to the House of Fun: Buffy Fanfiction as a Hall of Mirrors." *Refractory: A Journal of Entertainment Media* March. Vol 2, 2003. www.refractory.unimelb.edu.au/journalissues/vol2/lindarust.htm (paragraph 4).

[2] Spike's intriguing remark in "Buffy vs. Dracula" (Buffy 5001) for example, to the effect that the Count owes him eleven pounds, clearly invites stories about the circumstances surrounding the debt. This challenge has been duly taken up by fan-fiction writers in stories such as Caro's "Sound and Fury" and Karenbear's "Eleven Pound." Angel's demand that Spike hold his hand whilst fighting the guardians of the Deeper Well in "A Hole in the World" (Angel 5015), to which Spike replies 'St. Petersburg', would be another example. It obviously begs the question – what happened in St. Petersburg? Tania's story "St. Petersburg" is one of the many fan-fics which attempts to fill in the blanks. Caro. "Sound and Fury." Character Pairings: Spike/Drusilla. Published: 2004. Rated: PG- 13. Archived: The Bloody Awful Sandlot (a Spike site) http://www.the-sandlot.com; Karenbear "Eleven Pound." Character Pairings: Spike/Xander, Spike/Dracula. Published: 2004. Rated: R. Archived: Biteable (a Xander/Spike slash site) http://www.biteable.co.uk; Tania. "St. Petersburg." Character Pairings: Angelus/Spike. Published: 2004. Rated: NC-17 (British18). Archived: The Adventures of Captain Peroxide and Deadboy (a Spike and Angel/Angelus site with a lot of slash) http://www.fangedfour.com/deadboy.

[3] Lady Angel the Part-time Succubus (Angelia Sparrow). "Scary Visual Places." Character Pairings: Giles/Joyce, Cordelia/Wesley, Willow/Oz, Angelus/Xander/Faith. Published: 2002. Rated: NC-17, BDSM. Archived: http://www.geocities.com/lady_aethelynde.

[4] Spanking the Slayerettes: http://www.spankingtheslayerettes.com; Xander Xtreme: http://www.xanderxtreme.com; Buffy's X Adventures: http://rosie.buffysmut,com.

[5] Triality: A Wuffara Archive http://papa-bear.com/Wuffara.

[6] Darryl Jones, *Horror: A Thematic History in Fiction and Film*. New York: Oxford University Press, 2002. p 85.

[7] Henry Jenkins, *Textual Poachers*. London and New York: Routledge, 1992. p188.

[8] Camille Bacon-Smith, *Enterprising Women: Television Fandom and the Creation of Popular Myth*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania, 1992.

[9] Esther Saxey, "Staking a Claim – The Series and Its Slash Fiction." Roz Kaveney, Ed. R*eading the Vampire Slayer: An Unofficial Critical Companion to Buffy and Angel*. London and New York: Tauris Parke, 2001.

[10] Sam Leith, "How I Wreaked Havoc in the Elf Kingdom." *The Daily Telegraph*, 03/01/04.

[11] Joss Whedon, The Bronze VIP Posting Board May 6th, 2000. Archived: BuffyGuide.com http://www.buffyguide.com/extras/josswt.shtml.

[12] Michel Foucault, *Madness and Civilisation: A History of Insanity in the Age of Reason*. 1961. Trans. Richard Howard. London and New York: Vintage Books, 1988. p 210.

[13] Thomas Hibbs, "Buffy the Vampire Slayer as Feminist Noir." James B. South. Ed. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Philosophy: Fear and Trembling in Sunnydale*. Chicago and La Salle, Illinois: Open Court, 2003. p 57.

[14] Chris Lee, "Safe Word." Character Pairings: Buffy/Angel. Published: 10/01/04. Rated: NC-17, BDSM. Archived: the "Hardcore" section of Morbid Love – The Darker Side of Buffy and Angel http://www.euphoriq.org/love/archive.

[15] Amy, "Switch." Character Pairings: Lilah/Faith. Published: no date. Rated: NC-17, BDSM. Archived: Innergeekdom.net (a general fan-fic site) http://innergeekdom.net/Fic/Angel.htm.

[16] Ozmandayus, "Ferocious Intent." Character Pairings: Faith/Angel. Published: 2003. Rated: NC-17, BDSM. Archived: The Mystic Muse (a general BtVS and AtS fan-fiction site) http://mysticmuse.net.

[17] Atara, "Chocolate and Chains." Character Pairings: Spike/Giles. Published: September 2000. Rated: NC-17, mild BDSM. Archived: the "Buffy the Vampire Slayer" section of Powerplays – Fanfic With a Kinky Edge (a general kink-fic site) http://atarastein.tripod.com/index.htm.

[18] This is clearly established in "Sanctuary" (Angel 1019), when Angel and Buffy face off over Faith and Angel says, "… in case you've forgotten, you're a little bit stronger than I am."

[19] Whips and Chains (a women-on-top Buffyverse het site, with some slash) http://www.geocities.com/whipsandchainsbtvs.

[20] Harpy, "Common Enemy." Character Pairings: Angelus/Buffy/Faith. Published: no date. Rated: NC-17, BDSM. Archived: All Angelus (an Angelus site) under "Buffy: Angsty" http://www.geocities.com/allangelusfic.

[21] K. J (Katherine Jay) Draft, "Tooth and Nail." Character Pairings Buffy/Spike. Published: January 2002. Rated: NC-17, BDSM. Archived: Nautibitz.com (a personal Buffyverse fan- fic site, mostly NC-17) http://www.nautibitz.com/kj/fiction.html.

[22] Mint Witch, "No Angel." Character Pairings: Spike/Buffy. Published: no date. Rated: NC- 17, Non-Con. Archived: Mint Witch's BtVS Fan-Fiction www.the-sandlot.com/mintwitch/mwfic.html.

[23] The show's "out" gay relationships, between Willow and Tara and later Willow and Kennedy, are not situated within the BDSM canonical imaginary. Lesbians are traditionally coded as "deviant" in the horror genre, so this omission, subversive in its own way, is clearly a deliberate stratagem.

[24] "I share Michel [Foucault]'s horror of those who call themselves marginal: the romanticism of madness, of delinquency, of perversion, of drugs… But lines of flight, which is to say assemblages of desire, are not created by marginal elements for me." Giles Deleuze, *Desire and Pleasure*. 1977. Trans Melissa McMahon. 1997 http://www.arts.monash.edu.au/visarts/globe/issue5/delfou.html (Paragraph F).

[25] Mistress Kitten Fantastico,

http://www.alia.customer.netspace.net/au/kitten.htm. This site is maintained by Chris Cook. It is on the basis of discussions amongst beta readers on other related Buffyverse websites, such as Mystic Muse, where Chris is referred to as "he," that I assign Chris a male gender in this paper.