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"You're on My Campus, Buddy!" Sovereign and Disciplinary Power at Sunnydale High

[1] In exploring models of power articulated via the three principals at Sunnydale High, I consider the portrayal of school authority in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* to be not only symptomatic in its reflection of cultural anxieties, but also diagnostic in its exposure of the ways in which school authority fails, and ultimately pedagogic in the alternative educational practices signalled on the show.

[2] Those looking at representations of educators in popular culture tend to have adopted a cultural studies model in examining the interaction between such representations and public perceptions, and have therefore focussed on their role in the shaping of perceptions of teachers (Farber & Holm 1994 Weber 1995; Dalton 1999; McCullick et al 2003) and on their contribution to the lore of both practicing and qualifying teachers (Farhi 1999; Grant 2002; Dollof 2003). A study of images of principals in popular culture (Glanz, 1997) identifies three basic models – the Numskull, the Bureaucrat and the Authoritarian - and examines the contribution of these models to conceptions of the role within and beyond the profession. Such a study of educators in a cult high-school based show might therefore yield productive, if predictable, results; the representation of at least two of the three principals in *Buffy* can be seen to fit within these identified stereotypes, and the third relies on shared cultural models in order to confound our expectations. Thus far, the show conforms to audience expectations in its representations of school life, and uses them to cue our responses to and sympathies with the teenage protagonists in a world where high school is literally built on hellish foundations. These observations might seem to contradict the show's much vaunted originality and depth of characterisation. However, I would argue that *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* goes beyond using stereotypical representations in order to trigger responses on cue, to invite our recognition of the ideologies embodied within the stereotypes and of why we dislike and deride them. In inviting such recognition, the show can be read as offering a critique not only of bad principals, but of the conceptions of authority that make them so.

[3] In the field of *Buffy* studies the nature of school authority structures has been considered as a part of a broader consideration of power in the show, by Buinicki & Enns (2001) and by Wall and Zyrd (2001). Focusing on the Buffy's college experience, Daspit (2003) discusses problems in modernity and post-modernity in education. While considering the three portrayals of school headship in *Buffy*, my concern is to explore authority within the school institution itself as constructed through role of the Principal, using Foucault's theories of sovereign and disciplinary authority.

[4] Foucault traces constructions of authority from pre-modern hierarchically ordered or sovereign systems, in which power is expressed through individuals and their agents, through to disciplinary systems in which authority is universally diffused, operating constantly via inter- and self-surveillance among subjects in a process of coercion and normalisation. In *Discipline and Punish* in particular, Foucault examines the ways in which the explicit methods of control relying on fear used in pre-modern times in Western cultures have been superseded by more

covert controls or disciplinary constructions, in which power is dispersed through social networks and institutions. (Foucault 1979)

[5] The usefulness of Foucault's models for defining and understanding the contemporary nature of authority in schools is the subject of some academic debate (see, for example, Covaleskie 2004 and McDonough 2004) and gives rise to examination of the ways in which such authority is constructed between students, faculty and society. This is mirrored in more popular debate not only among practitioners, but also in the wider world, where the nature and efficacy of authority in schools appears as a burgeoning moral panic.

[6] In the UK school discipline makes frequent appearances in news headlines; Internet news searches suggest that this is the case across Western cultures.[1] The proposed solutions to this crisis fall into two clear camps: either the advocation of what are commonly called positive behaviour programmes, which in their attempts to make student behaviour self-regulated could be described as disciplinary, or calls for hard sanctions and zero tolerance led and enforced by a strong head, which could be described as sovereign. Recent trends towards stringent discipline policies can be characterised as reactionary in that they reverse not only liberal-humanistic approaches developed in schools in the latter half of the 20th Century, but also the historical development in the nature of authority and punishment observed by Foucault. Such trends in themselves suggest an illogically pre-modern response to perceived post-modern threats to schools, which are, in their construction of social and curricular knowledge, modernist. In other words, in an age of growing uncertainty the response is to insist ever more strongly yet ever more vainly, on the certainties of the past.

[7] These same trends are mirrored at Sunnydale High in the roles of Principal Flutie and his successor, Snyder. The first model I consider is that adopted by Principal Flutie. His leadership style seems at first to reflect some features of disciplinary authority: On first meeting Buffy, he tells her that 'the kids here are free to call me Bob' (Buffy 1001). His use of the pronoun 'we' characterises almost all his exchanges with students, and suggests equality, shared priorities. But this initial encounter is telling in that it exposes as a myth the notion of communication between faculty and students on a basis of equality: Flutie appears less than comfortable with the idea of being called by his first name when Buffy tries it, and reveals that, in fact, students do not do so anyway. This indicates understanding on both parts that the principal holds the power. Furthermore, when he tells Buffy: 'We want to service your needs, and help you to respect our needs. And if your needs and our needs don't mesh…' his use of the word 'needs' is euphemistic, the threat at the end implicit: If she doesn't conform to the rules, she'll be expelled. Although more sympathetically portrayed than Snyder, who openly threatens: 'Just give me a reason to kick you out, Summers' (*Buffy* 2021), from the outset we can see that Flutie's wielding of authority is less than self-aware. Buffy's subsequent encounter with Flutie in the same episode (when she tries to leave the premises on an apocalypse-averting mission) repeats many of these features –his use of the first person plural pronoun, a veiled threat of expulsion – and here they are underlined by the symbolic locking of the gate, imprisoning Buffy within school codes which actively work against her more informed priorities.

[8] In all this we see a central difficulty in characterising schools in themselves as institutions in which power is disciplinary: students tend to perceive school authority as sovereign, and with good reason. Such

strategies ultimately depend on the enforcing power of the staff. As educationalists such as Covaleskie (2004) have pointed out, students do not set the agenda or make the rules, and can be punished for failing to adhere to them. Studies of positive behaviour policies and programmes, in which teachers are exhorted to maintain strict and rigorous application of school codes and rules while exhorting students to take responsibility for their own behaviour, reveal the same underlying tension[2]

[9] Through Flutie, the ultimate effect of adhering to such a model without the underlying sovereign authority to enforce it is demonstrated in 'The Pack' (*Buffy*1006). In this episode an enraged Flutie attempts to remonstrate with a hyena-possessed group of students who have just eaten the school mascot – a piglet – alive. When he tells them: 'You're busted! Yeah! You're goin' down!' we can see that having developed no discourse of authority himself, he borrows that of the cop show. 'That's it! My office, right now...Now!' shows a rare use of the imperative in his attempt to be an enforcer, but his lack of authority and the impotence of his sanctions are revealed: in the face of outrage, he can only threaten detention, then a phone call home, and finally a visit to the school counsellor. His hysterical question – 'Are you insane?' - as they turn on him suggests his lack of understanding not only of their behaviour, but also of the overturning of the hierarchy of which he has been such a compromised representative. The symbolism of his being devoured by the pack echoes a common descriptor among teachers for those seen as too weak to control a class - 'she/he will be eaten alive.'

[10] However, ineffective leadership such as Flutie's does not mean that no students will participate in the conventions of disciplinary structures, but rather that such participation is conditioned by the validity for them of the truths and imperatives propounded within the school. Foucault observes, "In discipline, punishment is only one element of a double system: gratification-punishment" (Foucault, 1979, p.180). Students in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and in the world will self-regulate when they either anticipate rewards or fear sanctions, on both an institutional and a larger social scale. Thus we see Willow and Cordelia as both compliant and productive. They work hard because the rewards accruing hold value for them; they will pass exams in order to succeed later in life. Willow in particular frequently prioritises homework over other more enjoyable activities – a classic example of the deferred gratification habitually practised by able, middle class students. Even Oz, the master of work avoidance and rejector of the career path, succumbs and ends up repeating his senior year rather than dropping out. But for students of lesser ability such as Xander, hard work brings few rewards – a D- rather than a fail. (*Buffy* 2016) He is driven by fear of future consequences, rather than deferred gratification. Even Buffy, with her knowledge of other conditions and imperatives, and her frequent questioning of the usefulness of her studies for life beyond school, struggles to balance this fear with that of impending apocalypses.

[11] The driver here, the knowledge, propagated in schools and participated in by students, is that failure in school results in failure in life. Foucault characterises this phenomenon in schools as an element of a hierarchizing penalty system which 'distributes students according to the use that can be made of them later in life.' (Foucault 1970 p.182) Evidence of this system is manifested early in Season One when Willow tells Xander:

> You remember, you fail math, you flunk out of school, you end up being the guy at the pizza place that sweeps the floor and says, 'Hey, kids, where's the cool parties this weekend?' We've been through this. (*Buffy* 1006)

Here we see the normalising process at work. A poignant reflection on the theme exists in the comment below from Matt Stone, co-creator of South Park, interviewed in Moore's (2002) documentary film *Bowling for Columbine*:

> I remember being in sixth grade, and I had to take the test to get into honors math in seventh grade, and they were like, 'Don't screw this up, because if you screw this up you won't get into honors math in seventh grade, and of course if you don't get into honors math in seventh grade you won't get into honors math in eighth grade, and then not ninth grade and not 10th grade or 11th grade, and then you'll just die poor and lonely …the teachers, the counsellors… scare you into conforming in school.

The central thesis of Moore's film is the potential for extreme damage in creating a culture of fear. Such a culture is actively propagated at Sunnydale High not only by Snyder, for example in his taunting of Buffy with the prospect of a career in Hot-Dog-on-a-Stick (*Buffy* 3002), but also reinforced by students in what could be described as an inter-surveillance, for example Cordelia in her frequent predictions that Xander will be a 'loser'.

[12] Such examples would tend to characterise aspects of authority in the school as disciplinary, in that they foster normalisation through the propagation of socially constructed truths. And, as McDonough (2004) points out, schools operate within a larger social framework which 'tracks working class kids into working class jobs.'

[13] With the demise of Flutie the notion of student self-regulation, however illusory, dies too. It is replaced by a more clearly sovereign model in Principal Snyder. The nature of Snyder's rule and the contrast with his predecessor is made clear in our first encounter with him in 'The Puppet Show' (1009):

> SNYDER: My predecessor, Mr. Flutie, may have gone in for all that touchy-feely relating nonsense, but he was eaten. You're in my world now. And Sunnydale has touched and felt for the last time.

Snyder's use of 'my', in contrast with Flutie's 'we', is the first of many. There is no pretence at a democratic rule; it is his world, his campus. The larger political ramifications of such a rule are slyly suggested through Giles, in the first reference we ever have to Snyder as 'Our new Führer, Mr. Snyder.'(*Buffy* 1009) then later through Cordelia who calls him 'a tiny, impotent Nazi' (*Buffy* 2001) and Ms Barton, who refers to him as 'Commandant Snyder' (*Buffy* 3006).

[14] That Snyder's model is reactionary in educational terms is clear in his beliefs about students. He sees them as driven by the basest of urges and appetites, describing them as 'Crawling around, mindlessly bent on feeding and mating. Destroying everything in sight in their relentless, pointless desire to exist … just a bunch of hormonal time bombs' which it

is the faculty's duty to control. (*Buffy* 2001) These views on the nature of childhood resemble those of early Victorian educationalists.[3]

[15] The central tenets of his model of leadership are particularly revealed in 'School Hard' (*Buffy* 2003). He tells Buffy and the recalcitrant Sheila: "A lot of educators tell students, 'Think of your principal as your pal'…. I say, 'Think of me as your judge, jury, and executioner.'" This puts the school fairly within an archaic judicial framework in which his authority is total and unmediated, and flags Snyder's educational philosophy and practices as likely to be regressive.

[16] Later in the episode, Snyder's responses during the attack on the school by Spike and a vampire gang reveals how his authority is invested in a traditional conception of principal/student roles. He insists, 'This is my school. What I say goes!'; power is located in the person rather than the institution, so a challenge to authority is a direct challenge to the person. Buffy asserts her authority in this crisis, instructing the trapped group, 'They will kill everybody in this room. Nobody goes out, nobody comes in until I say so. Do you hear me?' She is the one with the knowledge that is valid ('I'm the one that knows how to stop them'). Snyder's responses - to Buffy's mother Joyce, 'She's a student. What does she know? and 'I say this is not happening!' and to Buffy: 'You don't tell me! I tell you!' - are illuminating, firstly because of his denial of the validity of Buffy's knowledge and of the invasion of her reality into his, and secondly because he rejects knowledge coming from a student as unacceptable because it reverses the traditional one-way transmission in schools.

[17] Snyder's sovereign approach is also interesting in that it exposes the compulsion underlying more disciplinary styles such as Flutie's – this is evident in what Xander describes as 'his interesting take on the volunteer concept' (*Buffy* 2006]; he compels students into participating in activities such as the school talent show (*Buffy* 1009) or selling candy for the band (*Buffy* 3006), the volunteer safety program for Halloween (*Buffy* 2006), and cleaning graffiti (*Buffy* 3006).

[18] His punishments are qualitatively different from Flutie's in other ways too: Snyder's sanctions expose individuals and make a public demonstration of his power; he makes Buffy, Willow and Xander participate in the talent show as a punishment for mocking the institution (*Buffy* 2006); he forces Buffy and Sheila to set up and front the parent teacher night as a demonstration of their commitment to the school (*Buffy* 2003). This is a further way in which authority at Sunnydale High from Flutie to Snyder reverses the social trends observed by Foucault: historically, standard punishments changed from pain and public humiliation to imprisonment. Xander's observation draws our attention to this when he reminds Snyder: 'Can I just mention, that detention is a time-honored form of punishment?'(*Buffy* 1009) - detention being a school's approximation of imprisonment. Furthermore, in considering Snyder as a representative of the principal-as-sovereign, we can note that as Foucault considered the point of making punishment both uniform and hidden was to avoid provoking rebellion, Snyder's conviction in his right and ability to exert control is clear in his choice of public punishment over private penance.

[19] The shortcomings of the sovereign model for as a basis for school leadership are also dramatised through Snyder. Unlike in the disciplinary model, surveillance cannot be total. Although Snyder tries to operate as a one-man panopticon, his failure in surveillance is illustrated not only in Giles and the Scoobies' success in prosecuting their own

agenda despite him, but also more directly in 'Choices' (*Buffy* 3019): He makes himself ridiculous in his attempts to discover drug dealing on campus, first through mistaking a lunch bag and then a box of demon spiders as contraband.

[20] However, as Season 2 progresses into Season 3, it becomes apparent that Snyder's power derives not only from his autocratic take on the principal's role, but also from the more powerful figure of the Mayor. While apparently operating as sovereign on campus, Snyder, it transpires, is merely the agent rather than the source of power. In the hierarchical and dependent relationship between principal and city council here, one can read a representation of real world schools' relationships with the police and the judiciary. The loss of traditional respect for teachers and headteachers is a phenomenon frequently observed and mourned in educational settings. There is a wealth of documentation of the resultant necessity for schools to involve external forces in maintaining discipline – in the UK from an on-campus police presence to the prosecution of parents whose children persistently truant.

[21] Moreover, in *Buffy* we can see an illustration of not only the nature but also the dangers of such dependency. While the Mayor's backing does appear to increase Snyder's power, particularly in the complicity of other agencies such as the police, the pitfalls inherent in hierarchically derived power are dramatised in his battle to keep the expelled Buffy out of Sunnydale High. In 'Dead Man's Party' (*Buffy* 3002) he smirks and observes, 'Wouldn't that be interesting?' to Buffy's mother when she threatens to go to the Mayor. Later in the episode he advises Giles to 'take it up with the city council', secure in the Mayor's support. However, Giles counters with a threat to go to the State Supreme Court, telling Snyder: 'You're powerful in local circles, but I believe I can make life very difficult for you, professionally speaking. And Buffy will be allowed back in.' Buffy's pleasure in observing 'I'm really back in school because the school board overruled you. Wow. That's like having your whole ability to do this job called into question, when you think about it.'(*Buffy* 3003) demonstrates her understanding of the nature of Snyder's power as an agent within a sovereign system. He derives his authority from an external hierarchy, and such hierarchies can be accessible to those with conflicting interests; unless you have privileged access to the ultimate authority, your card can be trumped. This area is a particularly sensitive one for some UK schools, where in recent years pupil expulsions, enforced by the school and local education authorities, have been overturned by appeals panels and have even been the subject of ministerial intervention.[4]

[22] And there are further dangers within such hierarchical structures; Snyder is eventually literally devoured by the greater power, as Mayor Wilkins transforms into a giant demon snake and swallows him. His final cries still reinforce the characteristic nature of his rule – 'This is not orderly! This is not discipline! ... You're on my campus buddy!' (*Buffy* 3022). As with Flutie, we can observe a desperate insistence on his authority in the face of contradictory evidence. Also like Flutie, he fails to understand the nature and importance of the foundations of power on which his authority is constructed. Snyder's death provides a dramatic metaphor for contemporary vulnerability of schools, in that they can be attacked by the very systems of power that they exist to serve and depend on for their authority. As Richard Arums observes, "adversarial legalism (leads to) the intimidation of school personnel … and an undermining of the school's moral authority". (Arums 2003 cited in Taylor Jr. S 2003)

[23] It is interesting to note that, like the nature of power in schools, neither Flutie's nor Snyder's leadership styles can be described as wholly disciplinary nor sovereign; Flutie fails to recognise the need for some sovereign-style back-up in his positive policies, and Snyder, while he achieves a measure of control though intimidatory measures, fails to achieve complete rule over his limited domain when his subjects are neither compliant nor participatory. Each model can be seen to depend on the incorporation of some aspects of the other. However, the failure of either should not be attributed to its characteristic nature. As Giroux observes,

> 'The language of lesson plans and upward mobility and the forms of teacher authority on which it was based has been radically delegitimated by the recognition that culture and power are central to the authority/knowledge relationship. Modernism's faith in the past has given way to a future for which traditional markers no longer make sense.' (Giroux 1994)

Schools have lost authority because students, who are navigating a world of dangers and possibilities undreamed of by previous generations, recognize the certainties they offer or threaten as redundant. It is a lack of recognition of student realities and experiences that renders an overlaid model of discipline delegitimised and ineffectual. The refusal of educators to allow for a student construction of knowledge, or for the possibility of their agency within such a construction, is an epistemic failure of which the consequences on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* – the destruction of the institution and the endangerment of the world – could be read as metaphors for the social consequences of pursuing a reactionary educational agenda[5].

[24] If schools as essentially modernist institutions must respond effectively to the conditions of post-modern society, then it is unlikely that reactionary measures will work. Logic alone would suggest that an effective response would be characterised by an appreciation of post-modern conditions. As Giroux suggests, 'there is a need for cultural workers to address the emergence of a new generation of youth who are increasingly constructed within postmodern economic and cultural conditions that are almost entirely ignored by the schools' (Giroux 1994). He argues that schools must not only themselves understand such conditions, but must equip students to understand socialising forces if they are to have any hope of agency at all. While Giroux's focus is the advocacy of popular culture within a transformed curriculum, his advice is as apt for Sunnydale High; one of the many ways in which the High-School-on-a-Hellmouth metaphor works is as a dramatisation of the ways in which we must either attain informed agency or risk being devoured by the powers at work in a transformed world we only dimly apprehend.

[25] Flutie's failure to realise the existence of the students' world leads to his end; Snyder's insistence on archaic models, his refusal to recognise Buffy's power and the importance of her role, lead to his. The school is destroyed, in the end, because its leaders do not allow for alternatives.

[26] In Robin Wood we see such an alternative. He is the only principal to survive, and he achieves this because he wields authority in a way which takes account of and responds to a differently constructed knowledge. The contrast with the previous models is underlined from the

outset: His words in our first encounter with him 'Gotta start deadening young minds'. (*Buffy* 7001) show a recognition of the limited nature of education/ knowledge offered by schools. This reminds us of Spike's analysis of schools as 'Just factories, spewing out mindless little automatons'. (*Buffy* 6001)

[27] Unlike his predecessors, Wood realises that schools must demonstrate some understanding of conditions of adolescence: He tells Buffy 'They need to feel like there's someone around here who actually understands them.' (*Buffy* 7002) Indeed, this is his initial rationale for employing her. When he advises her:

> A little authority can be a wonderful thing. Just remember that while you are here to help, you're not here to be their friend. Trust me, you open that door, and these students will eat you alive. (*Buffy* 7002)

we see he also has a pragmatic awareness of the need for some disciplinary framework within the teacher/student relationship: Here implicit criticism of Flutie's model emerges, while the bullying archaism of Snyder's approach is equally mocked when he observes: 'There's only three things these kids understand: the boot, the bat, and the bastinada'. (*Buffy* 7002)

[28] In the episode 'Him' (*Buffy* 7006) we see a direct contrast with Snyder's techniques; where Snyder bullies Willow into changing the failing grade of a member of the swim team and into undertaking basketballer Percy's work so these sports stars can earn the school glory, Wood reprimands the footballer RJ for 'getting these young, impressionable women to do [his] homework'. For Wood, the moral welfare of the individual is placed above the status of the institution.

[29] Which is not to say that we cannot see any similarity in their methods: In 'Never Leave Me' (*Buffy* 7009) he threatens two students responsible for graffiti with an adverse entry on their permanent records. When they show no concern, he realises his bluff has been called and tells them:

> This whole permanent record thing is such a myth anyway. Colleges never ask for anything past your SAT scores, and it's not like employers are gonna be calling up to check to see how many days you missed back in high school.

He then cheerfully offers to involve the police instead. Although, unlike Flutie, he acknowledges his lack of real authority where students are not compliant, like Snyder, he is willing to derive the power he needs from outside agencies. This is also an interesting exchange because it exposes the fear imperative discussed earlier as fraudulent; Wood supplants false with real knowledge; in doing so he inspires respect in the students, and makes his claim not to be bluffing more credible, having just exposed one school shibboleth.

[30] It is in the nature of his knowledge, however, rather than in the way he wears his authority, that we see the real point of contrast between Wood and the former incumbents. Wood is the son of a Slayer, raised by a Watcher. Unlike Flutie, he understands the conditions and imperatives of this world, and privileges them. Unlike Snyder, he recognises Buffy for what she is and can do; he takes orders from her and puts himself at her disposal. He joins with helping the group of potential

slayers - a group of young women developing the skills and building the power necessary for their survival in dramatically changed conditions of reality. He has learned from experience that the mission is more important than he is, even to the point of turning away from his goal of avenging his mother's death at Spike's hands. He recognises that the source of evil must be attacked rather than its individual manifestations.

[31] Wood understands the nature of the limitations of his role in the face of greater global issues (and how much more global an issue is there than the end of the world?). This is shown, for example when he sacks Buffy, telling her,

> there's nothing here for you. I mean, people are leaving town, half the kids don't even bother showing up anymore. You've got things to deal with that are much worse than anything here. Look at the big picture.' (*Buffy* 7015),

and later when he tells Faith 'Yeah, well I'm the principal of a school where nobody finished, and I am completely out of my league in this.' (*Buffy* 7018) His ultimate comment on the school, in the season and the show's finale, mocks the obsolescence of many school disciplinary concerns in the face of greater imperatives:

> Welcome to Sunnydale High…There's no running in the halls, no yelling, no gum chewing. Apart from that, there's only one rule. If they move, kill them.' (*Buffy* 7022)

[32] Although in his leadership one can, inevitably, recognise features of institutional power described by Foucault, one could argue that these are transformed to serve an agenda which begins to look like critical pedagogy in its foregrounding of this other world of youth. Wood privileges the knowledge and skills necessary not only to survive in it, but also to recognise and fight against its more malevolent and harmful manifestations of power. Ultimately therefore I suggest that the show does not so much critique models of discipline in schools themselves, as suggest that any such model is doomed to fail if the school does not address the dichotomy between the knowledge or ideologies propounded within its walls, and those experienced by students in their lives beyond the institution.

[33] As well as through Robin Wood, through the responses and experiences of the Scoobies and in the pedagogic relationship between Buffy and Giles we see alternative ways forward: Willow is all compliance and productivity for most of Seasons 1-3, a participator in the school's ideologies and disciplinary structures. However, she eventually jumps off the track that takes her from study to high grades to offers from top UK as well as US Universities: instead she opts for UC Sunnydale, because it will give her both the autonomy to design her own curriculum and the opportunity to engage in the fight against evil. (*Buffy* 3019) Here it could be suggested that Willow has achieved the Foucauldian ideal of acquiring informed moral agency.

[34] Xander's experiences beyond school too suggest a resistance to the message of 'fail in school, fail in life' – it is not until he has left school that he finds he has worthwhile skills, and realises the value of his contributions to the Scooby Gang. It is a depressing comment on the nature of schools that we see Xander as having nothing that is valued by them, and how this experience shapes his perceptions of himself.

[35] Although there is not space here to explore fully the pedagogic model constructed between Buffy and Giles, it is worth observing that the development from his initial and largely fruitless attempts to enforce an institutional, Council-derived authority in Seasons 1 & 2, through to Buffy's request that he resume the Watcher's role in Season 5, offer an alternative to more conventional constructs of the teacher/student relationship, one which again appears to embrace some of the principles of critical pedagogy.* After her encounter with Dracula, Buffy realises that he understood the nature of her power better than she herself does. She tells Giles:

I need to know more. About where I come from, about the other slayers. I mean, maybe ... maybe if I could learn to control this thing, I could be stronger, I could be better. But I'm scared. I know it's gonna be hard. And I can't do it without you. I need your help. I need you to be my Watcher again. (*Buffy* 5001)

Buffy asks Giles to resume his pedagogic role because she values his knowledge; she knows it will help to understand the nature of her power and its sources, and thus become more powerful.

[36] Her later defeat of the Council is possible not though her power, which she always had, but her realisation of it– this knowledge enables her to take control. She tells Travers and his entourage of Watchers: 'I've had a lot of people talking at me the last few days. Everyone just lining up to tell me how unimportant I am. And I've finally figured out why. Power. I have it. They don't. This bothers them.'(*Buffy* 5012) The resonance with critical pedagogy is underscored.

[37] Through the central metaphor of the High School as Hell, the show exposes and explores the anxieties and alienation experienced by students. The source of some of these anxieties can be traced through to the authority and pedagogies embodied in school. In the alternative models offered in Principal Wood and Rupert Giles, one can read a plea for a radical rethinking of the school as institution. In considering a critical theory of education, Kellner (2004) states that 'A reconstruction of education could help create subjects better able to negotiate the complexities of emergent forms of everyday life, labor, and culture, as contemporary life becomes more complex and dangerous.'; my consideration of school authority in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* reads an advocacy of such a reconstruction in the show, though like Buinicki and Enns (2001) I acknowledge that textual analysis alone cannot determine its potential to effect such change.

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Notes

[1] The following sample is taken from a search conducted on 21.05.2004:

- Rethinking Discipline: What are we teaching our students when discipline policies are reduced to punitive measures grounded in coercion, control and compliance?: *Rethinking Schools Online* http://www.rethinkingschools.org/archive/14_01/dis141.shtml
- It is time to restore respect for authority to its rightful place. That in turn must mean a sustained drive to strengthen school

discipline *Secretary of State for Education; December 2002* http://education.guardian.co.uk/classroomviolence/story/0,12388,859290,00.html

- Lack of Morals and Discipline: A Huge Problem – *The Massachusetts News* http://www.massnews.com/past_issues/other/10_Oct/kilpat.htm
- School discipline ranks as one of the major concerns voiced by the public about schools and the school system *Australian Journal of Social Issues*: February 01, 2000 http://static.highbeam.com/a/australianjournalofsocialissues/february012000/
- Only four out of 10 members of the NAS/UWT believe that their school's discipline policies work *Times Educational Supplement* 21/05/2004; http://www.tes.co.uk/
- Let school authority be firm, not fuzzy http://www.theteacherspot.com/maxwell.html
- Weak school discipline disrupts learning *United Press International* . http://www.safeyouth.org/scripts/display/NewsDisplay.asp?NewsNbr=1466

[2] For example Joan Gaustad (1992) reviews studies of school discipline in order to make broad recommendations for practice, and Joan Mowat (1997) studies the impact of such a scheme in a Scottish secondary school identifies successful components. Both these and similar studies reveal the high level of compunction and teacher enforcement underlying such strategies, even if this aspect is not the focus of the study.

[3] A famous example is the Rev. Carus Wilson of Cowan Bridge School, satirised by Charlotte Brontë in her thinly disguised portrait, Mr Brocklehurst in *Jane Eyre*. Brocklehurst asserts: "my mission is to mortify in these girls the lusts of the flesh; to teach them to clothe themselves with shame-facedness and sobriety" (Bronte, (1978) Ch 7 P.3 first published 1847)

[4] For example, in 2002 two national teacher unions identified nearly 140 cases where headteachers felt they were undermined by expulsions being overturned. One teaching union alone, the Association of Teachers and Lecturers, had 70 ongoing cases during the month of July. Source: Guardian Unlimited; http://education.guardian.co.uk/schools/story/0,5500,811077,00.html

[5] That the type of knowledge propagated at Sunnydale High is not that which is necessary for survival on the Hellmouth has also been noted by Davis (2001) and Daspit (2003), and the broader political consequences discussed by Wall and Zryd (2001).

Editors' note: see Zoe-Jane Playden's essay in *Slayage* 5 on training vs. education.

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