Sherryl Vint

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

(1) Feminism has a particularly close relationship with the study of popular culture. Feminist scholars have been concerned with studying the way ideology both maps and shapes the desires of women, offering critiques of texts that construct feminine identity in terms desirable to patriarchy and celebrating texts which offer visions of women's own desire. Feminist scholarship has also been important in forcing us to reconnect the researcher to the object studied. Feminism eschews that practice of "objectivity," wary of the pretense that the subjectivity of the researcher does not enter into the research practice, that intellect alone, not emotion, is relevant. Feminism as a cultural and scholarly practice is important to my sense of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* as a feminist text.

(2) First, I must confess that I am a *Buffy* fan. This was originally a closet obsession; it seemed wrong to announce my enthusiasm for something called *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* within hearing of Milton and Joyce scholars. Further, I had to accept the fact that my "favorite" show was also the favorite of 14-year-old girls everywhere. Finally, the enthusiasm I encountered among people my own age was largely that of—in advertising parlance–men 18-34, whose attraction to the show was clearly based on a sense of *Buffy* that was different from my own. Yet my shame was alleviated when I discovered that there were "others like me," cultural scholars who also found *Buffy* worth talking about. The varied responses to the text led me to question, who is the "real" Buffy Summers? Is it possible—or desirable—to defend a reading of *Buffy* as feminist text as the "correct" way to read the show? In this essay, I will explore how my thinking about this issue has led me to see new ways in which *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* can contribute to a feminist cultural politics.

(3) Clearly, phrasing the question in terms of a "real" Buffy conveys a naiveté about reading and identity, so let me rephrase it more precisely. One of the reasons I am attracted to Buffy is that she is a strong woman, a woman who saves the day herself rather than waiting for a man to do it for her. For me, Buffy undoes the helpless-female stereotypes of my youth—the girls who got the hero but who never got to be the hero. Buffy strikes me as a positive role model for young women, one which feminism should celebrate. However, I am aware of another Buffy that circulates among fans, a sexualized Buffy most often seen in the photos that accompany magazine articles. This Buffy still has power, but this power is always in the absent text of the show, while the present image is the body available to the male gaze. These photographs disturbed me because they seem to subvert what I found positive in the show. That is, for me, they were not the "real" Buffy. This sense of unease led me to ask a number of questions about the show, about young women as fans of the show, and about the circulation of images of Buffy/Sarah Michelle Gellar in what John Fiske would call "secondary texts." The key issues that I want to investigate are the relationship between the images in the primary text (the show) and the secondary texts (the magazine articles) in the construction of female identity and the problem of conflating the character Buffy with the actor Sarah Michelle Gellar.

(4) My starting point for thinking through these questions is Fiske's understanding of popular culture as a space of "producerly" readings. Producerly readings are constructed by consumers of popular culture based on their own experience; they are meanings that allow the reader to impose his or her sense on the text rather than be helpless before its ideological message.[1] Fiske argues that television texts are particularly open to the construction of producerly meanings, contending that, for television, the meanings found in secondary texts—newspapers, magazines, advertisements, conversations, styles of dress, etc.—are in a dialectic relationship with the primary text, that is, the show: "Their meanings are read back into television, just as productively as television determines theirs" (*Television Culture* 118).

(5) I want to consider this dialectical relationship between primary texts and secondary texts as it concerns the representation of Buffy and sexuality. Fiske's discussion of primary and secondary television texts notes "how much attention these secondary texts devote to the lives and opinions of the actors and actresses who play the characters in television drama, and how these real-life biographies are mobilized to make the fictional characters appear more real" (119). Do the sexualized readings of Buffy/Sarah Michelle Gellar in magazines directed at male fans undo the powerful feminist role model offered by the primary text? Is the openness to producerly readings a liability rather than a strength for this show?

(6) The feminist flavor of *Buffy* as a primary text is acknowledged by its producers, critics and fans. The show emerged from Whedon's desire to reverse the stereotype of the blond victim common in horror movies: "It was pretty much the blond girl in the alley in the horror movie who keeps getting killed. . . . I felt bad for her, but she was always more interesting to me than the other women. She was fun, she had sex, she was vivacious. But then she would get punished for it. Literally, I just had that image, that scene, in my mind, like the trailer for a movie—what if the girl goes into the dark alley. And the monster follows her. And she destroys him."[2] As Jacqueline Reid-Walsh points out, *Buffy* also works against the gothic tradition of passive heroines. *Buffy*'s challenge to the female stereotype is not only evident to cultural critics but also accessible to teenage girls. For example, in "Halloween" (2006) Buffy becomes a "helpless" 18th-century maiden when Ethan Rayne's spell makes everyone become his or her chosen costume. Buffy has chosen her costume in the hope of attracting Angel by being similar to the girls he knew in his youth. The show speaks to a young woman's desire to be attractive and pleasing to her object of desire but also shows—humorously through the chaos that results when Buffy becomes passive and more seriously through Angel's affirmation that he loves Buffy for herself— the error of this kind of thinking.

(7) The show delivers this "message" by working through the desires and concerns of teenage girls (for acceptance and love, about sexuality and partnerships) rather than trying to "preach" to them about appropriate feminist behavior. This strikes me as an important strength of *Buffy* and why it matters to me to read *Buffy* as a feminist text. Young women often reject a feminist identity because they associate such an identity with the negative stereotype of a man-hater, or because they believe feminism is about a kind of "political correctness" that rejects the pleasure they find in culture and judges them for finding such pleasure. It is imperative that feminism find a way to connect with the cultural life of young women, and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* strikes me as one productive avenue through which this work can be done. It is inevitable that young women will be exposed to what feminism would label negative stereotypes of women and that they may be attracted to such stereotypes. Rather than condemning these stereotypes—and hence the desire that women might find in them—feminism should help young women to critically interrogate the stereotype and its constructed appeal. A feminism that seeks only to judge and condemn will continue to convince young women that this is a postfeminist age.

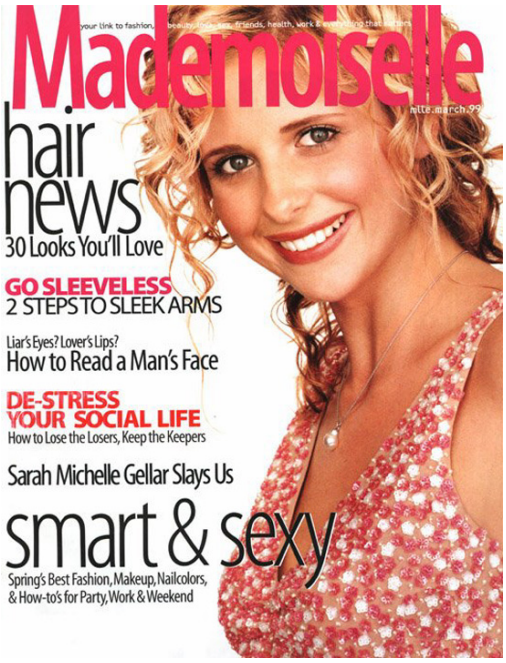
(8) It is important to note that the primary text does sexualize Buffy, although it always combines this sexualization with demonstration of her power. To a large extent, this juxtaposition is part of the point, something that is most apparent in the show's first two seasons, during which Buffy almost invariably wore a short skirt and a spaghetti strap top. However, in more recent reasons, we have seen Buffy's wardrobe mature with the character. Buffy now appears in both sexy outfits and her workout clothes. She is more than a sex object, but she doesn't have to deny being sexy in order to be a strong woman. However, I still question the effect the sexualization of Buffy's power within secondary texts has on her ability to function as a feminist role model. In these secondary sources, Buffy's power is separate from her appearance as a sex object. Is the subversion of stereotypes in the primary text co-opted back into a reading of controllable women by the secondary texts? I will explore this question by analyzing both the representation of Buffy's sexuality in the fourth and fifth seasons of the show and some images of Sarah Michelle Gellar that have circulated in magazines based on her fame as Buffy.

(9) The major event in Buffy's love life during the show's fourth and fifth seasons was the replacement of Angel with a new boyfriend, Riley, and her breakup with Riley as he chooses to pursue his military career rather than the relationship. Buffy and Riley's relationship raises concerns about the connection between love, sex, and power that are central to adolescent girls as they seek to develop their adult identity, including their sexual identity. Once the Initiative is disbanded and he no longer has the enhanced strength provided by their medical manipulation, Riley is unable to accept his relationship with Buffy. He feels that Buffy doesn't "need" him, and he can't imagine a role in her life other than as needed protector. This story forces young women to confront some of the fears that they have about dating and competing with boys for accomplishments in school and in sports.

(10) The story doesn't offer a conventional happy ending—Riley does leave—nor does it suggest that the incident is trivial. Buffy struggles, wondering what is wrong with *her* to have made him leave. However, the episode "I Was Made to Love You" (5015) resolves some of Buffy's feelings in its exploration of the limitations of an identity constructed entirely around pleasing another. April, the robot-girlfriend character in this episode, provides Buffy with insight into identity and love. April has no identity because she is literally, as the title suggests, made to love her creator: her identity is to be what he desires. Further, it turns out that being the perfect woman will not guarantee a faithful partner. Warren, the "boyfriend," has moved on to a human woman, whose ability to surprise and challenge him is what keeps him interested. Over the course of this episode, Buffy moves from the painful attempt to be pleasing to Ben, who is at that point a potential romantic interest, by forcing herself to laugh at his jokes, to a decision to just "be Buffy with Buffy" for a time. Another relationship may come, but she is no longer interested in defining herself in terms of who loves her. Thus, *BtVS's* text on this (and other) occasions provides an explicitly feminist message that rejects the construction of female worth through sexual attractiveness.

(11) Secondary texts, on the other hand, provide a less immediately accessible and more contradictory message, in part because they are directed to specific segments of *Buffy*'s heterogeneous fan groups. Based on her fame as Buffy, Sarah Michelle Gellar has appeared in magazines that range from *Seventeen* to *Esquire*. Part of what goes on in these texts is that Sarah Michelle Gellar as role model becomes conflated with Buffy as role model. Sometimes this can have positive effects. For instance, Gellar insisted that *Teen People* visit the Dominican Republic where she was working for Habitat for Humanity as one of the conditions for granting an interview.

(12) In an article in *Mademoiselle* magazine (March 1999), an angelic and wholesome Sarah[3] is pictured, accompanied by an article that discusses both her career and the show. In this photo, Sarah appears in a sleeveless, flower-print dress. She looks demurely up and to the right, her eyes not meeting the viewer's as she smiles wistfully. In this photo, Sarah looks neither strong nor sexy, but instead looks innocent and virtuous. Her hair is softly pulled back, a few loose curls escaping to frame her face in a halo-like effect. Articles such as this one emphasize the parallels between Sarah and Buffy, noting that both are working teens who have had to shoulder adult responsibility at an early age and that both have been raised by their mother alone. In such "girl" magazine contexts, both narrative and visual images offer a reading of Sarah that emphasizes the positive qualities she embodies as Buffy: her refusal to discuss her personal life stands as an insistence that her identity is more than just who she dates, and her professionalism and work ethic offer the positive role model of girls-as-achievers. The fact that Buffy can or should function as a role model is explicitly stressed by the *Mademoiselle* article. Gellar herself comments that the character Buffy offers her an image of strength that helps her respond with optimism to the challenges that she faces in her own life (134).




(13) In articles targeted at young women, then, the feminist agenda that influences the construction of Buffy as character also influences the construction of Sarah Michelle Gellar as media personality. But what happens when the image of Buffy/Sarah Michelle Gellar is moved to contexts in which the explicit addressees are not young women? I am interested in two questions here. How do young women receive these images from other contexts, and what are the consequences of conflating Buffy with Sarah Michelle Gellar? This strategy works positively to reinforce a reading of both as feminist role model in the articles targeted at young women. However, this conflation extends to images addressed to male fans who produce a sexualized reading of Buffy and Sarah. It is possible that the feminism that Buffy offers—tied to pleasure, linked to teenage concerns—can work on reshaping the subjectivities and sexual attitudes of adolescent boys as well as women. Whedon argues, "If I can make teenage boys comfortable with a girl who takes charge of the situation without their knowing that's what's happening, it's better than sitting down and selling them on feminism."[4] However, as I look at secondary texts directed at young men, this comfort with "a girl who takes charge" is not sustained in their representations.

(14) One example is an article in *Esquire* (January 2001) that provides text at odds with its visual image. The text—interestingly, an edited version of an article that originally appeared in the May 2000 issue of *Rolling Stone*—focuses on Joss Whedon and his vision of *Buffy*'s meaning, not on Gellar. The reading of the show produced by this text emphasizes the ways that *Buffy* challenges stereotypes of female sexuality, arguing that "the characters have sex with consequences, but are not defined by that alone. They also have friendships with consequences, school with consequences, popularity with consequences" (165). The text also points out that *Buffy* is arguably one of the most "realistic" shows on television because it deals with complex emotional issues without becoming trite or preachy. The metaphor of monsters made literal in the show is an emotionally-true depiction of life as a young adult; as Gellar sums it up: "When someone breaks your heart, it feels like the world is ending. And in Buffy's case, that's true. But everyone feels that. And that's the point" (165). So, from an analysis of the text, the reading of *Buffy* in *Esquire* magazine is consistent with the reading of the primary text.

(15) The visual images, however, are another story. In the photo, Sarah faces the camera, head tilted down but heavily mascara-ed eyes raised to meet the viewer's gaze. Her expression is an insolent pout. Her hair falls straight to her shoulders, its style tousled and the lips dyed a deep red. Sarah wears only a locket and a small pink top whose neckline is a drawn string. The two sides of this top are not connected, each panel falling to cover most of Sarah's breasts. The curve of her right breast is partially exposed. This highly sexualized picture of Sarah—breast partially exposed and looking at the camera with a bowed head—seems to be the opposite of everything that Buffy as character and as text stands for. This is an image of the actor, not the character. However, as I have suggested above, the conflation of the two as role models is common in magazines that target young women. For magazines like *Esquire*, the main attraction is the image of the actor available for men's consumptive gaze, but it is the character that provides the occasion for the accompanying article. The conflation that is typical of secondary texts makes it more difficult to argue that this sexualized image is not the "real" Buffy, since ownership of the image does not reside in a single place.

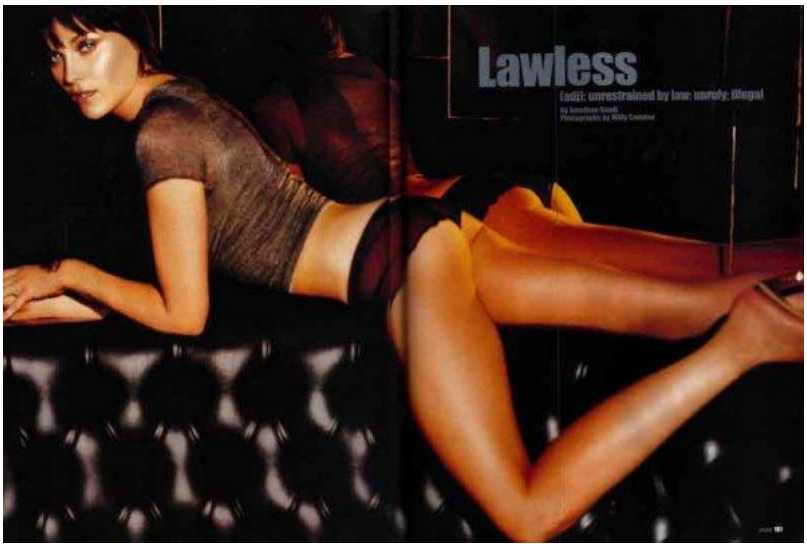
The January 2001 *Esquire*,
British Edition

(16) The secondary texts produce their hegemonic or dominant reading through the visual image rather than through the written article. My sense of this hierarchy is strengthened by the fact that the same written text from *Rolling Stone* is reproduced in *Esquire*, but the photographs are new. Clearly, the article functions as a context for photographing and displaying the image of Sarah Michelle Gellar. When the article originally appeared in *Rolling Stone*, the text was accompanied by photographs that displayed Sarah on the hood of a car. In this photograph, Sarah sits on the hood of the car, knees spread wide apart, pointed feet resting on the front bumper. She wears tight black jeans and a glittering silver top with spaghetti straps—a "favorite" style in the show's early seasons. Her head is tilted to the right, and a wind machine blows her hair in this direction. Hands braced on her out-stretched thighs, Sarah's breasts jut toward the viewer; her eyes meet the viewer's gaze, but she neither smiles nor pouts.

(17) This photographic scene was used to make the article on Gellar fit into the theme of the issue, "girls and cars and rock'n'roll." Thus, secondary texts—like Jenkins' poaching fans—take what they can use from the primary text and recontextualize it to serve their own needs and desires. In magazines targeted at men, the desire to show Sarah as an object for sexual consumption becomes the dominant meaning of the text. The concern I have is how young women accustomed to viewing Buffy and Sarah as conflated role models respond to these texts. Do they necessarily read all images of Buffy/Sarah through this structure of role model and feel compelled to "live up to" the sexualized standard set by these other secondary texts? Or can some secondary texts be rejected as failing to display the "real" Buffy?

(18) Before I answer these questions, I want to turn to one more example of a secondary text and the complications that arise when an actor is conflated with the character she plays. In this case, the picture is of Lucy Lawless, television's Xena. In this photo, Lucy stands with legs apart in a striding position. She bends from the hips, keeping her long legs straight as she lowers her head and positions her buttocks in the photo's highest position. Her arms reach down to hold her front ankle. Lucy wears high heels, a pink bustier laced up the back, and a very short black skirt. Just to make sure readers have the point that Xena/Lucy is sexy, this skirt is also slit all the way up both thighs, held together only by its waistband. Lucy tilts her head up to look provocatively at the viewer, her mouth partially open.

This image, taken from the June/July 2000 issue of *Stuff for Men* magazine, juxtaposes a sexually provocative Lucy Lawless with text that compares Buffy and Xena, focusing on the commonly posed question about who's tougher. The text asks the question about the characters and their on-screen fighting ability. However, the image accompanying the text seems to me to suggest a comparison of Lucy Lawless' willingness to produce more sexually explicit photographic images than those Sarah Michelle Gellar has been willing to pose for. While the text itself doesn't make this comparison explicitly, I would argue that the primacy given to the visual text in these secondary sources makes the comparison implicitly. In fact, my memory of this magazine was that the "challenge" had been issued in terms of how sexually provocative each actor was (remembering that Gellar left an earlier photo shoot for *Rolling Stone* because they pushed her beyond her comfort level). I would suggest that my faulty memory in this instance is a product of the fact that these secondary texts do function through the circulation of images, that is, that the implicit message would be read and remembered by other readers familiar with the genre. I find this example particularly intriguing because of the way that the competition between the shows is translated to a competition between the two actors, the criterion for "best" being the image which most pleases the male reader.



(20) *Stuff for Men* magazine is clearly no friend of feminism, and it seems clear that the representation of Lucy/Xena within its pages does not suggest any increased comfort with the idea of powerful women who can take charge. The Lucy that emerges from this article is clearly in charge, but what she is in charge of is being titillating. Indeed, when asked if she has a problem being a sex object, she enthusiastically responds, "It's great. Everyone wants to be an object of attraction" (102). What I'm suggesting here is not that it is a problem for Lucy to love being a sex object, but that it is a problem to suggest, as *Stuff for Men* does, that being a sex object is the only legitimate role for a woman. The *Stuff for Men* article's text is not in tension with its visual images—both emphasize the sexual appeal of Lucy Lawless. Both, however, are in tension with the show's construction of Xena as feminist hero. Images of Buffy and Sarah Michelle Gellar are often both more complex and more contradictory. The visual images may insist on a sexualized reading, but the written text shows Buffy's power. The juxtaposition of the two makes it clear that being sexual is not the whole story. When the comparison between Buffy and Xena is made in secondary texts, the location of the comparison and the primacy given to visual images within this location attempts to reduce all—characters, actors, show texts—to the level of sexual appeal.

(21) So, is it a problem that being sexual is part of the story in these texts? Does a sexualized Buffy in the secondary texts mean a return to the patriarchal stereotypes of women, undoing all the feminist ideological work performed by the primary text? Fiske has argued that "a program becomes a text at the moment of reading, that is, when its interaction with one of its many audiences activates some of the meanings/pleasures that it is capable of provoking. So one program can stimulate the production of many texts according to the social conditions of its reception" (*Television Culture* 14). The question I want to ask about the various readings of Buffy produced by different social conditions is what happens when producers of one reading become aware of producers of another, competing text? Does the competing reading that returns Buffy to the category of sex object undo the "role model work" that a powerful Buffy might perform? My answer is a qualified "no."

(21) The power of fans to establish multiple readings of a text has been well established by many cultural critics including Fiske himself, Constance Penley. and Henry Jenkins. Through study of fan fiction, these scholars have demonstrated that fans do not feel compelled to accept a reading of characters that does not conform with the fans' own desires, even if this reading is produced by the primary text itself. *Buffy* fans have an established record of refusing to accept any reading as more valid than their own; therefore, the

question that I started with—who is the "real" Buffy?—is simply answered, in a way. For each individual fan, the real Buffy is "my Buffy," the representation that best fits my desires about who the character should be. Additionally, the feminist ideas that circulate in popular texts like *Buffy* have produced young women—and others—as sophisticated, savvy readers, aware of the ways that sexualized texts attempt to manipulate their self image. Gellar, herself a young woman who has been formed by these cultural forces, has demonstrated the ability of young women to maintain an ironic distance from their exploitation. Commenting on her role in the typical teen sex/horror film *I Know What You Did Last Summer*, Gellar told *Cosmopolitan* magazine, "Jennifer Love Hewitt and I like to refer to that as I Know What Your Breasts Did Last Summer."[5] So, the first conclusion that I reach about the stereotyped images of Buffy/Sarah that circulate in secondary texts is that fans who identify with Buffy are sophisticated enough readers of culture to recognize constructions of Buffy *as* constructions, potentially even as "wrong" constructions compared with their "real" Buffy.

(22) However, I would go further than this, and suggest in addition that the multiple and contradictory readings of *Buffy* are also a place where young women might begin to develop a critical consciousness about the construction of female identity and sexuality. *Buffy* may be a way to make feminism fun: a critical interrogation of the disparity between the magazines' readings of *Buffy* and their own is a way for young women to recognize the issues they will face as women in patriarchal culture. One way this kind of work might happen is to ask such young women to compare Buffy to the other "fighting females" who have suddenly become legion on television programs. I think Buffy has more in common with big screen heroines Sarah Connor and Ripley than she does with other television heroines like Xena, Sheena, and Sidney Bristow. One of the reasons for this difference is that the other television shows are willing to create their heroines as sex objects on the screen as well as off, while *Buffy* resists this impulse, thereby insisting upon a space where the powerful woman is taken seriously. The primary text of *Buffy* thus contains fewer gaps that allow readers to reconstruct the heroine in typical patriarchal terms, but the work of secondary texts to accomplish this demonstrates that the ideological battle over the construction of the female is far from over. What better way to show young women that feminism still has relevance in their lives?

(23) In *Yearning*, bell hooks argues, "students are much more engaged when they are learning how to think critically and analytically by exploring concrete aspects of their reality, particularly their experience of popular culture. Teaching theory, I find that students may understand a particular paradigm in the abstract but are unable to see how to apply it to their lives. Focusing on popular culture has been one of the main ways to bridge this gap" (6). In a similar vein, I would argue that the tensions produced by the heterogeneity of *Buffy* are themselves a kind of theory. They are concrete representations of the continuing ideological battle over the category of woman, and, while it may not be important to discuss this with adolescent girls in theoretical language, it is certainly imperative to help them become critical thinkers who can understand the import that such "theory" has in their lives. Being fans of *Buffy* is empowering for young women not just because Buffy is a strong feminist role model, but also because in some contexts she is not—and this discrepancy can introduce fans to a critical consciousness of ideology.

(24) In their article "Making 'Hope Practical' Rather than 'Despair Convincing': Feminist Post-structuralism, Gender Reform and Educational Change," Jane Kenway and others have argued that the most hopeful thing we can teach young women is that there is a politics of gender, that it is not a natural arrangement but a cultural construction made by people and open to change. Following from this insight, I would argue that it is not important to argue whether a particular representation of Buffy/Sarah is feminist or non-feminist. The fact that a single text or person can contain both readings opens productive space for getting young women (and others) to see how meanings are constructed. A debate over who is the "real" Buffy is one way of coming to understand the way ideology works to construct what we see and believe to be natural or "real." It is important to raise the questions that I have asked in this paper with young women. Why are some representations in tension? Who are they being produced for and what

values or identities do they enforce? What does it mean if Sarah Michelle Gellar and Buffy become the same in these texts? My struggle in "placing" Buffy as feminist or not is related to the tension in feminism between critiquing and celebrating images of women in popular culture. In thinking about this project, I conclude that the binary of oppressive/emancipatory popular culture unduly restrains the power of its interventions in life and our scholarly engagement with it. Instead, the most productive point of inquiry is precisely the way it is always both.

(25) Clearly, more work needs to be done to understand how young women are constructing images of Buffy and how they are incorporating these images into their own lives. I have suggested that the sexualized secondary texts privilege the visual images over other representations. One important site for further work is to investigate the relative importance of visual images in young women's consumption of *Buffy*. A recent experience has led me to believe that this issue may be even more complicated. As a trained literary critic, I think of myself as a sophisticated reader of culture, able to distinguish between Buffy and Sarah Michelle Gellar. However, when I looked at a *Buffy* comic book as one potential source of material for this project, I discovered a slim girl wearing blue jeans and a purple sweater cut to just above her waist walks down the sidewalk. Her medium brown hair falls in a curve to her shoulders. In the final close-up frame, the girl is labeled "the slayer" by the text as she lifts her sunglasses to reveal her face. It is an attractive, heart-shaped comic book heroine face, but it is clearly not an attempt to present Sarah Michelle Gellar in comic book form. My immediate response to this image was that it was not the "real" Buffy because the character looked wrong. Clearly, by "wrong" I meant, "not like Sarah Michelle Gellar." My response to this text privileged the visual, just as my questions about the tension between secondary texts and the primary text privileges the consequences of the visual image over the written text.

(26) Further research must explore the question of how young women perceive these visual images. Do they recognize a tension between them and other representations of Buffy? Do they seek these images out in magazines they would not normally consume because they are fans of the show? How do they relate these images to Buffy and to themselves? Exploring these questions by interviewing young women would provide an opportunity not only to gather further data on the reciprocal relationship between primary and secondary texts, but also to engage such young women in a dialogue about *Buffy* and the circulation of cultural images. Practice is what feminism should be about, and the opportunity to engage in this kind of practice is one of the reasons why feminists shouldn't be afraid to say, "I'm a fan of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*."

**WORKS CITED**

Bellafante, Ginia and Jeanne McDowell. "Bewitching Teen Heroines." *Time 5* May 1997: 82-85.
Diamond, Jamie. "Que Sarah, Sarah." *Mademoiselle* March 1999: 133.
Dietzel, Susanne B. and Polly Pagenhart. "Teaching Ideology to Material Girls: Pedagogy in the 'Postfeminist' Classroom." *Feminist Teacher* 9.3 (1995): 129-136.
Fiske, John. *Television Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1987.
___. *Understanding Popular Culture*. London: Unwin Hyman, 1989.
"Girlspeak." *Off Our Backs* (December 1995): 6-7, 15.
Goodale, Gloria. "Television's Superwomen." *Christian Science Monitor* 91.49 (February 5, 1999): 13.
hooks, bell. *Yearning: Race, Gender and Cultural Politics*. Boston: South End Press, 1990.
Jenkins, Henry. *Textual Poachers: Television Fans and Participatory Culture*. New York: Routledge, 1992.
Kenway, Jane, Sue Willis et al. "Making 'hope practical' rather than 'despair convincing': Feminist post-structuralism, gender reform and educational change." *British Journal of Sociology of Education* 15.2 (1994): 187-211.
Moy, Suelain. "Girls Who Fight Back." *Good Housekeeping* April 1999: 86.
Reid-Walsh, Jacqueline with Krista Walsh. "Power Girl/Girl Power: The female action hero goes to high school." *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy* 42.6 (March 1999): 495-504.
"Sarah's Style." *Cosmopolitan* June 1999: 14.
"Sarah Michelle Gellar Vamps it Up." *Cosmopolitan* June 1999: 158.
Small, Jonathan. "Lawless: [adj]: unrestrained by law; unruly; illegal." *Stuff for Men* June/July 2000: 100-105.
Udovitch, Mim. "What Makes Buffy Slay?" *Rolling Stone* 11 May 2000: 60-65.
___. "Buffy: On Set with Sarah Michelle Gellar." *Esquire* January 2001: 114-119.

---

[1] See *Understanding Popular Culture*, 103-104.

[2] Quoted in Udovitch, "What Makes Buffy Slay?"

[3] In this and other descriptions of secondary texts, I use the actor's last name to discuss my impressions of her and statements she has made that I discuss. I use her first name only to describe the images produced in magazines, following the discursive strategy of the secondary texts themselves and their efforts to put their readers on a 'first name basis' with the actors portrayed in them.

[4] Quoted in Ginia Bellafante and Jeanne McDowell. "Bewitching Teen Heroines."

[5] See “Sarah’s Style.”