

A Qualitative Study of Typology in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* Fanfiction

by

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B.A. in Philosophy, B.A. in Telecommunications

A Thesis

In

MASS COMMUNICATIONS

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty  
of Texas Tech University in  
Partial Fulfillment of  
the Requirements for  
the Degree of

MASTERS OF ARTS  
IN  
MASS COMMUNICATIONS

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August, 2007

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### Acknowledgments

I am greatly indebted to Dr. Amanda Gallagher for her perpetual guidance and unwavering support. She is my role model.

I would like to thank Dr. Jimmie Reeves for his willingness to indulge me with long conversations about all things related to the media. Also, I thank him for his part in leading me on my current career path.

Dr. Wilkinson never once allowed me to rest on my perceived laurels. He constantly expected more from me. I am grateful.

The faculty of the college of Mass Communication at Texas Tech is motivated, highly intelligent, and patient. My time working with and learning from them has made me into a better student and scholar.

Finally, I would like to thank my roommate (friend, brother) Gilbert for his support and understanding.

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### Abstract

This study looks at a sample of fanfiction written by fans of the television show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. There has yet to be a more updated look at the *types* of fanfiction being written by more current fanfiction writers. In addition, most research on fanfiction focuses on how writers of fanfiction use their writing to accommodate a male lead and a non-existent female lead. There has not been an examination on the types of fanfiction written for a show with a prominent female character. This thesis examines the types of fanfiction written about the show. It also looks at fanfiction in relation to cultural studies, in particular, reception studies.

## Chapter I Introduction

Fanfiction is fiction written by fans of a particular text (i.e., a television show, movie or book) featuring characters and/or situations from that text (Jenkins, 1992). The fans of a narrative use elements of that narrative such as characters, situations, and fictionalized worlds to write their own stories.

Fanfiction stories are indicative of the participatory nature of an audience. Instead of sitting idly by and passively receiving a text, these audience members are actively engaging with the text. However, they are not just engaging with the text, they are transforming the text and perhaps even becoming part of it.

This study looks at a sample of fanfiction written by fans of the television show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. It examines the types of stories that *Buffy* fans write as well as what those stories say about the fans themselves.

### *Participatory Fan Culture*

The notion of a participatory fan culture is not a new one (Bacon-Smith, 1992; Jenkins, 1992). However, it is one that has been wrought by negative perceptions and misconceptions. Jensen (1992) examines the apparent bias against participatory fans. She studies how fans who do not exhibit the traditional and sanctioned ways of participating in fandom are made to seem abnormal and reduced to stereotypes.

In particular, such fans are put into two categories: the obsessed loner and the frenzied crowd member. Jenkins (1992) also appraises how fans who are active in fandom are relegated to the sidelines of what is deemed normal social behavior. He mentions the same two stereotypical fans in his work that Jensen mentions (the obsessed



loner and the frenzied crowd member) and adds another type of fan: the comic fan. This fan is characterized as a 40-year old who has trouble speaking to members of the opposite sex and still lives at home with his/her parents. This fan is so involved with his/her fandom that he/she loses sight of reality.

Jenkins rejects this stereotype and comes to the staunch defense of this type of fan. He believes that the participatory fan, one that gets involved actively with the fandom, is relegated to the sidelines because he/she rejects traditional notions of aesthetic distance (Jenkins, 1992). He/she is relegated to the sidelines because he/she immerses him/herself in the text and sees popular culture and the media to be as socially relevant as more sanctioned “high culture” works of “art” (Jenkins, 1992, p. 23). In addition, this active fan is the type of fan who writes fanfiction.

### *The Beginning of Fanfiction*

Fanfiction first appeared in fanzines or ‘zines in the early 1970s (Bacon-Smith, 1992). ‘Zines are newsletters/magazines circulated by fans to other fans at social events or conventions. This phenomenon was first discussed in relation to fans of the show *Star Trek* (Bacon-Smith 1992; Jenkins 1992). As the Internet gained prominence, more and more fans began replacing print ‘zines with Web sites dedicated to their favorite shows or even their favorite characters from their favorite shows.

Like the ‘zines themselves, as the Internet grew in popularity, so did new avenues for distributing stories. Fans began posting their stories in online bulletin/message boards and Web sites devoted entirely to the archiving of fanfiction. One such Web site is [fanfiction.net](http://fanfiction.net). This site alone hosts literally thousands of stories featuring the characters

and situations from such diverse and historical texts as *I Love Lucy* to the *Peanuts* comics to the movie *West Side Story*.

Fanfiction.net is not the only source for acquiring fanfiction; a quick search on Google for the term “fanfiction” results in more than 60 million hits. There are Web sites and message boards devoted entirely to a particular type of fanfiction: fanfiction sites based on a certain television show, for example, or sites that just focus on fanfiction of a certain relationship, or ‘ship, as the term is more commonly known.

This study will examine fanfiction based on the television show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. The show’s premise is that Buffy, a stereotypical teenage Valley girl, is the one girl in the world endowed with the power to kill forces of evil, most notably vampires. Buffy surrounds herself with a group of friends that help her on her quest to fight evil. Giles, a librarian at the school where she matriculates, serves as her teacher in all things related to killing vampires. Xander, a fellow student, is her friend and confidant. Her best friend, Willow, starts out the show a meek, nerdy girl. Over the course of seven seasons, Willow transforms herself into a powerful lesbian witch. The show features strong female characters and is both lauded and criticized for its feminist messages (Bodger, 2003; Early, 2001; Fudge, 1999; Karras, 2002; Pender, 2002; Lamb, 1999; Ostow, 1998; Siemann, 2002).

### *Buffy the Vampire Slayer and Feminism*

The literature about Buffy as it pertains to feminism attempts to reconcile the feminine attributes of the character with her role as a feminist (Bodger, 2003; Early, 2001; Fudge, 1999; Karras, 2002; Pender, 2002; Lamb, 1999; Ostow, 1998; Siemann, 2002). Buffy is a young, pretty, slim woman. She wears makeup and short dresses and is,

in essence, very feminine. She is also preoccupied with things that are generally considered, for lack of a better word, “girlie” (Karas, 2002, ¶ 10). She is preoccupied with shopping, with popularity, and with boys. Because of her feminine qualities and traits, researchers are faced with a question. Namely, whether it is possible for there to be a feminist icon that is also feminine. Some authors do not think so. They believe that Buffy’s femininity hinders any attempt at a feminist message.

Bodger (2003) writes that all the female characters on *Buffy* conform to stereotypes of women that are easily discernable and digestible by men (the cheerleader, the witch, the madwoman), thus the women on the show only serve to fulfill male fantasy. Even Buffy, who is considered the hero of the show, does nothing to get away from patriarchal stereotypes of women. Buffy is, according to Bodger, still blonde, pretty and highly sexualized. She conforms to the patriarchal norms of what a female heroine should look like and thus still caters exclusively to the male gaze.

There are other points of contention against Buffy as a feminist icon. Lamb (1999) does not believe that Buffy is a good female role model because she is concerned with seemingly trivial issues like popularity and boys. Ostow (1998) writes that while she admires the television show for its serialized storytelling, she does not see how Buffy could be considered a feminist icon—her preoccupation with trivial matters being so prevalent. Finally, Fudge (1999) writes that *Buffy* is nothing more than a clever marketing campaign that capitalizes on the girl power craze common in the late 1990s and made famous by the Spice Girls. Buffy never breaks away from the confines of femininity (either in personality or in physical traits), and, Fudge (1999) implies that because of this, Buffy does nothing more than pay lip service to true feminism.

However, these authors seem to be missing a vital component of the premise of the show. Namely, that Joss Whedon (the show's creator and executive producer) purposely wrote *Buffy* to be feminine. In an interview for *Rolling Stone* magazine Whedon explains how he first came up with the idea for the show. He states that he first thought up the premise while watching a blonde female victim in horror film get 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. (Udovitch, 2000, ¶ 6)

Thus, what *Buffy* does is allow the female victim in horror movies (traditionally portrayed as blonde, helpless, and, yes, feminine) to become the heroine (Karas, 2002).

Early (2001) examines the relationship between the feminine aspects of *Buffy*'s character and her role as a hero. She writes that *Buffy* can be seen as a transgressive woman warrior. One that upholds male ideals of what it means to be a warrior (strong, silent, powerful), but at the same time thinks and acts in ways that are traditionally coded as feminine (instead of always resolving conflicts by force, she tries to do so by means of conversation, empathy, and compassion). The fact that *Buffy* has both male and female characteristics in her portrayal is not seen as a hindrance; rather, the confluence of the two aspects make it possible to read *Buffy* as a modern day warrior, a hero for a new century.

Karas (2002) views the feminine characteristics in *Buffy* as an example of third wave feminism. She writes that modern feminism (third wave) is concerned with, among other things, embracing femininity. Third wave feminism takes up the idea that females do not lose power by being feminine. On the contrary, the feminine is a source of female

empowerment. Women can care about appearance and about being sexual because their appearance and sexuality are no longer means of oppression. They see themselves on equal footing with men. Femininity then, is a way of celebrating women, of celebrating their uniqueness. *Buffy* is an embodiment of the third wave aesthetic. It is a manifestation of the idea that being feminine does not mean being weak. Buffy is feminine. She also kicks butt. Karas (2002) writes that a modern feminist is capable of doing both, and as such, Buffy is a modern day feminist icon and heroine.

The idea of Buffy as a heroine and an icon is further explored by Siemman (2002). She states that Buffy can be considered both things if the definition of feminism is qualified. Buffy cannot be considered a heroine and an icon if to do so means disavowing male assessment and appreciation. However:

She *is* a feminist icon because she is an empowered yet ordinary woman with ordinary problems who nonetheless has accepted the responsibility that comes with her strength and who consistently achieves the extraordinary because she must. (Siemman, 2002, p. 124)

Buffy cares about her appearance and has a girlish personality. She cares about boys and is sometimes preoccupied with the idea of having a boyfriend. These traits do not comprise her whole character. Siemman (2002) states that she is also responsible and trustworthy and takes her job as a slayer of vampires seriously. The two differing components of her character are not dualistically opposed. In fact, Pender (2002) writes that in order for the show to work, the two components of her characters must be seen in tandem.

Pender (2002) states that there is a dichotomy in a feminist reading of Buffy (one that can be seen in the above examination of the literature). Buffy is either feminist or

feminine. She cannot be both. This binary mentality of *Buffy*'s feminist message is a disservice to the show's intent. The show relies on a confluence of both the feminist and the feminine. They are the two sides of Buffy's character. The show is about Buffy (the feminine girl) and the slayer (the confident hero). If one were to give precedence to one of those aspects while ignoring the other, the show would not work. The two aspects work together to make Buffy the character and *Buffy* the show successful.

Feminism and the feminine are interrelated concepts on *Buffy*. The show only works as a feminist icon if one qualifies the feminine tendencies of the girl behind the slayer. However, once the femininity of Buffy is embraced, a reading of *Buffy* as a feminist text is possible.

#### *Background on Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

*Buffy* was first broadcast on the WB network as a midseason replacement in 1997. The show lasted seven seasons and aired five of those seasons on the WB. After losing a dispute with the WB over the operating budget of the show, the show's broadcast rights were bought out by UPN (Stewart, 2003). UPN broadcast the final two seasons of the show. While the show's ratings (an average of 5 million viewers per episode) would warrant cancellation on major networks, the WB and UPN both considered the show a success (Stewart, 2003). This is because both networks never received ratings higher than seven million viewers (Stewart, 2003). The WB proclaimed it as the show that launched the network (Epstein, 2005).

The show ended in May 2003 having aired 144 episodes. While the show never received any major awards (the closest it came was an Emmy nomination for the fourth season episode *Hush*), it did garner critical acclaim both in popular culture (Miller, 2003)

and in academic study (Burr, 2005; Zacharek, 2002). The show also boasts a rabid fan-base that is active and productive in the fandom (Burr, 2005). This paper aims to explore one aspect of *Buffy's* fan activity and production: fanfiction.

### *Justification*

Research on fanfiction began in the early 1990s (Bacon-Smith, 1992; Jenkins, 1992; Scodari, 2003; Scodari & Fedler, 2000). While early researchers did examine the types of stories being written, they tended to focus exclusively on a type of story called slash (I will discuss this in more detail later). Also, they based the types of fanfiction being written on shows featuring strong male leads and weak or nonexistent female leads—*Star Trek*, *Galaxy Quest*, and *Doctor Who* (Bacon-Smith, 1992; Jenkins, 1992). More recently, research has either picked up on the examination of slash (Kustritz, 2003; Scodari, 2003; Scodari & Fedler, 2000) or attempted to look at what fanfiction means for the writers and readers of it in terms of romance and wish-fulfillment (Salmon & Symons, 2004; Somogyi, 2002).

There has yet to be a more updated look at the *types* of fanfiction being written by more current fanfiction writers. In addition, most research on fanfiction focuses on how writers of fanfiction use their writing to accommodate a male lead and a non-existent female lead (Bacon-Smith, 1992; Jenkins, 1992; Scodari, 2003; Scodari & Fedler, 2000). They focus their research on fanfiction based on shows with predominately male characters. There has not been an examination on the types of fanfiction written for a show with a strong female character. This thesis seeks to fill the gap. It also examines how fans not only perceive a text, but how they become actively engaged with that text by making meaning of it and using it for their own purposes.

## Chapter II Literature Review

Research on fanfiction is a relatively new area of media studies (Bacon-Smith, 1992; Jenkins, 1992). However, the foundations on which fanfiction research is based on (fandom and active audience) have been around longer and are important concepts to the understanding of fanfiction itself. As such, this literature review will first look at research on fandom and active audiences. It will then examine academic research related to fanfiction itself.

### *Fandom and Active Audiences*

In order to examine fanfiction, it is important to understand the basic concepts behind it, namely the interrelated ideas of fandom and active audiences.

#### *Fandom*

Adorno and Horkheimer (1972) first attempt to look at and define fandom by categorizing it as either high or low-class. They mention this distinction in their examination of the culture industry. In their work they posit that creative endeavors mass-produced for widespread/mass consumption lose their aesthetic value and cease to be art. Instead, mass production of cultural artifacts makes those artifacts a commodity. Adorno and Horkheimer (1972) write that there is nothing creative in things that are mass-produced; rather, mass-produced cultural artifacts, or popular culture, are ways to keep society passive and compliant. Because popular culture produces artifacts that are generic and unchallenging, the public easily consumes them without hesitation or restraint. Thus, they are implying that fans of popular culture are nothing more than willing participants



in their own passivity. In their view, only fans of things that are not mass-produced and generic should be lauded.

Jensen (1999) also talks of the distinction between high-class and low-class fandom. However, instead of focusing on low-class fandom as a way to dupe a passive audience into rampant consumerism, she talks about how low-class fandom is catalogued as abnormal. She writes that low-class fandom is seen as a harmful pathology and that fans categorized as low-class are made to appear dangerous and fetishistic. Adding to existing literature (Jenkins, 1992), she describes two types of low-class fans: the obsessed loner and the hysterical crowd. The obsessed loner is the type of fan who crosses the line from being just a fan to being fanatical. This type of fan becomes obsessed with his/her fandom and is ultimately dangerous, because he/she is socially inept and unable to distinguish fantasy from reality. There are depictions of the obsessed loner in both film and television.

The other type of fan that Jensen (1999) mentions is the hysterical crowd. The epitome of this type of fan would be screaming girls at a rock concert. The type of fan associated with the hysterical crowd is one that has lost all sense of reason and is in a state of frenzy over the object of his/her fandom. This type of fan can also be seen as obsessive and dangerous. The examples of the potential dangers of a hysterical crowd include deaths at rock concerts due to a stampede or deaths at sport matches due to a fan's anger over a team's loss.

Jensen (1999) points out that while these types of fans might exist, they are in the minority. The stereotyping of all fans into these two extremes categories is a way for

others to make them appear to be abnormal. It allows for a dismissal of fandom and views it as unimportant to culture and society.

Jensen (1999) mentions that fans of high culture are not categorized as fans, but as aficionados. They are neither dangerous nor obsessed. The implication here is that aficionados should be lauded because they like and are enthusiastic about things that are refined, whereas fans of low culture are dangerous and obsessive or, at the very least, cultural dupes.

Fiske (1992) examines the dichotomy between the two types of fans by way of explaining his theory of a cultural system. Fiske (1992) writes that there is a cultural system that works like an economic system. This system measures cultural capital. This capital is similar to what money would be in an economic system. The people with the most capital tend to be privileged and sanctioned by society, while those with less capital tend to be discriminated against.

Fiske (1992) believes that cultural capital is cashed out in terms of what is deemed high and low art, with sanctioned and acceptable means of acquiring culture (classical art, the opera, or antique collecting) producing more capital (and therefore class) while popular culture (movies and television) produces less capital and is devalued. Fiske (1992) writes that popular culture does not receive either social legitimacy or support from institutions.

He seeks to examine fans of popular culture and legitimize their fandom. Fiske (1992) does this by explaining that fans use their fandom as a way of “filling a cultural lack” and providing “social prestige and self-esteem” (p. 33). Fans of popular culture use their fandom to mimic the official cultural capital system in place. He writes that fan

culture “echoes many of the institutions of official culture, although in popular form and under popular control” (Fiske, 1992, p. 33). Therefore, Fiske argues that fans of popular culture work within a system which devalues them and what they enjoy. In response, these fans subvert the system, and give legitimacy to fandom through their fan activity and practices.

In short, research on fandom tends to focus on the distinction between high-class fandom and low-class fandom. People participating in high-class fandom are seen as exemplary. They are seen as the kinds of fans who resist watered-down consumerism and abnormalities in social behavior. Also, they are the kinds of fans who acquire the most cultural capital and are therefore deemed more acceptable to society. Low-class fans are devalued, relegated to the sidelines, and made to seem abnormal because of their association with “low-class” art forms like popular culture.

However, it is not high-class fans who are seen as active and engaged with the text (Fiske, 1992). Rather, the active fans are low-class fans—fans of popular culture. For example, people who write fanfiction based on the television show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* are not engaged in traditional high-culture fandoms. This does not mean, however, that their fandom is any less valuable than those who are fans of high-culture. In fact, if we take into account the works mentioned above (Fiske, 1992; Jenkins, 1992; Jensen, 1999) then the fandom has tremendous value.

### *Fan Activity*

Popular culture fans tend to be active in their fandom. They support it not just by participating in it; there is some extra step involved. In short, popular culture fandom requires active participation and production on the part of its consumers.

Sterling (2005) examines the discourse of a group of fans of an online Web site called *Television Without Pity*. The Web site provides summaries of numerous television shows along with active message boards dedicated to each television show. Fans of a particular show (for example, *Grey's Anatomy*) can discuss certain components of the show (favorite quotes, current storylines, spoilers for future episodes) with other fans of the show.

Sterling (2005) writes that fans that post on the *Television Without Pity* message boards tend to be erudite and insightful in their commentary. They are keen observers of the current storylines of the show they watch and are knowledgeable of the aspects of production necessary to make the show possible. Their expertise in/with the show is respected, so much so that actual producers of the shows (the examples that Sterling uses are the executive producers of *The West Wing* and *Alias*) contact the fans through the message boards and create future storylines based on their input. The implication is that fans that are active in their fandom hold power over the fandom and should be lauded for their input.

Kozlowski (2005) writes that fans of *The West Wing* use a Web site devoted to the show to their own advantage. Kozlowski (2005) writes that by becoming active in their fandom, by garnering knowledge about the show premise and characters through the Web site, fans are able to acquire knowledge in other areas. The show under examination in this study is focused on the fictional goings-on of the president and his staff. Fans of the show, wishing to acquire knowledge about the show's narrative, see the Web site as an informational source. However, instead of just acquiring knowledge about the narrative,

they also learn about the political process thanks to the show's focus on U.S. government and practices. Kozlowki (2005) posits that the fandom proves beneficial to the fans.

### *Fan Production*

Being a fan, however, does not just mean being active in the fandom, it means using the fandom to produce original creative endeavors. Bacon-Smith (1992) examines the productions of a group of female fans of the television show *Star Trek*. These fans congress at annual social conventions devoted to the television show. At these conventions they wear homemade costumes similar to those worn by the characters of the show. They distribute 'zines (fan-made magazines) that talk about the fandom (what the actors in the fandom are doing now, summaries of their favorite episodes, etc.). They also share original artwork featuring the characters of the show. Bacon-Smith (1992) looks favorably at the creative endeavors produced by these fans, writing that those endeavors help bring fans closer to other fans, as well as give their fandom a sense of legitimacy.

Fan productivity has also gone high-tech. Markman (2005) looks at how fans edit and produce homemade videos based on the television show *Star Trek*. He examines two movies made by fans. The fans write the scripts for the movies, cast the actors to play the parts of the already established characters of the show, direct the movies, add the musical score to the movies, and edit the movies. They then distribute the movies to interested fans through the Internet. Markman concludes that these fans are using their fandom as a way to take "the means of cultural production into their own hands" (p. 2).

One of the most prominent ways in which fans are active producers in their fandom is through the creation of fanfiction.

*Fanfiction: An Introduction*

Bacon-Smith (1992) and Jenkins (1992) are the first two authors to examine fanfiction. They study fanfiction as one of the productive endeavors of active audiences of science-fiction fandoms.<sup>1</sup> Bacon-Smith's work focuses on the fan practices of female fans of *Star Trek*, while Jenkins' work focuses on the fans of a wide variety of science fiction shows. Both authors come to similar conclusions about fanfiction. Namely, that fanfiction writers tend to be women and their fanfiction endeavors are laudable.

Bacon-Smith (1992) and Jenkins (1992) write that women readers directly enter a fictionalized world, focusing on the events and relationships of that world rather than on the extratextual process of its writing. Male readers are more respectful of an author's authority (Jenkins, 1992). Jenkins (1992) alleges that a female reader is more likely to take a fictionalized world and use it for her own means—to rewrite it. Subsequent research also takes as a given that most fanfiction writers are women (Kustritz, 2003; Salmon & Symons, 2004; Scodari, 2003; Scodari & Fedler, 2000; Somogyi, 2002).

Bacon-Smith (1992) and Jenkins (1992) also write that fanfiction writers should be praised for their participatory endeavors. This is because they believe that a certain kind of fanfiction called slash (which I will explain later) manages to actively resist certain types of dominant ideology. Before examining why they believe that slash resists dominant ideology, it is prudent to explain the types of fanfiction stories that they catalog in their research.

*Types of Fanfiction*

Both Jenkins and Bacon-Smith (1992) examine different types of fanfiction written. It is important to note that the fanfiction they focus on is based on shows

featuring strong male leads with weak or non-existent female leads. Jenkins' (1992) is more expansive in his research because he examines not only the fanfiction written about *Star Trek*, but also shows like *Doctor Who*, *Galaxy Quest*, and *Alien Nation*. These are shows that he categorizes as having a high science-fiction/fantasy element and that are all almost exclusively told from the male point-of-view. In addition, both authors mention four different types of fanfiction: alternative universe, Mary-Sue, hurt/comfort, and slash.

*Alternative universe* fanfiction uses the characters of a particular show, but transplants those characters into a different story universe (Bacon-Smith; Jenkins, 1992). For, example, writers of alternative universe fanfiction can transplant the characters of *Star Trek* away from the show's space setting place them in the Wild West.

*Mary-Sue* fanfiction occurs when a fanfiction writer implants an idealized version of herself into a fictional world. This idealized version of herself usually ends up solving the problems of the characters in the fictionalized world and tends to more often than not, die heroically. This type of fanfiction is usually belittled by other members of a fandom because the Mary-Sue character is so perfect that she comes off as a caricature (Bacon-Smith, 1992; Jenkins, 1992).

Another type of fanfiction is *hurt/comfort*. This type features the main character of a show with a supporting character in a situation where one character is hurt physically and the other comforts them. *Slash* began within the confines of this type of story.

*Slash* stories are stories that feature a male character from a primary text in a romantic (sexual) relationship with another male character. These types of stories get their names from the classification scheme given to them by the authors—i.e., m/m means a male slash male pairing (Bacon-Smith, 1992; Jenkins, 1992). Slash fiction

began, according to Jenkins (1992), with the pairing of Spock and Captain Kirk on the original *Star Trek* series. The first of these kinds of stories were written using the generic hurt/comfort scenario. This scenario featured one of the characters being hurt in some way and then being taken care of (comforted) by another character. Due to the close proximity and vulnerability inherent in these situations, the characters inevitably comfort each other through romantic and sexual interactions.

Jenkins (1992) asserts that women who write slash fanfiction are fulfilling a “desire for romance between mutually respectful equals sharing a dense back-story” (p. 195-196). Because women showcased on *Star Trek* and other science fiction shows are nothing more than sexual objects, the show lacks a strong female role model. Therefore writers of fanfiction place men who are strong, independent, and equal, in effeminate roles with each other.

Jenkins (1992) sees slash as proof of the “resistive” action of female fans (p. 186). He writes that slash is “a reaction against the construction of male sexuality on television and in pornography” (p. 189). Because slash writers are writing men in ways that are indicative of not only homosocial leanings, but also homosexual desire, they are subverting patriarchal norms of gender identity. Jenkins proclaims that slash fanfiction “confronts the most repressive forms of sexual identity and provides utopian alternatives to current configurations of gender” (p. 190).

While Jenkins does raise an interesting argument, he fails to come up with a solution to the problem inherent in writing slash fanfiction. Namely, that while slash fanfiction might resist patriarchy, it does nothing to overthrow it; rather, slash keeps working within the strict and oppressive confines of the primary text. Jenkins (1992)



writes that slash writers are “forced to work within generic traditions created by and for men and already codified with patriarchal assumptions” (p. 189). Instead of finding “appropriate models for autonomous female characters,” these women find it easier to rework the existing patriarchal assumptions (p. 190). While they might be resisting patriarchy, these women appear to be apathetic about overthrowing it.

It is my belief that the types of fanfiction written (particularly m/m slash) are directly correlated with the types of shows watched. Thus, fans of shows that feature a strong male presence and lacking a strong female presence write fanfiction that is based on the male characters (the most dynamic characters on such shows). Along that same line of thought, I believe that a show featuring strong female characters will produce fanfiction focused more on female characters.

Research on fanfiction occurring after the work of both Bacon-Smith (1992) and Jenkins (1992) focuses on two main tenets: fanfiction as wish-fulfillment and slash fanfiction. The two types of research avenues are closely linked. Thus, research that focuses on the wish-fulfillment aspect of fanfiction sometimes uses slash fanfiction as an example.

#### *Fanfiction as Wish-Fulfillment*

Wish-fulfillment in fanfiction is the idea that the writers of fanfiction produce the fanfiction because they want to satisfy some sort of fantasy (Bacon-Smith, 1992; Scodari, 2003). The writers of the fanfiction use the characters of a narrative to create what they would like to happen to the characters and, in doing so, speak to what they would like to happen in their own lives. For example, Bacon-Smith (1992) argues that writers use

fanfiction as a means to carry out romances that they are unable to carry out in their everyday lives.

Salmon and Symons (2004) evaluate whether slash can be “used as an unobtrusive measure of human female mating psychology” (p. 94). They assert that by finding out why slash appeals to women they can elucidate the psychology of female mating rituals. They found the opposite to be true. Instead of slash informing new perceptions of female mating psychology, female mating psychology reveals important components of slash.

The authors, through the use of textual analysis on a few selected works of fanfiction, explicate that slash fanfiction is just another means of writing the romance novel. The authors posit that romance writing is for women what most pornography is for men: “wish-fulfilling fantasies, well designed to pick the locks of the pleasure circuits in female brains, and largely worthless as guides” to understanding mating psychology (p. 96). They see slash as a way of allowing women to live in the “fantasy realm that one might call Romantopia” (p. 97). This realm is essentially comprised of the female mating psychology ritual of “overcoming obstacles to achieve the perfect mate-ship” (p. 98). The only difference between this realm of fantasy and slash fanfiction is that instead of propagating the fantasy in the form of a man and a woman in a romantic setting, slash fanfiction writers use a man in a romantic setting with another man.

Salmon and Symons (2004) argue that slash does not have anything to do with homosexuality. In fact, the authors state, most women who write stories about homosexual acts tend to be ignorant of the actual physicality involved in those acts, thereby implying that they are not really imagining the acts in their writing at all.

They also write that slash “written and read primarily by lesbians should be essentially identical to male slash, except with respect to the sex of the protagonists” (p. 100). In other words, they state that there should be nothing spectacular about this type of slash, nothing that differs from the propagation of the same ritual that male slash espouses, except the sex of the characters involved.

This study is important for two reasons. One, it brings up the idea that *all* fanfiction can be seen as a means of wish-fulfillment. In other words, that people write fanfiction because they want to change the narrative in some key way. They want to contribute to and change the primary narrative (the television show, in this case) in such a way that it fulfills their own perception of reality. Second, because it helps to cement the point I made earlier about slash fanfiction. Namely, that women who write slash tend to do so because the shows they watch lack strong female characters.

Somogyi (2002) also examines the notion of romance and wish-fulfillment in fanfiction. He looks at the fanfiction written about the two main characters of the television show *Star Trek Voyager*. Somogyi (2002) examines fanfiction involving heterosexual couples even though heterosexual romance pairings are not, by his own words, “subversive” or “in any way new and different from romance novels” (p. 399).

He writes that fanfiction about heterosexual couples should be studied because it offers “insights into how women shape erotic writing for their own consumption” (p. 399). He also asserts that heterosexual fanfiction is as free of producers’ commercial pressure as is slash fanfiction. Somogyi (2002) uses textual analysis to examine twenty-seven stories that focus on the romance between Captain Janeway (the first female captain in a *Star Trek* series) and her first mate Chakotay. He selects stories that

fanfiction writers rate as either R or NC-17 as he wants to focus on the stories' explicitly erotic structure. He concludes that Janeway and Chakotay stories are conventional in terms of the sexual acts they depict and that there are seldom cases of stories involving the characters that also involve "fantasies of force ... dominant/submissive sex [or] purely recreational sex" (p. 27).

While Somogyi (2002) should be praised for addressing a rarity in fanfiction studies—the heterosexual fanfiction pairing—his work is flawed. He chooses to focus specifically on the sexual nature of fanfiction stories. He omits completely the notion that fanfiction tends to be more about an idealized romance than it does about women's erotica (Bacon-Smith, 1992; Jenkins, 1992, Salmon & Symons, 2004). Regardless, his work is important because it provides a means of seeing how fanfiction writers who feature both a strong female and male lead do not tend to write slash fanfiction.

The stories chosen for Somogyi's (2002) study revolve around two characters that are explicitly linked together on the television series. It is a sanctioned romance, and while the romance fizzles out toward the end of the series, it is prevalent on the show. As such, fanfiction stories appear to match up to the romance on the show.

In my opinion, the writers of fanfiction are not completely changing the romantic pairings; rather, they are shifting the plots of the primary narrative to suit their own wish-fulfilling needs.<sup>ii</sup> I believe that fanfiction focusing on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* will attempt to address these wish-fulfilling needs. I also believe that the fanfiction will reflect the romantic couplings seen on the show.

*Slash Fanfiction*

The other major tenet of research in fanfiction since the early 1990s has been slash fanfiction. Slash fanfiction is an important component of fanfiction research because it brings up issues of patriarchy and resistance.

Kustritz (2003) looks at a Web site created by a group of women who called themselves the “Renegade Slash Militia” (p. 354). The members of the self-proclaimed militia state in a “lighthearted” manifesto that they reserve “the right to slash anyone, anywhere, anytime” (p.352). Kustritz does an in-depth examination of slash through the members of the group and their Web site. She finds that fan writers want to fix the damage done to the characters of a television show “at the hand of the writers and producers of the source product” (p. 351). In other words, they want to change the text in such a way that it coincides with their version of reality (wish-fulfillment). She also states that most fanfiction communities are made up of “overeducated but underemployed heterosexual women” (p. 356). The demographics of the women involved consist of “mostly to totally heterosexual, between the ages of twenty and forty, and in computer related fields or in graduate school” (p. 365).

Kustritz (2003) notes that women write slash fanfiction specifically because the men on the shows are more interesting and more autonomous than the women. She states that the men slashed most often are “in perpetual control of the narrative, the camera, and the other characters” (p. 357) She also writes that these men often have a close relationship with other men and that the women tend to be “women of the week,” tragic heroines, or femme fatales (p. 357). Thus, Kustritz postulates that women are interested

in writing stories that depict “two equally dominant, independent, and masculine characters” (p. 357).

Kustritz also finds that the sexual acts depicted in the slash stories always occur “within some kind of emotional context,” and that sex always has “direct and dramatic emotional ramifications” (p. 357). In short, she states that slash stories are not about sex, but about romance. This ties back to Salmon and Symons’ (2002) concept of idealized romantic pairings in fanfiction writing.

In particular, Kustritz (2003) suggests that relationships in slash stories are structured differently. She writes, “the characters’ attraction to each other is primarily intellectual or spiritual, [and] based upon a long friendship” (p. 368). She concludes by stating the following:

Although part of a long history of fan activities, slash offers its own particular challenge to normative constructions of gender and resistance, as it allows women to construct narratives that subvert patriarchy by reappropriating those prototypical hero characters who usually reproduce women’s position of social disempowerment. By rewriting both the source product and each other’s reconfigurations, women are able to write out a radically different romance narrative and an unconventional conceptualization of community, gender, and relationships. (p. 371)

Scodari and Fedler (2000), through observation and textual analysis, examine the fan practices of an online community of *X-Files* fans. *The X-Files* focuses on two main characters, Fox Mulder and Dana Scully. Both are billed as leads of the show. The authors’ posit that the equality of the two characters roles will lead to more heterosexual fanfiction. While there are certainly some heterosexual fanfiction stories, Scodari and Fedler find that there is resistance by fans to show Mulder with Scully at all.

The fans deem Scully to be unworthy of Mulder's affection. Instead, fanfiction writers pair him with other male characters or with female guest stars. The authors claim that the reason for such resistance is due to a need to view Mulder as "a lone male hero" (p. 240).

Thus, the writers of *X-Files* fanfiction do not view Scully to be on equal footing with Mulder. He is still the main character and she, still not the most dynamic one. Compare this with Somogyi's (2002) work that I mentioned earlier. In that work, the primary character was the female and her love interest (supporting character) was a male. In that work, it was possible to see the two heterosexual characters involved romantically in fanfiction. A show like *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, where the female character is not only the protagonist, but is surrounded by another female character in her supporting cast (the powerful witch, Willow) should produce different kinds of fanfiction that those produced by *X-Files* fans.

Scodari (2003), in a later article examines whether this resistance to writing a strong male lead with (presumably) an equally strong female lead extends to other shows. She uses textual analysis to study fans' reaction to the romantic relationships in two other science-fiction shows, *Farscape* and *Stargate: SG1*. She finds resistance in these fans as well. Scodari explains that the reason for this resistance is because there is a need for "some slash enthusiasts to be the sole consequential woman in an otherwise predominately male universe" (p. 113). Taking this notion into account there is:

The possibility of interpreting many instances of 'traditional' slash activity as having a motivation comparable to that associated with male-targeted pornography featuring lesbian encounters—namely, removal of the competition and the desire to frame both attractive characters of the opposite sex as performing for and serving only the individual indulging in the fantasy. (p. 114)

Therefore, Scodari notes, it is not that women are writing slash because there are no strong female role models, but because they want both males for themselves. Women do not write slash to put themselves on equal footing with men. Nor do they write it because of a lack of a strong female role model. Rather, they write it in order to keep the archetypal male role model for themselves.

However, I do not believe that this is the case for fanfiction written about *Buffy*, if only because the women on *Buffy* are not on equal footing with men. Instead, they are the focus. They are the primary characters. The men act as supporting characters and more often than not, serve to fulfill the role of romantic love interest.

Also, Scodari (2003) points out some of the flaws inherent in slash fanfiction, which previous authors on the subject do not fully address. She concludes that slash still works firmly within the confines of patriarchy. Slash does nothing to overcome patriarchy or come up with a divergent definition of the female experience. The women who write slash are still relegated to the sidelines, if only because they refuse to think of slash stories as having to do with anyone besides men.

Fanfiction about *Buffy*, a show whose focus is on women, is important to study because it does help flesh out a truthful female experience. Almost all research on fanfiction focuses exclusively on fanfiction written around shows with male leads, then on shows with male leads being on more-or-less equal footing with female leads. The next logical step is to examine fanfiction about a show that focuses on female leads. By doing this, it is possible to catalog the kinds of stories being written and examine how those stories fully incorporate a female viewpoint.



### *Research Questions*

The review of the literature has shown that fanfiction tends to be concerned with three things: 1) producing something that contributes to the fandom, 2) creating wish-fulfillment, and 3) a need to change a fictionalized world to suit particular perceptions of reality. The review of the literature also shows that there is a gap in research. The typology of the kinds of fanfiction being written is more than a decade old and that typology reflects the kinds of fanfiction being written about shows that focus exclusively on male leads and weak or non-existent female leads.

There has also not been research to address what new types of fanfiction are being written based on shows with strong female leads. What this thesis seeks to do is catalog a selection of fanfiction written about *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. It will also look at how this fanfiction serves as a means of wish-fulfillment. My theory chapter will examine how different components of the circuit of culture (du Gay, et. al., 1997) help inform my research. My research questions are as follows:

RQ1: What are the types of stories written about *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*?

RQ2: How do fanfiction writers *produce/consume Buffy the Vampire Slayer* fanfiction?

RQ3: How do fanfiction writers *identify* with *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*?

The theory section that follows shows how cultural studies helps to examine these three research questions. In particular, it explores how reception studies and feminist media studies are useful in the examination of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* fanfiction.

### Chapter III Theory

This study uses reception studies and feminist media studies as its theoretical frameworks. Since reception studies and feminist media studies are both branches of cultural studies, a brief definition of cultural studies is required.

#### *Cultural Studies*

The focus of cultural studies is culture: what it is, why it is important and how it impacts society (William, 1976). Cultural studies emphasizes how a certain part of culture (a book, a movie, an advertisement) constructs and reflects society's ideas about key concepts such as morality, sexuality, and capitalism (Hunter, 2005). In short, cultural studies focuses on how societies use culture to find meaning (Storey, 1996). Cultural studies is a way for members of a society to make sense of their lives. It is a way for people to interpret the world around them and the things that surround and are part of their everyday existence, as important in their make-up as human beings (Williams, 1976).

Cultural studies focuses on power: who has the power and how it can be used (Dow, 1996). The basic premise is that people in power are the dominant ones and they control the messages sent out to the masses. The powerful control the culture; they control the ideology. Ideology is identified as a means of building and maintaining social consciousness; it is a "shareable, common meaning" (McQuail, 2002, p. 82). Hall (1986) puts it more succinctly by stating that ideologies are "the frameworks of thinking and calculation about the world—the ideas which people use to figure out how the social

world works, what their place is in it, and what they ought to do” (p. 97). Ideology, as it relates to cultural studies, is understood more easily through the concept of hegemony.

Gramsci (1971) writes that hegemony is the control that one group of people (the people in power) has over another group of people. He states that hegemony is a way to make ideology desirable. It is a way to make people that are not in power, see their lack of power as normal. Hegemony can be seen as the middle ground between the producers of the ideology and those consuming it: it allows for a quicker and easier assimilation of the ideology. Hegemony is seminal to cultural studies because it encapsulates how a dominant group, for example owners and managers of a media conglomerate, can control another group through ideology.

In sum, cultural studies is focused on two things: how culture produces meaning in society and how power is gained and maintained through ideology and hegemony. My study focuses on how fans use fanfiction to make meaning of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. It focuses on how they interpret the events and situations of the television show to fulfill their own unique needs.

### *Reception Studies*

Reception studies are a branch of cultural studies which examine audience consumption. There are at least two central theories in reception studies that relate to this research: the encoding/decoding model (Hall, 1980) and the circuit of culture (du Gay, et. al, 1997).

Hall (1980) outlines what it means to be an active audience member by explaining that there are different ways that an audience can decode a text. Decoding is concerned with how an audience consumes a text, how the audience interprets it. Encoding means

how the makers of a text produce the text and how they infuse it with meaning. There is a dominant reading of a text, which consists of taking the meanings of a text as they are given by the encoders of a text at face value. There is also a negotiated meaning of the text, where the audience takes the encoded meaning, but negotiates a way for what they would like to see happen to come true. The final way to read a text is in an oppositional manner. This way of reading a text means that the audience's own social situation puts them in conflict with what would be the preferred meaning. Thus, the oppositional reader of a text would have to reappropriate the text and use it for his/her own means and purposes.

A case can be made that all fanfiction can be classified as an attempt to negotiate with the text. A negotiated reading of a text does not mean that the ideology that the text suggests is ignored. Instead it means that the boundaries for that ideology are tested.

The circuit of culture (du Gay, et al., 1997) takes Hall's ideas and uses them to develop a more thorough and deeper examination of culture's (and by extension the media's) role in everyday life. The central idea of the circuit of culture is that moments in culture have deep meanings and that those meanings are socially constructed. The circuit of culture is first used to examine the evolution of the Sony Walkman. The authors follow the Walkman's evolution through five phases: representation, production, consumption, identity, and regulation. The authors state that all five phases are interrelated and are not independent of each other. There is also no part of circuit that is more important, all phases work with each other. Thus, each moment is important to the construction of meaning. Also, this model is not linear like Hall's "Encoding/Decoding" (1980) model.

The first phase in the circuit of culture is representation. Representation focuses on how meaning in culture is formed. In particular, it works under the assumption that representation is not static and that we give meaning to things by the way that we represent them (Hall, 1997). In short, representation is a belief that things in culture represent us, they stand in for us, and define who we are. But since representation is constructed and fluid, who we are and the things that we chose to define who we are are in a constant state of flux.

Representation is a key component of the circuit of culture that I use in my examination of *Buffy* fanfiction. It is vital because it helps explain how fanfiction writers use fanfiction to make meaning of the shows that they write fanfiction about. Thus, while they do not change the primary narrative (the television show) or the ideology espoused by that narrative, they are able to use fanfiction to reinterpret and negotiate with that narrative in such a way that it corresponds to their own version of reality. Representation allows for fanfiction writers to make sense of the television shows they watch. It allows them to define what they stand for and who they are by the types of fanfiction that they write.

The second area of the circuit of culture is production. This phase focuses on the production of meaning. It is similar to Hall's concept of the encoder. If we take Hall's model into account, then production is about how people encode the meaning of a text. Thus producers encode their products with an intended meaning. This moment is not studied frequently.

The third phase of the model is consumption. This process is interconnected with production in that it is only at the moment of consumption that production comes to full

fruition (Curtin, et al., 2005). Consumption, again taking Hall's model into account, is dependent on the consumer and the consumer decides what meaning to take from a particular cultural product. Consumption is about how someone takes in a product. *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is a product that is absorbed through the watching of the television show itself. Fanfiction can be interpreted as a way to substantiate and verify the authenticity of that absorption. In other words, fanfiction is proof that fans consumed *Buffy* vehemently and with great attention to detail.

The fourth phase is identity. This phase deals with how a person relates to a particular thing. In this instance it focuses on how watchers of *Buffy* relate to the television show. It is a way to establish a connection between the person and that thing. It is also interrelated with production and consumption because the way that a person identifies with a text has a lot to do with how they consume that text.

The final phase is regulation. This phase focuses on how a product of culture "impacts the social formation, its institutions, assumptions, and mores" of a life (Acosta-Alzuru, 1999, p. 6). Regulation deals with issues of control. It focuses on how culture and cultural products are managed and guided.

Each moment can be related to *Buffy* in general and *Buffy* fanfiction in particular. Representation is the most vital component in the circuit of culture for my particular research because it allows for an examination of how fans use fanfiction to make meaning. However, the other components are also important to an understanding of *Buffy* fanfiction as a whole. Production and consumption are important because they explicate the basic processes that are involved when a fan watches a television show, then turns around and writes fanfiction based on that show. The two moments are interconnected in

fanfiction. A fan is both a consumer of the television show and a producer of the fanfiction. My study focuses on how fans consume *Buffy* through their production of fanfiction.

Identity is important to this study because it explains how fans relate to *Buffy*. In fact, fans relate so much to the ideology, characters, and storylines that they chose to write fanfiction based on it.

Regulation is only peripherally related to my study. An examination of *Buffy* fanfiction cannot really be seen as impacting either institutions or society as whole. However, there has been research on the television show that examines how it has impacted and changed the television industry (Wilcox & Lavery, 2002). Regulation is an important component of the circuit of culture and it might be interesting to examine how it impact *Buffy* and *Buffy* fanfiction in further studies.

*Polysemy and Polyvalence.* Two more important concepts in reception studies are polysemy and polyvalence. Polysemy is a concept that says that a text is open to a wide variety of interpretations, and that texts (a television show, a commercial), in order to be understood, must be viewed in the context of other texts (Fiske, 1986). Polysemy means that a text can have different connotative meanings, but still hold on to a central denotative meaning. In terms of fanfiction, polysemy means that the primary narrative of the television show can still hold on to its basic denotative meaning while allowing and inspiring different connotative meanings in fanfiction.

Polysemy works in tandem with Condit's (1989) concept of polyvalence. If polysemy is the ability of a text to be connotatively different, then polyvalence is the limitations that are imposed on a denotative meaning by economic, social, or other

circumstances. The concept of ideology that I mentioned earlier in relation to Hall's (1980) work is relevant here. In other words, fanfiction writers are limited by the denotative meanings given to the events and circumstances of the television show (the ideology).

To reiterate, reception studies are considered a branch of cultural studies because they focus on how members in society seek meaning in their media products. The concentration of reception studies is the active audience, the audience that is always searching for meaning and interaction with a text. Reception studies examine the symbiotic relationship between the consumption of a text and the production of meaning. The meaning can be codified in terms of different readings of a text, i.e. preferred, negotiated, and oppositional (Hall, 1980). *Buffy* fanfiction is a means by which fans of the show consume the text and produce meaning. The meaning is produced both in their interpretations of what the text means (in their readings of the text) and in the fanfiction that they write. In a very real sense, *Buffy* fanfiction can be seen as the physical manifestation of the mental interpretations/readings of the text.

Reception studies are vital to my examination of *Buffy* fanfiction because of their focus on the audience and because of their ability to explain how an audience reads a text. In particular, four parts of the circuit of culture (du Gay, et. al, 1997)—representation, consumption, production, and identity—directly inform my study. These concepts, as well as the others mentioned, help to make sense of the types of fanfiction written, and the importance of those types.



*Feminist Media Studies*

Feminist media studies are the meeting point of two related fields: feminism and cultural studies. Feminism is “united in the quest for the cause of women’s oppression” (van Zoonen, 1994, p. 3). While there are various factions of feminism and those factions sometimes conflict with each other, the underlying foundations of feminism remain. Namely, that feminism has an “unconditional focus on analyzing gender as a mechanism that structures material and symbolic worlds and our [women’s] experience of them” (p. 3). Feminism sees women as having been categorically oppressed in all facets of society. The particular type of feminism that is mentioned in relation to feminist media studies aims to end that oppression and put women on, at minimum, equal footing with the men in society.

Feminism fits into cultural studies by way of trying to find “a cultural understanding of the relationship between gender, power, and mass media” (van Zoonen, 1992, p. 6). As stated earlier, the part of society that holds power uses ideology to expand a certain hegemonic ideal. People who hold the power, from a feminist point-of-view, are those who oppress women and promote patriarchy. Because they hold the power, the patriarchy also controls the ideology. In terms of feminist media studies, this ideology is in the form of media texts that promote patriarchy at the expense of feminist rights. Therefore, what feminist media studies try to do is to resist the dominant meaning of a text (Hall, 1980) and instead try to see the text in a negotiated or “resistive” manner (Jenkins, 1992, p. 186). Feminist media studies take the most incisive parts of each theory (ideology in cultural studies and oppression by the patriarchy in feminism) and use those parts as an infrastructure for their own theories.

Feminist media studies help in my research on *Buffy* fanfiction because they explicate the importance of looking at things from an alternative viewpoint. Also, they help explain the prominence of slash fanfiction in previous research. As stated in my literature review, slash fanfiction is prominent because of the lack of strong female characters on television shows (Bacon-Smith, 1992; Jenkins, 1992; Scodari, 2003; Scodari & Fedler, 2000). Thus, the dominant ideology exposed in the shows that feature strong male characters and weak or non-existent female characters is one that promotes patriarchy. I argue that fanfiction based on *Buffy* is different because it features strong, female characters; the ideology that it espouses can be interpreted as being not patriarchal in nature (Bodger, 2003; Early, 2001; Fudge, 1999; Karras, 2002; Pender, 2002; Lamb, 1999; Ostow, 1998; Siemann, 2002).

There are various examples of feminist media studies. A prominent example is the work of Radway. Radway (1984) examines a group of female romance novel readers in a small town. She finds that the books that are successful among the romance novel readers she observes have a few generic characteristics. Chief among those characteristics is a separation of the hero and the heroine (usually by some misunderstanding), the hero acting in an aloof fashion, and the heroine of the novel being somewhat different than “normal,” displaying qualities like independence and stubbornness. She also writes that women who read romance novels are not reading the novels from a dominant viewpoint; rather, they are reading the text in a negotiated/oppositional manner. Thus, they resist the dominant ideological reading of the text.

Additionally, Radway (1984) posits that while romance novels display dominant paradigms of what it means to be a man or a woman (men are strong and valiant, women

are fragile and meek), they also show the heroine having strong characteristics. This makes it possible to read romance novels as a means of resisting patriarchy.

Radway (1984) also discusses the concept of the interpretive community in her work. She notes that the fans that she examined for her study all purchased romance novels from the same store. However, the fans did not know each other. They were part of a community that had similar interests and beliefs but almost no actual real-life interaction. This is similar to what fanfiction communities do. The fans that post on fanfiction.net do not appear to use their actual names. Readers of the fanfiction would be hard-pressed to define where the fanfiction writers lived, what they did professionally, and other bits of information about their lives. Their only connection is the fanfiction itself and the world on which that fanfiction is based on.

Furthermore, Radway finds merit in the consumption of romance novels. She sees women that read these novels as resisting patriarchy because they are doing something that others might deem a waste of time. Radway's work proves that research using a theoretical underpinning in feminist media studies is possible. She brings the two issues prominent in feminist media studies to the forefront. She uses cultural studies (in the form of reception studies) and she uses issues prominent in feminism (patriarchy) to help frame her research.

Another scholar that contributes to the area of feminist media studies is McRobbie. McRobbie (1984) studies the role that dance plays in young women's lives. She looks at such far-reaching cultural artifacts as dance, magazines, toys, and movies to examine how dance affects young women. She finds that fans use common cultural artifacts to establish meaning. The artifacts are specifically codified to establish a way of

life for these girls. Thus McRobbie shows how a particular subculture of society, in this case teenage females, uses popular culture to find meaning in texts. The way that they do so is by becoming active consumers of texts and using media and cultural artifacts to establish their own sense of identity.

McRobbie (1991) also looks at a British teen magazine called *Jackie*. Instead of just looking at how this cultural artifact affects the lives of young women, she examines the publishing company itself. She finds that the company not only wants to make a profit from their young female readers, but it also aims to control the ideological messages that these girls receive. She writes that the girls who read the magazine buy into the ideological messages expounded and have a hard time subverting those messages. In other words, the girls buy into the hegemonic messages and discourse found in the magazine. The ideology expounded is one in which romance is key. It is an ideology which propagates the need to be meek, subservient, and placid. It is also one that makes things like hair color and cosmetics of monumental importance in young girls lives. McRobbie incorporates the two central issues prominent in feminist media studies (ideology and patriarchy) into her work. She examines ideology and how that ideology impacts teenage girls, and she postulates that that ideology is filled with patriarchal assumptions.

Thus, feminist media studies are a conglomeration of two theories: feminism and cultural studies. Feminist media studies take the most incisive parts of each theory (ideology in cultural studies and oppression by the patriarchy in feminism) and use those parts as an infrastructure for its own theory.

Both feminist media studies and reception studies are important to my own research on *Buffy* fanfiction. Feminist media studies are important because of the issues of ideology and patriarchy and the idea that patriarchy informs the dominant ideology. *Buffy* is praised for its apparent lack of a strong patriarchal message (Bodger, 2003; Early, 2001; Fudge, 1999; Karras, 2002; Pender, 2002; Lamb, 1999; Ostow, 1998; Siemann, 2002). Thus the ideology that is promoted is one that should seemingly advance a feminist point-of-view. The stories examined should celebrate and focus on women.

Reception studies are important because they bring about the issue of negotiated/oppositional meanings of a text (which is essentially what fanfiction does) and because of the representation, consumption, production, and identity components of the circuit of culture. Thus, reception studies allow an examination of *Buffy* fanfiction that looks at how fanfiction writers use the text to make meaning.

## Chapter IV Methodology

My approach to research is qualitative. Quantitative and qualitative research have distinct and diverging epistemological purposes (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). While quantitative research aims to get a concrete answer on specific and generalizable topics, qualitative research tries to decipher a situation from many angles (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002). The qualitative researcher sees each research situation as diverse and complex, and lacking an easy formulaic answer. The aim of qualitative research is crystallization; it is to see something from all possible sides until a comprehensible and subjective picture of the situation is revealed (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

### *Textual Analysis*

The method that I employ in my research is textual analysis. In his “Introduction” to *Paper Voices* (1975), Stuart Hall discusses the methodology for conducting textual analysis. He writes that a textual analysis should uncover all possible meanings of a text. It should see the text not just for the intended, surface meaning, but also for its “latent meaning” (p. 16). Textual analysis should “uncover the unnoticed, perhaps unconscious, social framework” that shapes the content of the text (p. 16). The way to uncover this social network is by first becoming “preliminarily soaked” (p. 16) in the text, by viewing the text once from the offset. The text should be viewed several other times, each time reading the text more closely. There are three stages in textual analysis (Hall, 2005). The first stage is to view the text as a means of becoming acquainted with the text. The second stage involves looking at the text for “specific patterns and themes” (p. 33). The final stage involves integrating all the findings into the theoretical foundations of the

study. I use the three-stage process for my own textual analysis of *Buffy* fanfiction.

I also use narratology as a way to guide and structure my research.

### *Narratology*

Narratology's main purpose is to define and analyze narrative texts. Once definitions are solidified, narratology ventures into examining the interaction between the recipients of the narrative text and the text itself. Specifically, narratology examines how members of a society use narrative texts to make meaning out of their lives (Bal, 1997; Ryan, 2004; Toolan, 1988). This is directly correlated to the concept of representation first brought up in my theory section. Representation, like narratology, also examines the meaning-making process. Narratology is an appropriate method for my textual analysis of *Buffy* fanfiction because it provides the necessary tools to fully examine the interrelationship between the television show and the fanfiction written about the show.

*Defining narrative texts.* The first goal of narratology is to define what constitutes a narrative text. Bal (1997) defines a narrative text as “a text in which an agent relates . . . a story in a particular medium” (p. 5). She then goes on to categorize and define the various components of a narrative text. Bal writes that a narrative text is composed of three different things: the *medium*, the *story*, and the *fabula* (Bal, 1997, p. 5).<sup>iii</sup> The *medium* through which a story is told has traditionally and overwhelming been literary in nature (Bal, 1997; Ryan, 2004; Toolan, 1988). However, anything that is capable of telling a story can be considered a medium. This means that such things as a photo, a painting, or even a building can be considered a medium (Bal, 1997).

A *story* is defined as the telling of a series of events in a specific manner (Bal, 1997). The series of event told in the story are the *fabula*. A story relies on a teller. It

relies on communication (Bal, 1997; Ryan, 2004; Toolan, 1988). Because no two tellers are alike, stories are subjective. The teller of the story recounts the fabula in his/her own way (Bal, 1997). Thus there are vast amount of different stories about the same fabula. Think, for example, of the countless retellings of the *Cinderella* story. Each one is unique, not because of the different fabula (subject matter), but because of different tellers. Fanfiction about *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* uses most, if not all, of the same fabula as the television show, but because it has a different teller and because it employs a different medium, it is considered to be a different narrative.

*Analyzing narrative texts.* Narratology has established its own lexicon in regard to the different components of a narrative (a story told through a specific medium) that help in its analysis. Most of the lexicon used in the analysis of a narrative is so familiar that it is now part of common vernacular. Most people know the basic concepts in a narrative: the narrator (the agent that relates the story), a character (an agent that acts out the events in the story), and a setting (the location in which the events of a story are carried out) (Bal, 1997; Toolan, 1988). These three basic components act as foundational tools in any examination of a narrative (Ryan, 2004).

The narrator, for example, is important because he/she/it tells us something about the values and beliefs of the author. The narrator and the author are not necessarily the same, but by looking at which parts of the fabula the narrator has deemed important we can find out something about what the *author* deems important (Toolan, 1988). The narrator is the agent who *tells* the story (Ryan, 1997).

There are two main types of narrators: the external and the internal narrator. The external narrator exists outside the fabula. He/she/it is never referred to as a character and



never refers to itself as a character. The internal narrator is one that is character bound (Bal, 1997). This type of narrator exists within the events of a fabula and refers to him/herself as a character. There are also perceptible and non-perceptible narrators (Bal, 1997). The characters in a story can discern the presence of perceptible narrators. The narrators are engaged in the plot of the story. Non-perceptible narrators only act as observers to the events of the story. Other characters do not know of the non-perceptible narrator's presence.

Each narrative also has something called a focalizer and a focalized (Bal, 1997). The focalizer is subjective and the focalized is objective. The focalized is the object of the subject's gaze (point-of-view). There is external and internal focalization (Bal, 1997). External focalization is not bound to a character, while internal focalization is bound to a character. A story can shift focalization between different characters or even shift to a focalizer existing outside of the boundaries of characters. What is important to remember is that the focalizer is the ones who *sees*. This is to differentiate the focalizer from the narrator, who is the *teller* of the story. The focalized is the part of the fabula that the focalizer is actively looking at or concentrating on.

The focalized can also be which part of the primary narrative (the television show) the author of the story focuses on (the point-of-view of the author). Bal (1997) writes that the point-of-view in which a story is told "is often of decisive importance for the meaning the reader will assign to the fabula" (p. 79). Point-of-view allows the author to, as Bal (1997) states, manipulate the reader of the text to see the fabula in particular ways. Bal (1997) writes that when manipulation of the text is possible then it is at that point that "suspense and pleasure are provoked, and that ideology is inscribed" (p. 79).

Thus, point-of-view allows for the ideology of the author to come through. Point-of-view tells the story in the author's own image.

Fanfiction is unique because it allows for two divergent points-of-view to be expressed. Writers of fanfiction are expressing their own unique point-of-view and are shaping the stories that they write in their own image; however, they are also manipulated by the point-of-view (the ideology) of the directors and producers of the primary narrative (*Buffy the Vampire Slayer*).

There are different levels of manipulation. As stated in my theory section, Hall (1980) mentions three possible readings of a text: the preferred reading, the negotiated reading, and the oppositional reading. I stated in my theory chapter that fanfiction writers tend to use the negotiated/oppositional reading of a text. This is because they use their fanfiction to negotiate and, to a lesser degree, oppose the meanings received from the producers. They negotiate/oppose the ideology that the producers and directors of the show promote. Fans of the show that do not write fanfiction might negotiate/oppose the show's ideology in a different manner, or they might take the ideology espoused at face value. The point is that there are different levels of manipulation possible, depending on the different readings of a text.

In order for a fully formed textual analysis of fanfiction to be conducted, it is necessary to not only examine the point-of-view of the fanfiction itself, but also to look at the interplay between that point-of-view and the point-of-view of the television show (the primary text). In doing this, a richer understanding of the fanfiction writer's own values and beliefs can be analyzed.

An analysis of character is also important to an examination of narrative. It is especially important in the examination of fanfiction. On a purely surface level, finding out which characters the writers of fanfiction have focused on tells us how important the writers feel those characters are to the primary narrative (the television show). Also, the characters that fanfiction writers choose to focus on tell us something about the writers themselves. The primary character in a story is closely tied with the narrator of the story (Toolan, 1988). Sometimes they are the same person, other times, the narrator is outside the actions of the fabula (Bal, 1997; Toolan, 1988).

Finally, setting is important to an analysis of a narrative. In fanfiction, setting is important because it provides context. It describes the world in which the events of the fabula are taking place. While it might be possible to look at setting from an aesthetic or critical point-of-view—to look at how a location is described for example, or to see if an account of a historical location is accurate,—it is of much more importance to look at setting in relation to the author. Bal (1997) writes that the purpose of a textual analysis of a narrative “is not to account for the process of writing, but for the conditions of the process of reception” (p. 78).

Thus, setting in fanfiction should be examined to see what the author of the fanfiction deems important. By setting, I am not referring to just the physical, descriptive, location in which the action takes place, but to how physical location helps establish the time in the primary narrative that events are occurring.

One can read a fanfiction narrative and, if familiar with the primary narrative (the television show), discern at what point in the primary narrative the action is taking place. There are other ways in which a narrative text can be examined (description for example,

or whether a story is told in past, present, or future tense); however, focusing on narrator, character, and setting allows for a direct examination of the interplay between the primary narrative (the television show) and fanfiction itself. An examination of this interplay gets to the heart of what fanfiction writers deem important.

*Narratology and interpretation.* Narrator, character, and setting should also be looked at because they give the fanfiction narrative structure. Bal (1997) writes: “all narrative texts are based upon one common model, a model that causes narrative to be recognizable as narrative” (p. 175). She states that by being composed of medium, fabula, and story, as well as of setting, characters, and narrators, all narratives are similar and easily discernable. Once the basic structure of a narrative is established, then the reader of that narrative shares the responsibility in the making-meaning process (Bal, 1997).

Bal (1997) states that all narratives, no matter how fantastic in nature, are based on one’s perception of their own reality (if not reality in situations and circumstances, then reality in feelings and emotions). When a narrative does not match up to one’s perception of reality, recipients of a narrative reinterpret it in order to normalize it (Bal, 1997; Ryan, 2004). Bal (1997) states that “no matter how absurd, tangled or unreal a text may be, readers will tend to regard what they consider ‘normal’ as a criterion by which they can give meaning to a text” (p. 176). Bal (1997) goes on to write that most narratives are constructed in ways that are analogous to “the demands of human logic of events” (p. 177). She defines this “logic of events” as things that are “natural and in accordance with some form of understanding of the world” (Bal, 1997, p. 177). Fanfiction can be interpreted as being, in large part, about this need to normalize a narrative.

Narratology allows a full examination of the interrelationship between the primary narrative (the television show) and the fanfiction narrative. By examining that interrelationship, I can explore the ideology that the writers of fanfiction (viewers of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*) internalize in their own stories. I can also examine which parts of the ideology they resist. Thus each fanfiction narrative should be examined for basic structure, narrator, character, and setting. It should then be placed in relation to the primary narrative.

### *My Study*

This textual analysis looks at the kinds of fanfiction that are being written about a television show that focuses on female characters, i.e., *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. It also examines issues of representation, consumption, and identity in fanfiction. As I stated in my theory section, the main purpose of the circuit of culture is to solidify the notion that moments in culture have deep meanings and that those meanings are socially constructed. Representation is the meaning-making component of the circuit of culture (du Gay, et al., 1997). It focuses on how meaning in culture is formed. In the case of fanfiction, it focuses on how fanfiction writers make meaning of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* through their fanfiction. I look at how the writers of *Buffy* fanfiction give meaning to both the fanfiction and the show itself by how it is represented in the text.

There are more than 30,000 fanfiction narratives on Fanfiction.net about *Buffy*. The first story posted on this particular Web site was on November 4, 1998. Fanfiction.net has the ability to filter narratives by whether they are ongoing (whether people are still updating them) or whether they are completed. By just focusing on the completed fanfiction on the Web site, I was able to reduce the amount of narratives to

just under 7,000. I chose to focus on half of a percent of all the completed narratives on Fanfiction.net, bringing my total to 34 narratives. This number is small enough that it is manageable in the time allotted to write a thesis and achieve redundancy—the primary goal of qualitative research (Lindlof & Taylor, 2002),— but still big enough to get a fairly accurate representation of the kinds of stories written about *Buffy*.

Fanfiction.net also lists completed narratives chronologically. The first narrative I chose was the 4<sup>th</sup> story posted on fanfiction.net (I chose this narrative at random). After that, I chose every 200<sup>th</sup> narrative. By choosing every 200<sup>th</sup> narrative, I was able to get a full representation of all the narratives on the archive: narratives that spanned from the first couple of seasons of the show to more current narratives, written four years after the show's final episode aired.

Some of the narratives were short, page-long, narratives called *drabbles* (I will explain this later), while others were narratives with more than twenty chapters. Some of the narratives were part of a series of narratives. In those instances, I chose to read the complete series of narratives to make sure I understood the narrative structures involved.

I read each narrative at least three times in order to get fully submerged in the text (Hall, 1975). As I read the narratives I put them into different categories based on who the primary character of the narrative was, the setting (the season of the television show) in which the narratives took place, and the narrator. There were instances in which narratives fit into more than one category. I put those narratives into their own unique categories. For example, narratives taking place during the fourth season and featuring Buffy as the primary character were put in their own category. I also made separate categories for the types of stories being told. For example, if a narrative clearly featured a

romantic situation between a male character and another male character, that narrative was typified as *slash*.

The final classification of narratives featured all narratives primarily separated by type. After separating each by type, they were separated by primary character, narrator, and setting respectively. Those narratives that fell within more than one category were put into separate categories.

All examined fanfiction narratives were looked at not in and of themselves, but rather in relation to the primary narrative (television show). I looked at a fanfiction narrative, situated it within the primary narrative—by using character, narrator, and setting—and examined the differences between the primary narrative and the fanfiction narrative.<sup>iv</sup> By doing this I was able to determine which parts of primary narrative fanfiction writers deemed important. I was able to look at whether those parts of the narrative that they focused on corresponded with their “logic of reality” (Bal, 1997, p. 177), as well as examine how they changed the primary narrative so that it *would* correspond to their logic of reality. In doing all of this, I was able to get to the heart of the matter under study, which is to look at the different types of *Buffy* fanfiction in relation to reception studies. In particular the idea that meaning in media products is formed and that the audience has the ability to negotiate/oppose the intended meaning of the text. I use representation, consumption, production, and identity components of the circuit of culture (du Gay, et. al., 1997) to examine how how fanfiction writers make meaning of the primary narrative, how they co-opted the fabula of the primary narrative to suit their own purposes, and how, through the use of fanfiction narratives, they try to understand their own lives.

## Chapter V Analysis

This analysis chapter looks at all 34 stories gathered from the fanfiction.net Web site. The stories are grouped together based on type. I examine each type of story in two ways: 1) by explaining the characteristics of the specific type and 2) by looking at the setting, the characters, and the narrator of each story that falls into that type. Finally, I relate each type of story to different components in the circuit of culture.

In all, I was able to distinguish six main types of stories: 1) *slash*, 2) *Mary-Sue*, 3) *missing scene*, 4) *alternative universe*, 5) *crossover*, and 6) *drabble* stories. Within two of these main types I found subtypes. Briefly, *slash* stories are stories that feature two people of the same sex (mostly male) in a romantic/sexual relationship with each other. *Mary-Sue* stories are stories that place an original character (usually an idealized version of the author) into the universe of the fandom. *Missing scene* stories fill in the blanks for actions, events, and thoughts that were not shown onscreen. *Alternative universe* stories take the characters and situations from the fandom and put them in unfamiliar settings. *Crossover* stories make the characters from one fandom interact with characters from a distinct fandom. Finally, *drabble* stories are vignettes that usually explore in detail an aspects of a character's personality. Within two of these main types of stories I found subtypes.

Missing scenes stories have as subtypes stories that feature minor characters and stories that feature the inner thoughts/motivations of characters. Alternative universe stories only have one subtype: stories that focus on altering the universe of the primary narrative (the television show) in such a way that it "rights-the-wrong" that the fanfiction



writers perceive the producers of the television show to have committed. Drabble stories are stories that tend to specify the length of the story (short) instead of the type of story.

Of the six main types of stories, three (alternative universe, Mary-Sue, and slash) are ones that previous scholars have explored (Bacon-Smith; Jenkins, 1992). The subtypes in missing scene and alternative universe stories seemed to have emerged organically and as a direct result of events occurring in the primary narrative. I will begin my analysis with an examination of slash fanfiction. In my analysis of all the types I will reference characters and detailed events from the television show, please see the appendices A, B, and C, for explanations of these characters and events.

### *Slash Fanfiction*

Four of the 34 stories read can be classified primarily as *slash* stories. Slash stories feature characters of the same sex involved romantically with each other. Past research on slash fanfiction has focused mainly on male/male slash (Bacon-Smith, 1992; Jenkins, 1992; Kustritz, 2003; Salmon & Symons, 2004; Scodari, 2003; Scodari & Fedler, 2000). As my review of the literature mentions, the prominence of slash in fanfiction writing is due to the lack of strong female role models in the primary narrative that writers of fanfiction watch. The writers of fanfiction tend to focus on the more dynamic characters in the primary narrative. These characters are usually male. Thus, fanfiction writers tend to write two males in romantic relationships with each other. The producers of the primary narrative (the television show) do not sanction these relationships because these themes are not present in it.

Of the four slash stories read, only one features a male/male pairing. The story focuses on the character of Larry.<sup>v</sup> It is entitled “What He Wanted” and is a character

study of Larry that focuses on what it means to be gay as well as his feelings for Xander<sup>vi</sup>:

God he hates Harris. Well, that may be a little harsh, he doesn't Hate Harris, at least not with a capital H. He just... is frustrated, constantly, by Xander, who is in his opinion, a scrawny, underfed little twerp that always has something to say. He can justify to himself that he's jealous, because he's never been much of a quick wit, or he can admit to himself that his friends aren't quite as loyal as Harris' seem to be given the bruise he sported after that strange Buffy chick slammed him into a vending machine. But he can't actually Hate Harris, certainly not with a capital H, because Xander was just one of those people that... was difficult to hate. ("What He Wanted," 2006)

The two main characters of the story are Larry and Xander. The story takes place during the third season of the show, after Larry tells Xander that he is gay but before Larry's death during the season finale.<sup>vii</sup> The story is told mostly through the point-of-view of Larry, although it switches over to Xander's point-of-view at the very end, after Larry's death. Thus both Larry and Xander hold the subjective gaze over the objective events of the story. They are both, at different, times, the focalizers of the story. The focalization is character bound and therefore internal. The story features an external narrator.

The story tells of Larry's thought processes on his interactions with Xander. The narrator starts off by stating that Larry hates Xander, but then qualifying that answer by stating that Larry thinks of Xander all the time. Essentially, Larry, through his interaction with Xander, realizes that he is gay. Toward the end of the story, he asks Xander out on a date. All events of the story, before this one, follow the plot of the primary narrative faithfully. Xander and Larry do not end up going out on a date. After Larry's death the narrator writes that Xander sometimes, when he thinks no one is watching, stops and thinks of Larry.

The story features two characters romantically involved in a way not sanctioned by the television show. However, the two characters are not the primary characters, nor are they the most dynamic ones (this title belongs to Buffy and Willow). Also, the fact that Larry is gay is part of the cannon of the primary narrative. Thus, the leap that fanfiction writers used to have to take by pairing up two people that were by all accounts heterosexual in nature is less stringent.

### *Femslash*

The other type of story that features two characters of the same sex romantically involved with each other is *femslash* (this is the term by which fanfiction writers categorize it). Femslash features two female characters in romantic situations with each other. Two of the stories focus on Willow in romantic situations with other women. The first story, called “Tempus Fugit,” features Willow in a romantic situation with Tara.<sup>viii</sup> Willow and Tara are the primary characters in the story. “Tempus Fugit” features two novel-length stories that focus on the Willow/Tara relationship (a relationship which occurred in the primary narrative). The stories are told from Willow’s point-of-view and span from the first time the girls converse with each other in the fourth season all the way until the end of the television series. “Tempus Fugit” is interesting because it further drives a hole into the theory of what slash could be. Instead of two male characters in a non-sanctioned (by the show’s producers) relationship with each other, the story features two female characters in a sanctioned relationship with each other.

Willow is, in addition to Buffy, the other prominent character on the show. She is a complex and dynamic character. The fact that there is slash (femslash) fanfiction about her shows that the writers of the fanfiction do not need to look at male characters to

supplant the lack of strong female characters. Also, the fact the Willow and Tara are romantically linked onscreen (in the primary narrative) means that the fanfiction writers presume a relationship. Fanfiction writers do not attempt to justify one.

The other story about Willow focuses on her relationship with Kennedy.<sup>ix</sup> The story, entitled, “The New Baby” shows Willow and Kennedy as they attempt to raise a baby together. The story is set sometime after the end of the seventh season. The story features an external narrator that also acts as the focalizer. The focalization is also external. The two main characters of the story are Willow and Kennedy. This story reiterates the points that I made in regard to the “Tempus Fugit” story. It features Willow as a main character and is a sanctioned relationship on the show.

The final femslash story read revolves around the character of Faith.<sup>x</sup> In the story entitled “Girlfriend in a Coma,” Faith is shown in a relationship with Cordelia.<sup>xi</sup> The story features an external narrator. Both Faith and Cordelia act as focalizers at different times. It spans the third and fourth season of *Buffy* and all five seasons of Buffy’s sister show, *Angel*.<sup>xii</sup> The story focuses on the fact that both characters end up in comas. Faith was put in a coma after she and Buffy fought at the end of the third season.<sup>xiii</sup> Similarly, Cordelia was put in a coma as a result of a fight against a villainous character during *Angel*’s fourth season. Faith comes out of her coma during fourth season of *Buffy*. Cordelia dies as a result of her coma during the final season of *Angel*. The story weaves a connection between the characters. It stipulates that the characters were involved and that things ended badly:

"I didn't mean for things to be like this." She whispers, her fingers tightening around Faith's. Tears brim to the edge of her eyes, a part of her she'd never let Faith see before.

The problem is Faith doesn't see anything anymore. Not her. Not anything.

In some ways she thinks it's a relief. With the Mayor dead, Buffy victorious and not a single visitor in sight Cordelia almost wishes that Faith would keep dreaming forever. The doctors say that she will, but Cordelia knows the truth. Faith is strong. It's only the eye of the storm.

"I just came here because I had to tell you I'm leaving. I'm going to L.A. I can't stay in Sunnydale after all of this and...I think I have a real shot at being an actress."

Another beat and Faith is still as Cordelia holds her breath. Her silence is unspoken approval and Cordelia's not sure if it's a cop-out or the end of something that should have been brilliant but fizzled into static.

"I'm sorry."

It's barely a whisper but it's enough, and suddenly Cordelia is motivated. She needs to leave and not just the hospital, but the town. Her days in California's Hellmouth are numbered and if she doesn't leave now she's afraid she never will. ("Girlfriend in a Coma, 2006)

The character of Cordelia is portrayed as purely heterosexual on the show. First by having a serious love affair with Xander on *Buffy* and later on *Angel* by becoming Angel's love interest.<sup>xiv</sup> Faith's sexuality is a bit more ambiguous. While she does have romantic relationships with men on the show, the producers of the primary narrative also imply that she has had past relationships with women. They also allude to the fact that Faith is attracted to Buffy romantically.<sup>xv</sup> While it is true that this is a pairing that is not sanctioned by the show, the fact that the portrayal of Faith's sexuality is so ambiguous makes it easier to understand how fanfiction writers are able to put her in a romantic situation with another woman.

### *Slash Fanfiction and The Circuit of Culture*

The four slash fanfiction stories read make it clear that past interpretations of what comprises slash fanfiction are limited in scope. Slash has been more about the way

in which fanfiction writers create their own stories because of a lack of strong female characters. Past research has stipulated that the writers of fanfiction tend to be heterosexual women that want the most dynamic characters in romantic situations with each other (Bacon-Smith, 1992; Jenkins, 1992, Scodari & Fedler, 2000; Scodari, 2003). Traditionally, the most dynamic characters were male and thus the pairings in slash fanfiction tended to be male. Since *Buffy* features strong female characters it stands to reason that the fanfiction would as well. Thus, there is only one slash story, but three femslash stories. Also, two of the femslash stories deal directly with sanctioned couples shown onscreen.

The three femslash stories (one that deals with a Willow/Tara pairing, another that deals with a Willow/Kennedy pairing, and a third that deals with a Faith/Cordelia pairing) are interesting because they are similar in scope and theme to stories that feature a heterosexual romantic pairing. In short, they can be interpreted as stories that attempt to showcase the normalization of female characters in romantic relationships. The sanctioning of two of the femslash romances by the producers of the show only help to facilitate the fanfiction stories written. The non-sanctioned third fanfiction pairing (Faith/Cordelia) is easy to understand because one-half of the couple featured in that story has a murky sexual identity (Faith).

#### *Mary-Sue Fanfiction*

The *Mary-Sue* type of fanfiction features a new original character who comes into the lives of the characters of the show and fixes their problems. Mary-Sue characters are typically showcased as being stereotypical blonde bombshells. Researchers who have written of Mary-Sue characters (Bacon-Smith, 1992; Jenkins, 1992) have interpreted

these kinds of stories as the fanfiction writer's attempt at including idealized versions of himself/herself into the fictional narrative. In Mary-Sue fanfiction, the original character knows everything about the universe she is thrust into and uses that knowledge to help the characters in the universe resolve their own problems. Past research has shown that readers of fanfiction do not particularly enjoy this genre and see those that write it as juvenile and poor writers (Bacon-Smith, 1992; Jenkins, 1992).

Two of the 34 stories read are classified as Mary-Sue stories. The first story, entitled "And Her Name was Mary-Sue" is actually a parody of the whole genre. There is no mention of setting as it relates to the primary narrative. In other words, there is nothing that indicates at which point in the television show the story is taking place. The characters involved in the story are: Buffy, Xander, Willow, Spike<sup>xvi</sup>, and Tara. The story starts off with this sentence: "Her perfect blonde hair was tied back in a ponytail, and her startling violet eyes twinkled with merriment." In short, it starts off with the stereotypical description of the Mary-Sue character.

The basic plot of the Mary-Sue story is that each of the characters individually finds out the identity of the new character. After finding out that the new character is, in fact, Mary-Sue, they run away from her. All of the characters meet and try to find a way to collectively get rid of the character. The only solution that they find is to perhaps plead with the author of the story (the characters are self-aware enough to realize that they are in a story being written by someone) to make Mary-Sue go away. However, none of the characters have the gumption to ask the author to change her story.<sup>xvii</sup>

The story ends with Mary-Sue walking into the room where they have all gathered. She then rambles on about the many different ways that she can help them. The

story features an internal narrator (the narrator refers to herself as a character), and the narrator is perceptible in that the characters in the story acknowledge her presence. The narrator never gives up the position as the focalizer as she does not allow any of the characters free reign (they are never truly subjective). Also, since the focalization of the story is not bound to a character means that it is external in nature. This story is an obvious parody of the Mary-Sue type and it showcases both the author's knowledge of the structures and types of fanfiction as well as the author's derision for the Mary-Sue genre.

The other Mary-Sue story read also attempts to resolve the problems of the characters by transplanting a character into the *Buffy* universe that knows everything about that universe. However, the main difference is that instead of an original character, the author transplants a character from another television show. Namely, the author writes in the titular character of the show *Veronica Mars*<sup>xviii</sup> into the second season of *Buffy*.<sup>xix</sup> Veronica knows that she has been transplanted into the television show and uses her knowledge of the show's second season to solve not only the problems of the characters of *Buffy* but to also solve her own problems. For example, she warns Jenny<sup>xx</sup> that Angel is thinking of killing her, thereby preventing her death. The story, entitled, "Martian Manhunter" is told from Veronica's point-of-view. She is the main character, the narrator (both internal and perceptible) and the focalizer of the story. The focalization of the story is internal. The author frames the story in such a way that Veronica cannot directly tell any of the characters what she knows about their future; instead, she can only guide them in the right direction. Here is an excerpt from the first chapter of the story:



Right now I'm betting you think you have it all figured out. You're wrong. Trust me, you're wrong. Because that sign I was taking a picture of? There were three words on it: "Welcome to Sunnydale." That's right, I'm smack in the middle of the *Buffy* episode "School Hard." My name is Veronica Mars. High school student, girl detective, and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* fan. And I know everything that is going to happen for the next six years. ("Martian Manhunter," 2007)

The story does not end until Veronica has managed to transplant herself back into her own world and time (after having fixed the problems of the characters in the *Buffy* universe of course).

#### *Mary-Sue and the Circuit of Culture*

The main difference between these two Mary-Sue stories and those researched by both Bacon-Smith (1992) and Jenkins (1992) is that the authors of the fanfiction stories are more cognizant of the types of stories being written and realize the stigma associated with these particular types of stories. Thus, they make is a point of dealing with the stigma by either mocking the genre altogether or changing the genre enough so that the readers of the fanfiction will be more actively engaged. Either way the two stories showcase the savvy of fanfiction writers and their knowledge of its structures. The stories elucidate how well the authors identify with *Buffy* and with fanfiction in general. Thus, by writing these updated versions of Mary-Sue stories, the writers show that they are informed enough to realize what fanfiction is and that they are not taking part in fandom by chance or luck, but rather are fully aware of their parts in making meaning and transforming the primary narrative.

#### *Missing Scene Fanfiction*

*Missing scene* stories are stories focusing on events mentioned in the primary narrative but never shown. These are stories explaining the motives for the actions that

occur on-screen. They are attempts by fanfiction writers to fill in the perceived gaps in the plots of the primary narrative. Nine of the stories read are classified as missing scene. Three of the nine focus on the inner thoughts and motivations of the characters during key parts of the primary narrative. Two of the nine focus on minor characters and showcase key events or thoughts that lead to the minor character's involvement in the primary narrative. The remaining four stories focus on events that were mentioned to or alluded to on-screen but that happened off-screen. I will begin by talking about these four stories first.

The first story, entitled “Pathetic” features Spike as the main character. It takes place at the end of the seventh season of the show.<sup>xxi</sup> The story has an external narrator. However, the focalization is internal as it is Spike who is the focalizer (the events are told from his point-of-view). During the series finale episode, “Choices,” Spike spies on Buffy kissing Angel. He gets jealous. The next scene that features Spike shows him hitting a punching bag. On that punching bag, he has taped up an amateurish drawing of Angel. Buffy walks in to talk to Spike and sees the drawing. She rolls her eyes. The missing scene that the fanfiction focuses on is Spike coming up with the idea to draw Angel. This is an excerpt of the story after Spike has told Xander that Angel is back in town:

Even when he wasn't looking at Xander, Spike knew Xander had a ridiculous grin on his face from the sound of his voice.

“I remember I used to draw some funny Angel faces and do whacky stuffy to them.”

Spike scoffed, “Pathetic.”

“I was in high school back then...”

Spike shook his head in ridicule and walked towards the basement ignoring Xander's defenses. Once in the basement he kicked the table in irritation. A notebook and a couple of pencils fell to the floor. Spike's eyes narrowed thoughtfully. ("Pathetic," 2006)

The other three stories that fall into the general missing scene category essentially do the same thing that "Pathetic" does, they fill in holes in the storyline. They are literally scenes written that help the writer understand and explain certain events on the show. In short, what general missing scene stories do are explore facets of the original stories shown on-screen, but do so in a way that adds to the complexity of the universe.

### *Inner-Thoughts*

Missing scene stories that fall under the sub-type of *inner-thoughts* focus on the inner-thoughts of characters before, during, and after key scenes. They showcase the reasons for character's actions. There are six inner thought fanfiction stories. One story, entitled "To Slay or Not" focuses on the character of Buffy during the first episode of the series. In the episode, Buffy tells Giles<sup>xxii</sup> that she does not want to be the slayer. She then storms off. The story features an external narrator with Buffy as the focalizer. The story focuses on her thought processes for not wanting to be a slayer: "Buffy hated being the slayer, having the weight of the world hoisted onto her shoulders. Didn't the powers know that this could damage her popularity status or play havoc with a young girl's social life?"

The story ends with Buffy realizing that if she does not step up and do her job, no one else will. If she is not the slayer, then people will most likely die. Thus, she resigns herself to her fate and reconsiders her decision. In the primary narrative, she goes back and tells Giles that she will be the slayer.

Another inner-thought story examines what Willow thinks about Buffy:

She's so strong and independent. She is used to fight alone, even though now she has friends surrounding her. Whenever things are going to get touch she shies away from us. She keeps us at a distance because she is scared that she will get hurt. Because if we are her friends and help her we might get killed.

She tries to prevent us from getting hurt, not realizing that she's hurting us in the process. ("Because She is a Friend," 2004)

The story is set during the fifth season of the show and features Willow as the (internal) narrator and focalizer. In this story, Buffy is the focalized (the subject).

Inner-thought fanfiction allows for an examination of the motivation that influences character's actions. It allows for authors to go beyond what can be shown on screen. Television is a visual medium. Thus, things on television are shown and not told. Character motivation is mostly limited to visual acts—a furrowed brow implies concern, a smirk implies amusement. Fanfiction, because it is written, allows for a more thorough examination of what the visual act implies. Writers can explore just what that furrowed brow means, for example. Or explain why a character smirked. It is as if the writers of fanfiction consciously acknowledge the limitations of the television medium and the advantages of the written medium to explore inner thoughts.

### *Minor Character*

Another type of missing scene story is one that focuses on *minor characters*. It shows what their lives were like before they become a part of the primary narrative. For example, the story entitled, "Dreary Sky" focuses on the character of Chloe Sanchez.<sup>xxiii</sup> Chloe is a potential that kills herself and is found by Buffy and the other potentials.<sup>xxiv</sup> Her death is pivotal to the primary narrative only in as much as it affects the major characters and moves the plot forward: the characters now realize that The First is

extremely dangerous. The story tells of Chloe's isolation and her fear of moving to a new city into a house she does not know with people she does not know. It tells of how insecure she was even before her life became entangled with that of Buffy and her friends. Finally, it tells of how The First taunts her and influences her decision to kill herself:

Buffy says she's the one who has gone through the most out of all of this, with the slayer thing, but she takes what she has for granted – I don't. She has a home, she has loads of supportive friends, and GOD- She even has family! I have none of what she has, but I don't feel jealous, or do I? No I'm not! Evil is creeping and crawling all over, inside my brain and it's filling my head with provoking thoughts. I can't tune it out completely. The First keeps telling me all these horrible things.

It twists my words and my mind, next it will be body and soul. No! It might take my mind but it will never take my soul. Over the years I learned one thing; all you have is your soul, nothing matters. Even though hope enters into your soul, I rejected mine, because it won't help me. I don't need it. It just disguises failure.

It haunts me, I wish for redemption, for what you ask? Everything: from being born to tying my shoes. No-one wanted me here, hell I didn't want to be here. Why does all of this stuff happen to me? I'm haunted by everything. Everything I do gets scolded at. And why the hell am I asking these stupid-ass questions? It's The First; it won't leave me alone, why? I wonder if that's rhetorical question. Deep down I know why and so will you, once you've finished reading my story. ("Dreary Sky," 2005)

The story is told in first person, from Chloe's point-of-view. The narrator is internal and perceptible. The focalization is also internal. Chloe is in fact, the subject and her inner thoughts the object of the story. It is set during the seventh season of the show. The story does not condone suicide; rather, it attempts to explain the motivations and actions that led Chloe to come to that decision. Thus, instead of viewing Chloe as a foil who further helps the producers of the primary narrative move the plot along, the

fanfiction writer sees it as an opportunity to explore in-depth Chloe's personality and motivations for her actions.

*Missing Scene and the Circuit of Culture*

Missing scene stories are one of the most prominent types of fanfiction stories. They are attempts by the writers of fanfiction to coincide the world of the primary narrative to their own experiences. They are attempts to make logical sense of the primary narrative's world and to fix that world in a way that coincides with their own beliefs and reality (the representation component of the circuit of culture). Thus fanfiction writers are not just fixing plot points, they are modifying the primary narrative to suit themselves.

Also, missing scene stories are important because they showcase the insights of the fanfiction writer. They show just how shrewd the writers of fanfiction are about the process of producing a narrative in a visual medium. The writers realize that the medium, while advantageous because of its ability to present setting, characters and dialogue instantaneously, is limited by time and by point-of-view. The producers of the primary narrative only have one hour a week to tell their stories. Thus, they need to allocate that time to the characters and plots that they believe are the most relevant. Things get missed. Fanfiction writers who write missing scene fanfiction do not begrudge the fact that things get missed, instead they see it as an opportunity to take up the mantle of adding to the primary narrative by filling in the gaps of the things missed.

Because television is a visual medium, events in the fabula have to be shown and not said—thoughts are almost never displayed. Fanfiction writers realize that the medium

of their fanfiction narrative allows for thought processes to be explored and they use this medium to do so.

### *Alternative Universe Fanfiction*

The next type of fanfiction explored is *alternative universe* fanfiction. Alternative universe stories feature the characters of the show but puts them in a universe that exists outside of the one shown in the primary narrative, or it skews the primary narrative in such a way that it is no longer recognizable as the primary narrative. Alternative universe stories pair up people who were never paired up on the show, make people have different characteristics that those displayed on-screen, or moves the characters away from their traditional settings.

11 of the 34 stories read are considered to be primarily alternative universe stories. Of the 11, two stories are alternative universe stories that I categorize as righting-the-wrong stories.

The main type of alternative universe story takes the characters of the primary narrative and puts them in settings or situations that are unfamiliar. For example, the story entitled “Childhood’s End” focuses on the recurring character of Harmony.<sup>xxv</sup> The story postulates the idea that Harmony had a child that no one knew about. The story has an external narrator. The story occurs during the fourth season of the show. Harmony decides to turn the child into a vampire. The story unfolds as Buffy and her friends find out about the child and interact with her:

“Mommy!”

It was fortunate that, as a vampire, Lacey did not need to breathe, otherwise her relieved mother’s embrace would have smothered her.

“Are you alright?” Harmony asked urgently, kissing her little daughter over and

over again.

“Fine, Mommy.” Lacey clung tightly to her mother’s neck. “Xander played Princesses with me and read stories and everything.” The expression on her small face became pensive. “He forgot to put sugar in my blood to make it taste nice, though.” The tiny vampire told her mother, not noticing the revolted looks on Buffy and Dawn’s faces, or Spike’s amused smirk.

“I’ll know for next time.” Xander said cheerfully, touched despite himself by the mother-daughter reunion.

Harmony scooped her little girl into her arms, hugging her tightly.

Lacey yawned, laying her head on her mother’s shoulder. “I miss Sparkles.” She confided quietly.

“Well,” Harmony tickled her gently before producing a fluffy purple stuffed unicorn. “That I can help with.”

“Sparkles!” Lacey cuddled her favourite toy tightly. “Was he good?”

“Very good.” Harmony reassured her. “He missed you though.” She kissed Lacey’s cheek. “I missed you too.”

“Lots?”

“Lots and lots.”

“Can we go home now?”

“In a little while.” It was with great difficulty that Harmony restrained herself from snarling at Buffy, who had spoken. The Slayer looked the elder of the blonde vampires in the eye, knowing that, as a mother, Harmony would cheerfully tear her to pieces if she thought that she was threat to her child. “Please.” She tried to keep her voice friendly and even. “We have to talk about a few things first.” (“Childhood’s End,” 2004)

The storyline of the primary narrative is altered due to the addition of Harmony’s child. Events unfold differently in the story than they do in the primary narrative. Other stories that fall into the alternative universe genre also alter the primary narrative in some way.



*Righting-The-Wrong Fanfiction*

The two alternative universe stories that I classify as *right-the-wrong* stories focus on attempts by the writers to right some sort of perceived wrong that they feel the producers of the primary narrative created. The two stories read attempt to “fix” the death of Tara.<sup>xxvi</sup>

The first story, called “Jonathan’s Wish” tells the tale of what would happen had Jonathan<sup>xxvii</sup> been a part of Buffy’s inner circle of friends. The story stipulates that Jonathan was their friend in elementary school but lost touch with the group as they all grew older. It is told from Jonathan’s point-of-view, Jonathan is the internal narrator of the story. It focuses on the changes that would occur during the sixth season of the show had Jonathan been *Buffy*’s friend. Thus, instead of Buffy and Spike being together, Buffy and Xander are. Instead of Xander being with Anya,<sup>xxviii</sup> Jonathan is with Anya. The story ends with Jonathan dying in Buffy’s arms as he takes the stray bullet that was meant to have killed Tara. Tara lives and Jonathan dies a hero, which, according to the narrator, is what Jonathan wanted to be most.

The other story is one that I first mentioned in relation to femslash. The story, or pair of stories, called “Tempus Fugit,” focuses on the characters of Willow and Tara. The overall story spans the fourth through seventh seasons of the show. The focalization of the story is bound to the character of Willow, thus it is internal. However, the narrator exists outside of the events of the narration. The basic premise of the story is that Buffy finds a device that, when activated, works as a spell that sends people back in time. The first version of the story called “S4: Tempus Fugit” tells how the season four version of Willow goes back in time to situations shared with Tara and finally realizes that she is in

love with her. The other story called "S7: Tempus Fugit" tells the tale of a season seven Willow (distracted over Tara's death and feeling guilty for murdering Warren) going back in time to season four and seeing Tara alive. Once, she sees Tara alive, she does everything in her power to not go back to a world without Tara. Through a series of events, Willow is forced to go back to the season seven timeline, but finds that things have changed, so much so that Tara is still alive and Willow is with her.<sup>xxix</sup> The following is an excerpt of the story that occurs after Willow is back in her normal time:

She couldn't trust her senses. They lied. Sometimes. They only understood the world in three dimensions, not the four or five or eleven of everything. And it could change in a moment.

"I'm not right!" she exploded in a frantic, tear-choked spasm. "I'm like an imposter. And, and the real Willow Rosenberg that belongs in this world is going to show up and kick me out and it's so not going to be pretty because if I were me..."

"You're not an imposter, Will..." the blonde began emphatically, but she cut her off because Tara needed to understand this. She needed to be aware of the threat. The lie.

"I don't belong..." she gestured wildly at the comforting contents of the room. "...in the...this here Tara! Don't you see?" she finished desperately, turning to meet blue eyes, averting her gaze almost immediately, terrified that Tara's features would blur and shift away from her. "I'm not the real Willow Rosenberg...the this Willow Rosenberg. This isn't right and...and you don't understand...I don't deserve this!"

Tara's thumb stroked her cheek gently as both hands cupped her face and the sobs stopped suddenly. "You just don't remember this world yet. You will."

She wanted to believe her. Desperately. But there was too much at stake. They needed to research. There was work to be done. "Tara we need to...we need the research and...because...I'm not going back there," she mumbled in a panic. (S7: Tempus Fugit, 2003)

Willow continues to try to make Tara see that she is an imposter. The story ends with Tara finally able to convince Willow that she is in fact part of that reality, and that she is not going anywhere.

#### *Alternative Universe and the Circuit of Culture*

Alternative universe stories are similar to missing scene stories in what they say about the writers of the fanfiction. The writers of the fanfiction want to write stories that correspond with their own logic of reality. They want stories that they feel represent them. So much so that they manipulate the text in a way that makes the stories more agreeable to their own version reality. This shows that the writers feel comfortable enough with the primary narrative to change it. It also implies that writers of fanfiction are actively involved in the meaning of that narrative and that they do not see the narrative as completely authoritative, nor themselves as without power.

Also, in this category of alternative universe fanfiction, the writers of right-the-wrong stories seem to be resisting the dominant ideology espoused by the show's producers. Namely, that Tara was not an expendable character and that they feel that she did not deserve to die. Instead of sitting idly by and letting her death go, the authors chose to do something about it. They did not agree with some of the producers' decisions in the creation of the primary narrative, so they change the fabula to suit their own needs

#### *Crossover Fanfiction*

*Crossover* fanfiction consists of stories that feature the characters of *Buffy* interacting with characters from other shows. Three of the 34 stories read are crossover stories. The "Martian Manhunter" story that I discussed earlier in relation to Mary-Sue fanfiction is an example of a crossover story. Another crossover story I read features the

character of *Daria*<sup>xxx</sup> interacting with characters from the *Buffy* universe. The final crossover story was written after both *Buffy* and *Angel* were off air. The story, entitled, “Just the Way You Are” and features Buffy interacting with a character called Seeley Booth from the television show *Bones*.<sup>xxxi</sup> The story begins with Buffy having moved to Columbus, Ohio and having finished up her undergraduate degree in Sociology. Buffy lives in a house by herself and, although she maintains contact with her friends, she is no longer close to them. The author writes that Angel disappeared a few years prior to Buffy moving and no one had seen him. The basic premise of the story is that Seeley looks remarkably like Angel. The story features an external narrator and external focalization. This is an excerpt from the first time that Buffy sees Seeley:

He rang the door to the next house on their canvass. He turned away from the door, scanning the street.

“Can I help you?”

He turned to face the resident. He offered her what he hoped was a comforting smile. The resulting look of shock and terror on her face was not what he’d expected. He couldn’t remember getting that response from a woman before. Maybe he was staring too hard.

“Angel?”

“I’m sorry to bother you. Miss Summers, is it?”

“I, Angel, is it really you?” She paled visibly. He wondered if she might faint.

Bones glanced at him and he shrugged. “I’m Special Agent Seeley Booth.” He showed her his badge and identification. “We just need to ask you a few routine questions.”

“Come on, what is this? If this is some kind of joke, it’s not funny. I had an exam today in one of my classes.”

“We’ll provide documentation for your professor stating you were unable to attend class if that’s necessary, Miss Summers.”

“Angel. What’s wrong with you?”

“I’m afraid I don’t know what you’re talking about. My name is Seeley.” (“Just the Way You Are,” 2006)

Through a series of events it is discovered that Seeley is in fact Angel. The story ends with Buffy and Angel involved romantically. What is interesting about the story is that the actor who plays Seeley Booth on *Bones* is David Boreanaz. He is the same actor who played Angel in both *Buffy* and *Angel*. Thus, the author uses the fact that he played both roles and frames his/her story around this fact.

#### *Crossover Fanfiction and the Circuit of Culture*

Crossover stories, like missing scene and alternative universe stories, examine the way in which authors of fanfiction feel entitled to manipulate the primary narrative to suit their own needs and desires. Fans of the show know the characters so well and, presumably, like the characters so much that they do not want the narratives told about them to end. Thus, they insert the characters into worlds, and, because of their investment and amount of knowledge about the characters, can write the ways that those characters would act once confronted by the situations in those worlds. They showcase the fact that fanfiction writers are bridging the gap between the author and receiver of the text and that a narrative is no longer seen as unchanging and final, but rather as fluid and ever evolving.

#### *Drabble Fanfiction*

The final type of fanfiction story is *drabble* fanfiction. This type of story, if defined broadly, is categorized by length. The stories are never more than a page long and usually have a word limit. Most drabble stories defined this way are also other type of stories. For example, there are drabble stories that are also alternative universe or

missing scene stories. The story I mentioned earlier called “Jonathan’s Wish” is categorized as a drabble story because it is only one page in length.

If defined more stringently, drabble stories are stories in which the author writes a response based on a prompt. Prompts are usually acquired through interactions with other fans of the show. The prompt is usually one word and the author then has to write a short vignette based around that word that features characters and/or situations from the *Buffy* universe. Seven of the 34 stories read fall into the more stringent classification of drabble (one that follows a prompt). For example, the drabble entitled “Vague Disclaimer: An Amazingly Short Story” is a 100-word story based off of the one word prompt: shovel. It goes like this:

Riley was making his way through the jungles of Belize, searching for a nest of Burchells’ demons, when he came across an unexpected figure.

“Willow!” he said, partly in delight, partly in surprise. “What are you doing here?”

“Remember when I helped set you and Buffy up at that party at UC-Sunnydale?” Willow said.

“Yes . . .”

“I made you a promise and now I’m going to keep it.” And without another word Willow took a shovel from – someplace – and hit Riley over the head with it, repeatedly.

The last thing he remembered was her saying, “Why doesn't anyone ever believe me?” (“Vague Disclaimer,” 2006)

Drabbles assume that the readers have intricate knowledge of events and dialogues that occur on show. This story is essentially one that focuses on a line of dialogue that Willow utters to Riley<sup>xxxii</sup> in the fourth season episode “The Initiative.”<sup>xxxiii</sup> In that episode, Riley realizes that he likes Buffy and goes to Willow for advice on how

to court her. Willow tells him that Buffy is going to a party that night and that Riley should ask her to dance. She gives him advice on the kinds of things that Buffy likes. She concludes her advice by telling him: “If you hurt her, I will beat you to death with a shovel. A vague disclaimer is nobody’s friend. Have fun!” The drabble then, consists of Willow fulfilling that statement. She literally does beat him to death because he hurt Buffy by leaving her in season five. It takes place during the fourth season of the show.

Another drabble entitled “Spun” is a 400-word exploration on the one-word prompt: carousel. In this drabble the main character is Dawn.<sup>xxxiv</sup> The story is told in first person and Dawn is both the internal narrator and the focalizer. Dawn is essentially remembering taking a carousel ride with Buffy when she was younger and is telling her friend about the event. Another character comes up and tells her that it never happened and calls her a “green girl.” The drabble again assumes that the reader knows enough about the primary narrative that she can piece together the story without exposition. In the fifth season of the show,<sup>xxxv</sup> Glory describes The Key as “shiny, green energy.” Thus the writer of the fanfiction assumes that readers not only know the events occurring during the fifth season, but also that they are paying enough attention to notice lines of dialogue.

#### *Drabble Fanfiction and the Circuit of Culture*

Drabbles are interesting because they assume a detailed and expansive amount of knowledge from the reader. The writer has a detailed and expansive amount of knowledge and expects the reader to keep up. Drabbles showcase the fact that fanfiction writers, while feeling entitled to manipulate the primary narrative, also are respectful of that narrative. This relates back to identity. To reiterate, identity is the component of the

circuit of culture that focuses on how an individual relates to a product. In this instance it focuses on how *Buffy* fanfiction writers relate to the show. A case can be made that fanfiction writers can only manipulate a narrative once they know enough about it. Also, that there are ways in which manipulating the main narrative is allowed and ways in which it is not. For example, a drabble story that gets the events of the primary narrative wrong would most probably not be seen positively.

### *Fanfiction and the Circuit of Culture*

There are many different meanings that can be construed about the authors that write fanfiction. Obviously, any attempt at cataloging meaning must come from the fanfiction itself. The following table summarizes the basic categories of all 34 of the fanfiction stories read. The table helps to better explain the prominence of different kinds of stories. It also facilitates a discussion of the relationship between the stories read and the concepts first mentioned in relation to the circuit of culture (representation, production, consumption, and identity) as well as the concepts of narrative theory. It is important to first examine how the fanfiction is structured. The narrative concepts that I mentioned earlier—setting, character, narrator—help in this examination.



Table 1

*Summary of Fanfiction Stories based on Type, Main Character, Setting (Season), and Narrator*

Name	Type	Main Character	Season	Narrator
<i>A Dream is a Wish</i>	AU	Spike/Buffy	5	External
<i>A Very Spikey Christmas</i>	AU	Spike/Willow	AS	External
<i>A Year Ago Today</i>	AU	Buffy/Spike	AS	External
<i>And Her Name Was Mary-Sue</i>	Mary-Sue	Mary-Sue	4	Internal
<i>April 10, 1997</i>	Crossover	Faith (Daria)	5	External
<i>Because She is a Friend</i>	MS (Inner Thought)	Willow Buffy	5	Internal
<i>Childhood's End</i>	AU (Minor Character)	Harmony	4	External
<i>Cursed Sunshine</i>	MS	Angel	2	External
<i>Dreary Sky</i>	MS (Minor Character)	Chloe	7	Internal
<i>Five Ways Jesse Never Died</i>	AU (Minor Character)	Jesse	1-AS	External
<i>Forgetting Isn't Easy</i>	AU	Buffy/Angel	6	External
<i>Free as in Beer</i>	Drabble	Dawn Spike	AS	External
<i>Freezing Snow, Thawing Hearts</i>	AU	Xander/Buffy	AS	External
<i>Girlfriend in A Coma</i>	(Fem)Slash	Cordelia/Faith	3- AS	External
<i>I'm My Own Grandpa</i>	MS	Angel Spike	6	External
<i>Jonathan's Wish</i>	AU (RTW)	Jonathan	6	External
<i>Just the Way You Are</i>	Crossover	Angel (Seeley)/ Buffy	AS	External
<i>Martian Manhunter</i>	Mary-Sue/Crossover	Veronica Mars	2	Internal
<i>Miss Edith</i>	MS (Minor Character)	Drusilla	2	External
<i>Pathetic</i>	Missing Scene	Spike	7	External
<i>Pax</i>	Drabble	Faith	AS	External
<i>Psychotic</i>	AU	Spike/Buffy	5	External
<i>Spun</i>	Drabble	Dawn	5	External
<i>Stuck</i>	Drabble	Spike/Buffy	7	External
<i>Tempus Fugit</i>	(Fem)Slash/AU (RTW)	Willow/Tara	4-7	External

Table 1. Continued.

	Type	Main Character	Season	Narrator
<i>The New Baby</i>	(Fem)Slash	Willow/Kennedy	AS	External
<i>Till Death Do Us Part</i>	MS (Inner Thoughts)	Anya/Xander	7	Internal
<i>To Slay or Not</i>	MS (Inner Thought)	Buffy	1	External
<i>Unmatched</i>	Drabble	Buffy	AS	External
<i>Untitled</i>	MS	Spike Giles	5-6	External
<i>Vague Disclaimer</i>	Drabble	Willow/Riley	6-AS	External
<i>Wasted</i>	Drabble	Buffy/Andrew	AS	External
<i>Wedding Day Fun</i>	AU	Buffy/Angel/Xander	AS	External
<i>What He Wanted</i>	Slash	Larry/Xander	3	External

Note. AU= Alternative Universe. MS= Missing Scene. RTW= Right-The-Wrong. AS=After Series.

There are certain things that can be discerned from the narrative structure of fanfiction. For example, the settings of the fanfiction stories read mostly correspond to events that happened from the fourth through the seventh season of the show. There are only two stories that focus on events occurring just during the first season. Three stories are set in the second season of the show and two stories are set in the third season. The rest of the stories are either set in each of the corresponding seasons (four through seven), span the length of the show (the stories begin set in the fourth season and end set in the seventh), or are set after the show ends. 11 of the stories focus on events occurring after the series ended. This means that writers of the fanfiction are still able to use the narratives of the show to create stories to this day. The fact that the television show is over has not hindered fans desire to see stories based off of its universe. If anything, the static nature of the primary narrative allows for a richer exploration of the themes and storylines of the narrative.

The main characters in the fanfiction stories examined are both men and women. However, women are either the main characters or one of the main characters in 27 of the 34 fanfiction stories read. Buffy is the main character or one of the main characters in 11 of the 34 fanfiction stories. Willow is the main character in six of the 34 stories. The other ten fanfiction stories that feature female characters as the main characters or as one of the main characters are comprised of either recurring or minor female characters. The fanfiction stories seem to reflect the prominence of females in the primary narrative. There is only one male slash story in all of the fanfiction read.

There are two main types of narrators in the fanfiction stories read: internal (which means that one of the characters featured in the fabula is also a narrator) or

external narrator. Five of the 34 stories featured internal narrators. The stories that did feature internal narrators were either missing scene or Mary-Sue stories. They all focused on the inner thoughts of characters. Four of them focused on the inner thoughts of either minor characters (missing scene stories) or of Mary-Sue characters. This focus implies fanfiction authors were more comfortable in fleshing out character motivation and feelings for characters that were not already well-established in the primary narrative (Bal, 1997). Minor characters do not have intricately established back stories, as such they are more pliable to manipulation. If a fanfiction writer were to attempt to explore the inner-thoughts of the main characters, they would be required to know the backstory of the character—their past relationships, their quirks, their personality. Anything written from an internal narrator perspective that did not adhere to the established character traits would ring as false (Bal, 1997).

All of the stories can be seen as examples wish-fulfillment. This falls in line with the ideas first mentioned in my literature review (Bacon-Smith, 1992; Jenkins, 1992; Salmon & Symons, 2004; Somogyi, 2002) and later expanded on in the theory section. In particular, wish fulfillment relates back to the ideas of representation and identity in the circuit of culture (du Gay, et al., 1997) and the idea of a negotiated reading that Stuart Hall (1980) first mentions. The authors are attempting to get a happy ending in the stories because they wish to get a happy ending in their own lives. They focus on the characters, plots, and settings in the primary narratives that they feel they can change enough to get their happy endings. They write stories about the characters ending up together and about characters coming back from the dead because they are used to this form of narrative. They are used to stories ending happily and with the main characters in love.

Other stories are attempts to fill in the narrative shown on-screen, to flesh out the characters, and to look at them more fully. If the characters are more fleshed out, if there are logical reasons for action, then they somehow hold more merit. Thus there are stories where the primary characters in the fanfiction fabula are only bit players on the television show fabula (Chloe Sanchez, Harmony, and Jonathan, for example). There are stories wherein the focalizer is not one of the main characters, but instead a minor one. The minor characters are more fleshed out in this type of fanfiction stories. This is because the writers want to make the characters more real, so that they can relate to the characters better.

Fanfiction writers alter events that occur in the primary narrative's fabula to suit their own needs. They find ways to circumvent events that have happened (the death of Tara). In circumventing those events, they could be said to be resisting the dominant ideology. However, they are not disregarding that ideology completely (they are still working within its confines), instead they are stretching the boundaries of the ideology in ways that fit them. Tara comes back in those stories in fantastical manners, true, but those manners are still part of the cannon of the *Buffy* universe, they are still acceptable ways for her to return.

All of the stories can be seen as an attempt to be part of a community. In fact, fanfiction itself is a way for fans of the show to find a place of belonging. As I stated earlier, exposition in drabble fanfiction stories is sparse. However, the tendency to be stringent with exposition is apparent in all the *Buffy* stories read. This, I believe, is because the authors assume that those reading the stories are like them—*Buffy* fans. The authors assume that readers are as intimately familiar with the primary narrative as they

are. They are part of an interwoven and rich community. Thus, by writing fanfiction and posting it online, the authors are contributing to the continued dialogue and growth of the community. They are also showing their expertise and claiming that they belong in this community.

## Chapter VI Conclusions

Fanfiction studies have previously focused mainly on slash fanfiction. The belief of many academics being that slash fanfiction was the most interesting component of fanfiction because it spoke to the relative power of the audience to interpret/oppose the intended meanings of a text. While it would be impossible to deny that slash does speak to the power of the consumer, it is also clear that once television shows began displaying more dynamic female characters, slash lost prominence. This thesis' primary focus is not slash. Rather, this thesis sets out to answer three questions: what are the different typologies prevalent in fanfiction about *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, how do fanfiction writers produce/consume *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* fanfiction, and how do fanfiction writers identify with *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

Of the 34 stories read, six different typologies emerged: slash, Mary-Sue, alternative universe, missing scene, crossover, and drabble. Slash stories focus on the relationships between two characters of the same sex. The story "What He Wanted" which deals with the character of Larry and his feelings for Xander, is an example of slash. Mary-Sue stories add an idealized version of the author into the fanfiction that solves all the problems of the characters in the story. "Martian Manhunter," in which the character of Veronica is transplanted into the second season of *Buffy* and solves all the characters' problems, falls the Mary-Sue category. Alternative universe stories put the characters of the story into unknown worlds and situations. There are 11 stories categorized as alternative universe. One prominent example being the story "Tempus Fugit" which imagines a world in which Willow goes back in time and saves Tara from

being killed. Missing scene stories explore parts of the narrative that are not shown on-screen. Most notably, these kinds of stories explore the inner thoughts of the characters. “To Slay or Not” showcases Buffy’s inner thoughts during the episode “Welcome to the Hellmouth.” Crossover stories have the characters of the television show interact with characters from other television shows. “April 10, 1997” is a story that details how the titular character of the television show *Daria* interacts with the characters from *Buffy*. Finally, drabble stories are short vignettes that use the characters and situations of the show in their attempts to respond to a user-generated concept or prompt. The story “Stuck” is a 100-word vignette that is a response to a challenge to write a story about the show that explores the themes evoked from the word “stuck.” The author imagines a story in which Buffy and Spike are stuck in a laundry room and play twister to pass the time.

All six typologies of fanfiction make prominent the idea that fans that are active in their fandom sometimes produce objects that support and further promote the fandom. Fanfiction is a prime example of fan production. It also speaks to the symbiotic relationship between consumption and production. The interconnected relationship between consumption and production as it relates to fanfiction has not been studied before. Fanfiction writers consume the television show through their production of fanfiction. Their fan activity is a physical manifestation of their love of the show.

*Buffy* fanfiction production is interesting because of what it says about fan relationships. The fanfiction studied is posted on a Web site that hosts more than two million stories. The stories are freely accessible to the public. The accessibility of the stories to a whole community of fans shows that fan production is closely related to the



concept of a virtual community (Radway, 1984). Fans do not write fanfiction in a vacuum. They do not write it to only be read by themselves. Fans write fanfiction for other fans. They write it so that all the fans of the television show can share in their love of the show.

They also write fanfiction to showcase their knowledge of the show. This attempt to showcase knowledge in fanfiction production is readily seen in drabble fanfiction. Other types of fanfiction can be seen as examples of wish-fulfillment, as examples of changing the primary narrative (the television show) in such a way that it coincides with one's own perception of reality. Drabble fanfiction speaks more to the desire for mastery of a text. Fanfiction writers that write drabble take seemingly trivial matters on the show (lines of dialogue, meaningful looks) and construct whole stories based on them. The stories feature little to no exposition. While the purpose of drabble fanfiction might be to entertain the fan community, the outcome is to showcase the fanfiction writer's superior expertise. In essence, drabble is about boasting. It's about power. It is about the idea that the more knowledge you have the more power you can exert over those with less knowledge. Drabble fanfiction posted the fanfiction.net website is a way for writers to elevate their place in the hierarchy of the virtual community of *Buffy* fanfiction writers and fans.

Fanfiction writers consume the television show through their production of fanfiction. Also, they produce fanfiction as an attempt to relate with other fans of the show. They also produce fanfiction to showcase their mastery of the fandom.

The final question that this thesis set out to answer was how fanfiction writers identify with the television show. Identifying with something means relating to it,

equating what that something is to oneself and one's own experience, and seeing that that something shares similar characteristics. Identity is about empathy. Fanfiction writers use their fanfiction to showcase their empathy of and similarity with the characters on the television show. An example of this idea of fanfiction as a means of identifying with the primary narrative is seen in the reinterpretation of slash.

As stated earlier, slash has lost its prominence. So much so that in my study, there is only one instance of male/male slash. The instance ("What He Wanted") focused on a character that was identified on-screen as gay and the story dealt with his confusion about his feelings. Coupled with the inclusion of the three female/female stories that focused on characters that were either lesbian or bisexual on the show, slash can be interpreted as being more about reflecting the sexuality of the fanfiction writers than it can be about resisting the dominant ideology. Because *Buffy* prominently features strong female leads, there is no need to make one of the male characters fit into the feminine role. Thus, any instance of slash that is found is really more about wanting the two male (or in the case of femslash, female) characters involved with each other. The authors of the slash can be said to identify with the characters on the television show and their fanfiction can be interpreted as a means of showcasing the fans' similarities to the characters.

Another example of how fanfiction is used by writers as a means of identity is the story "Dreary Sky." The story focuses on the character of Chloe as she struggles with the idea of killing herself. The concepts discussed in the story (depression, worthlessness) are ones that most people, at one point or another, struggle with. The fanfiction writer identifies with the concepts and uses the character's pathos to further explore them in her fanfiction.

Fanfiction writers use their fanfiction to display how well they identify with the characters and situations of the television show. They use their fanfiction to show their empathy to the situations that the characters go through. They also use their fanfiction to try to work out the characters problems—as a means of catharsis. Perhaps by solving the characters problems in the fanfiction, they are able to work out how to solve the problems in their own lives.

#### *Future Studies*

Further studies on *Buffy* fanfiction should look at more than just the fanfiction text itself. While the text does provide the ability to discern how fans make meaning of the *Buffy* narrative, it does not allow for an examination of motivation. It does not allow to truly get at an explanation as to why fanfiction writers write fanfiction.

By talking to the fans that produce the fanfiction a more thorough understanding of motivation can be accomplished. Future studies should talk to the producers of *Buffy* fanfiction and exam how they come up with ideas for stories, why they feel that the writing of fanfiction is relevant, and the technicalities involved in the writing of the text.

Fanfiction in general and *Buffy* fanfiction in particular is an interesting area of research. Interesting because it allows for an exploration in the mindset of the audience, the active fan. Interesting because it shows that audience members and fans are more than just passive consumers of mass media. Further studies into fanfiction should prove a fruitful and worthwhile endeavor.

Notes

<sup>1</sup> In fact, most research on fanfiction since Bacon-Smith (1992) and Jenkins (1992) has revolved around shows that have a high science-fiction or fantasy component.

<sup>2</sup> I use the term primary narrative because the television show is what inspires the fanfiction in the first place. Without the television show being a primary component, there would be no fanfiction.

<sup>iii</sup> Other authors have given different designations to the various components. Most notably, Toolan (1988) classified the three components of a narrative text as story, fabula, and historie. Despite the different titles, the definitions of his classifications lined up readily with Bal's. To simplify matters, Bal's definitions of the different components are used.

<sup>4</sup> In order for an in-depth examination of interplay between fanfiction and the primary narrative to be possible, a thorough understanding of the television show *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* was required. As such, I watched all seven seasons of the television show.

<sup>5</sup> Please refer to Appendix A.

<sup>6</sup> Please refer to Appendix A.

<sup>7</sup> Please refer to Appendix B.

<sup>8</sup> Please refer to Appendix A.

<sup>9</sup> Please refer to Appendix A.

<sup>10</sup> Please refer to Appendix A.

<sup>11</sup> Please refer to Appendix A.

<sup>12</sup> Please refer to Appendix C.

<sup>13</sup> Please refer to Appendix B.

<sup>14</sup> Please refer to Appendix A.

<sup>15</sup> In the commentary for the season three episode "Bad Girls," Doug Petrie, the writer of the episode, states that he wanted to play up the lesbian subtext between the two characters. He also states that both characters are somewhat mirror images of each other. Buffy is the light slayer and Faith the dark one. Thus, they are attracted to their opposites.

<sup>16</sup> Please refer to Appendix A.

<sup>17</sup> This is the only story of the 34 read wherein the writer reveals her gender.

<sup>18</sup> Please refer to Appendix C.

<sup>19</sup> Please refer to Appendix B.

<sup>20</sup> Please refer to Appendix A.

<sup>21</sup> Please refer to Appendix B.

<sup>22</sup> Please refer to Appendix A.

<sup>23</sup> Please refer to Appendix A.

<sup>24</sup> Please refer to Appendix B.

<sup>25</sup> Please refer to Appendix A.

<sup>26</sup> Please refer to Appendix A and Appendix B.

<sup>27</sup> Please refer to Appendix A.

<sup>28</sup> Please refer to Appendix A.

<sup>29</sup> Please refer to Appendix B.

<sup>30</sup> Please refer to Appendix C.

<sup>31</sup> Please refer to Appendix C.

<sup>32</sup> Please refer to Appendix A.

<sup>33</sup> Please refer to Appendix B.

<sup>34</sup> Please refer to Appendix A.

<sup>35</sup> Please refer to Appendix B.

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Appendix A  
List of Characters

**Angel:** A vampire with a soul. He is Buffy's love interest. However, when he and Buffy have sex, he loses his soul and becomes evil. He regains his soul after Willow performs a spell, but finds that he and Buffy cannot be intimate with each other again. He leaves Sunnydale after helping Buffy defeat the mayor during her graduation day. He moves to Los Angeles and starts a detective agency. He gets help from Buffy's former high school classmate, Cordelia. Cordelia and Angel become romantically involved. However, it is clear that he still loves Buffy.

**Anya:** An ex-vengeance demon. She comes on the show during Buffy's senior year of high school. While granting a wish she loses her power, thus becoming a normal teenage girl. She dates Xander and is eventually engaged to be married to him. Xander leaves her at the altar. Anya dies during the final fight with The First.

**Buffy:** A vampire slayer. She is best friends with Willow and Xander. She has died twice. She has had romantic relationships with Angel, Riley, and Spike.

**Chloe:** Potential Slayer. Chloe is taunted by The First and eventually hangs herself. She is found by Buffy, her friends, and the other potential slayers.

**Cordelia:** A high school rival of Buffy. Xander girlfriend for a time. She broke up with Xander after she caught him kissing Willow. She leaves Sunnydale after graduation and moves to Los Angeles. She helps Angel in his detective agency. Cordelia and Angel become romantically involved. Cordelia goes into a coma after fighting an evil demon named Jasmine. She dies in that coma a year later.

**Faith:** A vampire slayer. Activated after the death of Kendra. First appeared during Buffy's senior year of high school. She accidentally killed a man while on patrol with Buffy. She went on to work for the mayor of Sunnydale, Richard Wilkins. She fought against Buffy in the third season finale and was put into a coma after Buffy stabbed her. She turned herself into the authorities after she came to realize that killing the man was wrong.

**The First:** Villain. The First is the first evil that ever inhabited the universe. It is incorporeal, but has the ability to look and talk like any person that is already dead. The first uses his minions to try and kill all the potential slayers. He also raises an army of vampires called the Turok-Han. The First cannot be killed. However, Buffy and her friends manage to kill the Turok-Han.

**Giles:** Buffy's watcher. He is charged with training Buffy to perform her Slayer duties. He becomes a father-figure to Buffy. He is part of a counsel of watchers that have trained slayers since the beginning of time. He quits the counsel after they ask him to deceive Buffy by performing a test that takes away her powers. He still continues to mentor Buffy. Later, he becomes owner of a magic shop called "The Magic Box."

**Harmony:** A vampire. Harmony first meets Buffy during both of their junior years in high school. Harmony is a friend of Cordelia and dislikes Buffy immediately. However, she does help Buffy and her friend fight Mayor Wilkins during the battle at their graduation. Harmony is attacked by a vampire and presumed dead. The next year however, Willow and Oz encounter her and find out that she is now a vampire. They do not kill her. Harmony later becomes romantically linked with Spike, but leaves town once she finds out that he is in love with Buffy. Harmony moves to Los Angeles and joins Angel's detective agency.

**Jenny:** A teacher at Buffy's school. She and Giles have a romantic relationship. However, she is killed by Angel once he loses his soul.

**Jonathan:** Jonathan first met Buffy while they were both sophomores. He was socially inept in high school and Buffy saved him from being killed on numerous occasions. However, Buffy and he were never friends. After high school, Jonathan becomes friends with Warren and Andrew. They band together to perform robberies all over Sunnydale. Buffy catches Jonathan and Andrew and throws them in jail. When Willow goes to the jail and attempts to kill them, they manage to escape and flee to Mexico.

**Kennedy:** A potential slayer. Willow's girlfriend. Kennedy first appears during the seventh season of *Buffy*. She pursues Willow and Willow, after some time, starts a relationship with her.

**Larry:** A minor character who appears in a spattering of episodes in the second and third seasons of *Buffy*. Larry is a football player. He is portrayed as lewd and obnoxious. During the episode "Phases" in the second season, he tells Xander that he is gay. Larry dies during the fight against the mayor.

**Spike:** A vampire. Spike first appears in Sunnydale during the beginning of Buffy's junior year in high school as a nemesis for Buffy. He and Drusilla (his girlfriend) attempt to kill Buffy numerous times. After helping Buffy defeat Angel, Spike takes Drusilla and left town. He reappears during Buffy's freshman year of college. He is no longer with Drusilla. He is captured by the Initiative. They put a chip in his head which disallows him from killing any living thing. Spike reluctantly becomes part of Buffy's circle of friends. During Buffy's sophomore

year of college, he confesses his love to her. She rejected him. A year later, the two began having sex. Spike leaves town shortly thereafter once he realizes that Buffy cannot trust him because he did not have a soul. He acquires a soul and returns to Sunnydale. Spike and Buffy start a romantic relationship. Spike dies during the final battle with The First.

**Tara:** A lesbian witch. Willow's girlfriend. She first appears during the fourth season of the show. Willow and Tara begins dating soon after they get to know each other. They stay together until the Tara is shot and killed in the sixth season by Warren.

**Willow:** A lesbian witch. She is best friends with Buffy and Xander. She has had three relationships. The first one was with Oz, a man. The second relationship with a witch named Tara. The third with a potential slayer named Kennedy. Willow is a powerful witch. She uses her powers for evil after Warren kills Tara. She kills Warren. She is redeemed however, and eventually performs a spell to transform all potential slayers into actual slayers.

**Xander:** A regular man. He is best friends with Buffy and Willow. He has had two relationships. The first relationship was with Cordelia. The second relationship was with Anya. Cordelia leaves him after she finds him kissing his best friend Willow. He leaves Anya at the altar.

## Appendix B Season Summations of Buffy

**Season One:** Buffy comes to the town of Sunnydale and meets Giles. She is a sophomore in high school and Giles is the school librarian. He informs her that he is her watcher and that she must fight the forces of evil in Sunnydale. She meets Willow, Xander, Jesse, and Cordelia. She becomes friends with Willow, Xander, and Jesse. All three find out that she is the slayer after she saves them from being attacked by vampires. However, a vampire bites Jesse and he himself turns into one. Xander stakes Jesse. Later, Buffy meets Angel. She begins having feelings for him; however, it is revealed that he is a vampire. Buffy believes that she must kill Angel. Before she succeeds in killing him, it is revealed that Angel has a soul and is in fact not evil. Buffy and Angel have romantic feelings for each other. At the end of the season, Buffy fights a vampire named the Master. In the course of the fight, the Master drowns Buffy. Angel and Xander find Buffy, and Xander manages to revive her by giving her mouth-to-mouth resuscitation. Buffy fights the Master and kills him.

**Season Two:** *Buffy* returns to Sunnydale after having been in Los Angeles visiting her father. She meets up with Angel, Willow, Xander, and Giles. Buffy, Willow and Xander begin their junior year in high school. Giles meets a teacher named Jenny. Giles and Jenny begin dating. Angel and Buffy begin dating. Two vampires come into town called Spike and Drusilla. The vampires are lovers and are out to kill the slayer. It is revealed that Angel did not always have a soul and was, therefore, not always good. When he was bad, he was friends with Spike and Drusilla. In fact, he was the one that turned Drusilla into a vampire. Xander and Cordelia begin dating. Willow, who likes Xander, finds out. Xander and Willow are at odds with each other. Willow starts dating a musician named Oz. A girl named Kendra comes into town and attacks Angel. It is revealed that she is, like Buffy, a slayer. The only way for there to be another slayer is if the current one dies. Thus, Buffy and her friends figure out that when Buffy drowned (at the end of season one), she activated Kendra. Buffy tells Kendra that Angel is good. Kendra leaves town. Buffy and Angel have sex. It is revealed that Angel keeping his soul is contingent on him not having achieved one moment of true happiness.

When Buffy and Angel have sex, Angel loses his soul. Angel becomes evil. He kills Jenny. Angel teams up with Spike and Drusilla. All three attempt to revive a demon named Acatlha who will suck the whole world into hell. Kendra comes back to town to help Buffy fight Spike, Angel, and Drusilla. Drusilla kills Kendra. Spike goes to Buffy and tells her that he will help her defeat Angel if she lets Drusilla and him leave town. Buffy agrees. Willow tells Buffy that she might be able to perform a spell to give Angel back his soul. Buffy tells Willow to try it, but that she is going to go fight Angel anyway. Angel revives Acatlha. Spike helps Buffy defeat Angel, then takes Drusilla and leaves town. Willow restores

Angel's soul. Buffy stabs Angel in the heart, sending him to hell. This is the only way that Acatla can die. Buffy, having killed her lover, leaves town.

**Season Three:** Willow, Xander, Cordelia, Oz, and Giles attempt to patrol (fight the vampires in town) while Buffy is missing. Giles goes to different cities searching for her but does not find her. Buffy comes back to Sunnydale. Faith comes into town. She is a slayer. She was activated once Kendra was killed. Faith and Buffy become friends. Angel comes back from hell. Buffy and Angel still have romantic feelings for each other but do not act on them since doing so will make Angel lose his soul. Willow and Xander kiss. Cordelia and Oz find out. Cordelia breaks up with Xander. Oz breaks up with Willow.

Buffy and Faith patrol together. Faith accidentally kills a man instead of a vampire. She does not feel any remorse for her action. The mayor of the town, Mr. Wilkins, is revealed to be evil. Faith begins working for him. Oz forgives Willow and the two begin dating again. Xander begins dating a girl named Anya. Anya is not a typical high school girl. She is a 1000-year-old ex-vengeance demon. Buffy and her friends find out that the mayor plans to "ascend" during their graduation ceremony. Buffy enlists the help of all her classmates to fight the mayor. Buffy and Faith fight and Buffy stabs Faith. Faith ends up in a coma. During the ceremony, the mayor turns into a gigantic snake. Some of Buffy's classmates die. Buffy blows up the school (with the mayor inside of it). Angel tells Buffy that he is leaving town. He leaves after the final fight with the mayor. Buffy, Willow, Xander, Cordelia, and Oz all graduate from high school.

**Season Four:** Buffy and Willow go to college together in Sunnydale. Xander does not go with them. Giles, who was a librarian at the high school, is out of a job. Buffy meets a student named Riley. She and Riley begin dating. It is revealed that Riley is part of a secret government operation called "The Initiative." Spike comes back to town alone (without Drusilla). He is captured by the Initiative. They plant a chip in his head that does not allow him to kill any living thing. He reluctantly helps out Buffy and her friends on occasion. Riley finds out that the Initiative has created a monster called Adam. Riley quits The Initiative and joins up with Buffy and her friends to fight against them. Oz leaves town. Willow joins a Wicca group. She meets a girl named Tara. Tara and Willow begin dating. Faith wakes up from her coma. She and Buffy fight and Faith leaves town. Faith meets up with Angel. Angel is in Los Angeles and has opened a detective agency. His assistant is Cordelia. Angel helps Faith come to terms with her history with Buffy and with the fact that she killed a man. Faith turns herself in to the authorities for the man's death. She tries to find redemption for her actions. Buffy and her friends fight Adam and defeat him.

**Season 5:** During the end of the first episode of the fifth season, the audience is introduced to the character of Dawn. It is revealed that she is Buffy's younger

sister (she is 14). Buffy and her friends act as if Dawn had always been Buffy's sister and had been parts of their lives. Buffy fights a woman named Glory. Glory defeats Buffy and leaves her badly beaten. Buffy finds out that Glory is after something called The Key. Buffy finds out that The Key is actually her sister. The monks that were sworn to protect The Key transformed it into a human girl and sent her to Buffy for protection. They also gave Buffy and her friends (including Dawn) the memories of Dawn in their lives. Buffy swears to protect The Key. Riley tells Buffy he loves her but that he does not think she loves him. He leaves town.

Glory stays in Sunnydale and tries to find The Key. She does not know that the Key is in human form. She still believes that it is a green orb of energy. Buffy finds out that Glory is a hell god intent on going home. The only way that she can go home is if she uses The Key. This means killing Dawn. Glory finds out The Key is human. She begins kidnapping Buffy's friends. She takes Spike and physically tortures him trying to get him to tell her who The Key is, but he does not tell her anything. Spike reveals to Buffy that he loves her. Buffy does not love him. Glory finds Tara. She believes that Tara is The Key and attempts to suck the energy out of her. Glory finds that Tara is not The Key; however, the attempt to suck the energy out of Tara has turned Tara crazy. Willow vows not to leave Tara.

Glory finds out that Dawn is The Key. Buffy takes her friends and leaves town. Glory finds them. She takes Dawn. Buffy and her friends find out that Glory plans to bleed Dawn dry, thereby opening a portal into Glory's hell dimension. The only way to close the portal is for the blood to stop flowing (for Dawn to die). Buffy finds out that the monks that created Dawn did so by using Buffy's blood. Buffy jumps into the portal instead of Dawn. She dies.

**Season Six:** Buffy friends attempt to patrol without her. Willow, by this time an even more powerful witch, comes up with a plan to resurrect Buffy. She tells her friends that she will not let Buffy suffer in hell. Willow performs a complicated and intricate spell. Buffy is resurrected. Buffy is not happy however. Buffy reveals that she was not in hell, but in heaven. Buffy becomes severely depressed. She finds low-paying jobs in an attempt to pay her bills and take care of her sister. Spike and Buffy begin having sex. Willow's power continues to grow.

Willow and Tara have an argument. Willow does a spell to make Tara forget the argument. Tara finds out. She leaves Willow. Willow uses more and more magic. She and Dawn are in a car accident. Dawn breaks her arm. Willow was using magic while driving the car. Willow tells Buffy that her magic is out of control and is the reason why Tara left. Willow vows not to use magic. Xander and Anya are engaged to be married. Xander leaves Anya at the altar. Anya turns back into a vengeance demon. Three young men named Warren, Andrew, and Jonathan begin performing heists around town. Buffy finds them and takes Andrew and Jonathan to the authorities. Warren gets away, but not before Buffy beats him up. Tara reconciles with Willow. Buffy's friends find out that she is



sleeping with Spike. Buffy tells Spike that regardless of the chip in his head, he does not have a soul. Thus, he is not what she needs. Spike leaves town.

Warren goes to Buffy's house with a gun. Buffy is in the backyard with Xander. Warren, humiliated that she beat him, shoots Buffy. He runs away. As he is running away he fires random shots at Buffy's house. One of the bullets shatters an upstairs window and hits Tara in the heart. Tara dies instantly. Willow attempts to use magic to get her back. When she is unable to, she swears vengeance. Willow finds Warren and kills him. She attempt to kill Andrew and Jonathan but is stopped by Buffy. Andrew and Jonathan escape from prison and flee to Mexico. Buffy and Willow fight each other. Willow attempts to bring forth a demon to destroy the world. Xander talks Willow out of it. Willow cries in Xander's arms.

**Season Seven:** Willow goes to England with Giles to attempt to control her magic. Once she has it relatively under control, she returns to Sunnydale. Buffy finds out that the planners of the town have rebuilt the high school that she blew up when fighting the mayor. Dawn begins attending that high school. Buffy acquires a job as a counselor at the high school. Buffy has dreams of girls being killed from all over the world. Giles finds out that the girls are all potential slayers. If Faith were to die, one of them could become the next slayer. Faith is still in jail. Giles begins to travel all over the world to gather all the potential slayers. He brings the ones that he finds to Buffy's house. It is revealed that The First Evil is the one that is killing all the potentials. The First (as he is called) has the ability to take the shape of anyone that is dead. The first summons a primitive vampire called the Turok-An. The vampire is hard to kill and Buffy almost dies fighting him.

Spike comes back into town. He reveals that he has a soul. Buffy and Spike begin dating. Willow meets a potential named Kennedy. She and Willow begin dating. The First has a helper called Caleb. Caleb kills some potential slayers. Buffy finds out that The First will raise a whole army of Turok-An from a seal concealed in the basement of the high school. Knowing that she cannot defeat them, she comes up with a plan. She has Willow perform a spell that allows all potential slayers to become actual slayers.

Angel comes into town and tells Buffy that he acquired a mystical amulet that might help Buffy with her fight against the First and the Turok-An. He gives the amulet to Buffy. Buffy gives the amulet to Spike. Buffy, her friends, and all the other slayers fight the Turok-An. Anya dies in the battle. Spike amulet begins working. It begins killing the Turok-An. It also begins destroying the high school. Buffy and her friends flee the school. The amulet kills the Turk-An and destroys the city of Sunnydale. It also kills Spike. The series ends with Buffy not being the only slayer anymore and with a shot of an open road that is leaving the destroyed town of Sunnydale.

Appendix C  
Description of Television Shows

***Angel***: A television show that focuses on Buffy's ex-lover, Angel, as he attempts to fight for good and redeem himself for all his past atrocities. Cordelia joins him in his fight and she and Angel become co-workers and friends.

***Bones***: A procedural show that teams up the F.B.I. agent Seeley Booth with a forensic pathologist named Temperance Brennan. The show revolves around their attempts to solve old murders.

***Daria***: The show focuses on Daria and her sister Quinn as they go through high school. Daria is highly sarcastic and a loner. Her only friend is an artist named Jane. Quinn is one of the most popular girls in school. Daria also interacts with her mother and father. Her mother is a highly successful lawyer that never pays attention to her children. Her father is a less successful businessman that is frustrated with his life.

***Veronica Mars***: The show focuses on the character of Veronica, a high school junior who is shunned by her friend after her father (the sheriff of the town) accuses her boyfriend's father of killing Veronica's best friend. The arc of the first season revolves on trying to figure out who killed Veronica's best friend.

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