

Religious imagery and its political significance in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*: a feminist reading¹

For Molly and Emily

Eve am I, great Adam's wife,
I killed Jesus long ago . . .
Irish lament

Theoretically there would be no such thing as woman. She would not exist.
Luce Irigaray, *Speculum of the Other Woman*

Invitation

'As a woman, I have no country. As a woman I want no country. As a woman my country is the whole world'.² The famous declaration is Virginia Woolf's, championing in *Three Guineas*, women's rights both to education and entry into the professions, in a seminal feminist manifesto, important aspects of which, I shall suggest, are reflected in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.

In this essay, I should like both to celebrate and to critique the *Buffy* series, by placing it in the larger contexts of Western feminist spirituality and political thought. Especially, I intend to argue that Buffy represents a particular combination of knowledge and power which places her outside the mainstream of super-heroes and leads to particular ideas of learning, of spirituality, and of citizenship. These ideas place Buffy and the Scoobies outside the dominant discourses of Western patriarchy and closer to Virginia Woolf's idea of a group of women, which:

would have no honorary treasurer, for it would need no funds. It would have no office, no committee, no secretary; it would call no meetings; it would hold no conferences. If name it must have, it could be called the Outsiders' Society.³

Over the years, the feminist project has been concerned to slay its own vampires, in the form of ideas that, hundreds of years old, have prowled and fed on society's marginalised communities, especially women. My invitation, therefore, is to come on patrol with a select group of Slayers, to join Buffy, the Scoobies, and feminist thinkers, and to help in doing the dusting.⁴

Cemeteries and Sunlight

Cemeteries

Let me map out the territory you will be working in. On the one hand is a monumental cemetery full of dead white males, the grand narrative of Western thought from Freud back to Plato, which, as Irigaray points out, consistently excludes women, by denying them subjectivity, that is, an existence of their own, in language, thought and imagination.⁵ They provide the patriarchy, state-sanctioned patterns of

thought and action, which consistently abject, or cast-out from social identity, marginalized groups and individuals, who do not meet their economic or political definitions. Such works are not only the product of men, of course, so that, for example, the tradition may be typified by works such as Janice Raymond's *The Transsexual Empire*⁶ and Germaine Greer's *The Whole Woman*.⁷ Both of those female writers provide deterministic, dystopian accounts of woman as having an homogenous identity which is inescapably constructed by white, capitalist, male heterosexism.⁸

Judged by standards such as Raymond's and Greer's, Buffy is another degrading sexploitation of the patriarchy, a woman who is objectified as a function – 'the Slayer' – and controlled to serve ends which are not her own. She is a constructed woman, a kind of 'cyborg', 'a creature of social reality as well as science fiction':⁹ constructed within the terms of the series, as the means for a male élite, the Council, to get their dangerous work done; constructed by the entertainment industry as soft SM porn, disguised as adventure story to legitimise scenes of violence against women; and constructed within media capitalism to provide image-branding and related merchandising opportunities, whether as tie-in 'Buff-Stuff' or generic halter-neck tops for eleven year old girls.

Sunlight

Exposing these ideas to sunlight, though, is the job of a more recent literature. Feminist writing reclaims the agency of marginalised individuals, it valorises subjectivity, and it resists the fixity of state-sanctioned patterns of thought and behaviour. So, Virginia Woolf's declaration in 1938 provides a reference point for Rosa Braidotti's idea of a feminist 'nomadic consciousness,' sixty years later. For Braidotti, nomadism is 'the subversion of set conventions . . . not the literal act of travelling.'¹⁰ One expression of nomadism, therefore, is Luce Irigaray's devastating critique of Western thought, from Freud back to Plato, which argues that it is consistently structured to exclude women, by denying them subjectivity, that is, an existence of their own, in language, thought and imagination.¹¹ Similarly, Monique Wittig points to the abjection, the casting-out from social identity, of lesbians: 'Lesbian is the only concept I know of which is beyond the categories of sex (woman and man), because the designated subject (lesbian) is not a woman, either economically, or politically, or ideologically'.¹²

Trans theory – the use of the lived experience of intersexed and transgendered people to critique contemporary notions of gender and sexuality – provides a further means of exploring liminality, that is, the 'in-between' areas that constitute the physical and intellectual boundaries of society.¹³ Works such as Leslie Feinberg's *Transgender Warriors* demonstrate how women's oppression and trans oppression intersect,¹⁴ while *Boys Like Her*¹⁵ by Taste This, compounds the literal process of border-crossing with that of transgressive gender performativity. These ideas, and feminist thought in general, are accessible to everyone, not just women: male writers such as Deleuze and Foucault¹⁶ contribute to feminist thought, which is concerned with the circumstances of all people, just as Giles and Xander are part of the Scoobies, who protect all Sunnydale.

The stakes are, these ideas against the body of knowledge that represents the patriarchy. This essay invites you to become involved in an argument that *Buffy*

offers not degrading readings of woman in society, but emancipatory ones, and that the series is suggestive of a series of feminisms: feminist theory, feminist mythology, and lesbian feminist politics. The aim is not to track down every allusion in the series, but to provide a framework against which you can test your own views and understandings of *Buffy*. Finally, apart from an occasional excursion to Los Angeles, the territory ends at the boundaries of Sunnydale since, to work within the restrictions of length, the focus of this essay will be on *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, with only tangential reference being made to *Angel*.

In Giles's Library: Philosophy

Education and training

My starting point is, that Slayers are both born and made. As Giles tries to tell Buffy in the first episode of the series, *Welcome to the Hellmouth*:

- Giles* Into each generation, a Slayer is born. One girl, in all the world, a Chosen One. One born with the . . .
- Buffy* . . . the strength and skill to hunt the vampires, to stop the spread of evil, blah, blah. I've heard it, okay?

Not only is Buffy born as the Chosen One, however, but also part of Giles's role as her Watcher is to teach her how to slay vampires, as a scene in *Angel* makes clear:

- Buffy* (*looking at some crossbow bolts*): Huh, check out these babies; goodbye, stakes, hello, flying fatality. What can I shoot?
- Giles* Nothing. The crossbow comes later. You must become proficient with the basic tools of combat. And let's begin with the quarterstaff. Which, incidentally, requires countless hours of rigorous training. I speak from experience.
- Buffy* Giles, twentieth century. I'm not gonna be fighting Friar Tuck.
- Giles* You never know with whom – or what – you may be fighting. And these traditions have been handed down through the ages. Now, show me good, steady progress with the quarterstaff and in due time we'll discuss the crossbow.
- (*Buffy demolishes him with the quarterstaff*)
- Giles* (*on the floor, breathing hard*): Good. Let's move on to the crossbow.

The undercutting of Giles's role in controlling Buffy's learning, provides part of the humour of the series and indicates that the means by which Buffy learns to *become* a Slayer, as well as being *born* the Slayer, is a particular one, negotiated between them. The introduction of another Slayer, Kendra, in *What's My Line? Part 2* makes this point. Kendra has been trained in what is to be understood as the traditional way:

- Kendra* My parents – they sent me to my Watcher when I was very young.
- Buffy* How young?
- Kendra* I don't remember them actually . . . I've seen pictures. But that's how seriously the calling is taken by my people. My mother and father gave me to my Watcher because they

believed they were doing the right thing for me – and for the world.

By contrast, Buffy's single-parent mother is unaware that she is the Slayer, while Giles has made specific decisions not to intervene in Buffy's learning in the usual way. So, in *What's My Line? Part 2*, he has not objected to her having friends who know that she is the Slayer:

Giles Kendra. There are a few people – civilians if you like – who know Buffy's identity. Willow is one of them. And they also spend time together. Socially.
Kendra And you allow this, sir?
Giles Well . . .
Kendra But the Slayer must work in secret. For security . . .
Giles Of course. With Buffy, however, its . . . some flexibility is required.

and he has not even bothered to introduce her to the Slayer handbook:

Kendra I study because it is required. The Slayer handbook insists on it.
Willow There's a Slayer handbook?
Buffy Handbook? What handbook? How come I don't have a handbook?
Giles After meeting you, Buffy, I was quite sure the handbook would be of no use in your case.

The need for Giles to support Buffy's learning in a particular way, is a continual theme, so that when, in the fifth series, Giles decides to leave for England, since he believes he is no longer needed by Buffy, she makes it clear that she still needs his support (*Buffy vs Dracula*):

Buffy You haven't been my Watcher for a while. I haven't been training and I haven't really needed to come to you for help.
Giles I agree.
Buffy And then this whole thing with Dracula. It made me face up to some stuff. Ever since we did that spell where we called on the first Slayer, I've been going out a lot. Every night.
Giles Patrolling.
Buffy Hunting. That's what Dracula called it, and he was right. He understood my power better than I do. He saw darkness in it. I need to know more, about where I come from, about the other Slayers. Maybe, maybe if I learn to control this thing, I could be stronger and I could be better. But I'm scared. I know it's going to be hard and I can't do it without you. I need your help. I need you to be my Watcher again.

This negotiated learning relationship between Buffy and Giles may be typified as education rather than training. As Peters points out, training is concerned with 'some specifiable type of performance that has to be mastered', in which 'practice is

required for the mastery of it', and 'little emphasis is placed on the underlying *rationale*'.¹⁷ Its focus is on transmission of skills, from an authority to a passive recipient, where the authority knows why the work has to be performed and the recipient simply does it. Education, though, takes place through 'conversation' rather than 'courses', in which 'lecturing to others is bad form; so is using the remarks of others as springboards for self-display. The point is to create a common world to which all bring their distinctive contributions'.¹⁸ The goal of education is 'transformation', since 'education implies that a man's outlook is transformed by what he knows,'¹⁹ rather than 'transmission' of a set of behaviours. It is clear from what has been said so far, that the relationship between Buffy and Giles is one of education: she doesn't need training in the quarterstaff, but she does need his distinctive contribution of esoteric knowledge and she needs the relationality of friendships to achieve personal growth and transformation.

For Buffy, her role as Slayer is fundamental to her being, as Kendra recognises (*What's My Line? Part 2*):

Kendra: You talk about slaying like it's a job. It's not. It's who you are.

Buffy: Did you get that from your handbook?

Kendra: From you.

Knowing and being

The philosophical concept lying behind the distinctions between education and training, is a division between 'knowing' and 'being', epistemology and ontology, which has been fundamental to Western civilisation since Plato. Feminist thinking has taken these two philosophical categories into new areas. Now, a distinction may be made between 'praxis', feminist epistemology which focuses on socially situated knowledge, to develop theory from the lived experience of marginalised groups, and 'the Academy', knowledge hallowed by the patriarchy, which foregrounds objectivity and the unquestionable truths of scientism.²⁰ Similarly, ontology, or being, is typified by patriarchal thought as comprising hierarchical organisational systems and entities – the Ideological State Apparatus of Louis Althusser²¹ – in a Copernican, regulated universe. Feminist terms, though, foreground the importance of relationality and community in matters of being, with organisational form typified by Virginia Woolf's *Outsider's Society*.

To contextualise this, most super-heroes are *either* born *or* made. Into the first category falls figures such as Superman, whose powers result from the accident that has placed him on earth, and those, such as Spiderman and the Flash, whose powers come about as a result of a physical accident. Their superiority is ontological, it arises from their simple physical being. Into the second category falls figures such as Batman, who teaches himself physical skills and scientific knowledge, and Xena Warrior Princess, who has learned special skills in combat, healing, and esoteric knowledge. Their superiority is epistemological, their strength comes through knowledge. Where it might appear that ontology is supported by epistemology in the creation of masculinist super-heroes, it is clear that the knowledge that is being invoked is of a particular kind, one that claims its being outside and beyond the subjectivity of feminist epistemologies. So, the knowledge which sets up the 'scientific experiment gone wrong', by which Flash, the Atom, and Elastic Lad are

created, is some mysterious, unrepeatable, unknowable science, as dark, fathomless and forbidding as patriarchy's Academy. Further, where the learning is human-scale and benign, as in the origin of Aquaman, it is firmly transmitted through the male line, as part of the fraternal social contract²² through which the patriarchy replicates its power. Similarly, in the cases of Batman and Xena, the ontological events which accompany their epistemological origins, the murder of Batman's parents and Xena's overpowering by Hercules, fall outside the realms of feminist ontologies and into that of male violence.

For Slayers, though, there is no division between being and knowing: they are born Slayers and simultaneously they learn to slay, they have inherent physical gifts of strength, stamina and recovery from injury, and they have to learn to fight effectively so as not to be killed. Their actions reflect both their being in the world and their approach to learning about the world: Kendra is trained: Kendra is killed. Buffy is educated: Buffy survives. By reconciling epistemology and ontology, knowing and being, Buffy falls outside the mainstream of super-heroes, therefore, a position which is underlined in the series by a constant stream of references to popular culture, with the implication that those icons are less real than the [fictional] characters who are referring to them: Power Girl (*Killed by Death*); Clark Kent (*Never Kill a Boy on a First Date*); Human Torch (*Witch*); Xena Warrior Princess (*Hallowe'en*); Pink Ranger (*What's My Line? Part 2*); and, of course, 'the Scoobies' (*What's My Line? Part 1*).

Plato's world

The distinction between knowing and being, reconciled by Buffy, is fundamental to reading the series' religious symbolism and political significance. It finds its origins in Greek thought. In Plato's world view, that which is best in human life is just a shadow of 'Ideal Forms' which exist out of this world, and are only accessible to those with spiritual intuition.²³ Thus, the numinous is transcendent, or, in other words, that which is awe-inspiring, that which appeals to the sense of mystery in human beings, is located in some sort of heaven, beyond the reach of ordinary people. So, with one stroke, knowing is separated from being. Now, it is possible for people to live, to be, but not to know that which they hold most important, since it has been made transcendent and placed beyond their grasp.

The consequence of this separation between being and knowing is that it is not sufficient for people simply to be, in order to know. Knowledge has been annexed and access to it is now restricted to certain kinds of people, who use it as a means of gaining power. Plato makes it clear, in *The Republic*, that these were his purposes, since its rulers will be given different knowledge to everyone else. 'Those who are now called kings and potentates must learn to seek wisdom like true and genuine philosophers, and so political power and intellectual wisdom will be joined in one . . . it is the proper nature of these to keep hold of true wisdom and to lead in the city', he says, whereas the others must 'leave philosophy alone and follow their leader'.²⁴ Philosopher-Kings will be given 'the most complete education or honour or rule'.²⁵ They will force everyone else to take a subordinate role, by limiting their knowledge, so that they learn only their specified trade, by telling 'one genuine lie':

"So you are all brothers in the city", we shall tell them in our fable, "but while God moulded you, he mingled gold in the generation of some, and those are

the ones fit to rule, who are therefore the most precious; he mingled silver in the assistants; and iron and brass in farmers and the other craftsmen”²⁶

Knowledge and power

For Plato, knowledge is power, ‘most mighty of all powers’²⁷ and he reserves power by restricting knowledge. Herein lies the political distinction between ‘training’ and ‘education’: training is an act of subjugation, education an act of empowerment. When Buffy refuses to acknowledge the power of the Council – ‘the council is not welcome here. I have no time for orders’ (*Graduation, Part 2*) she is challenging a political philosophy which is more than two thousand years old, and championing a feminism which has existed for less than a century. It is the same challenge provided by Virginia Woolf’s requirement for education *and* entry into the professions – equal knowledge *and* equal being.

This challenge is particularly important because the idea of democracy, in Western civilisation, consistently refers itself to the processes enacted in ancient Greek society, particularly that of Athens, and the principles propounded by philosophers of that period, especially those of Plato.²⁸ The challenge to it which Buffy provides is significant, therefore, both because she combines knowing and being and because she is a woman. In Athenian society, the model for modern Western democracy, women had no status as citizens: the ‘brothers in the city’, whether Philosopher-Kings or farmers or shoemakers, were all brothers: spiritual power and political authority were purely patriarchal, with women, at best, having a handmaiden role in religion as a servant of a god – such as the Pythoness who spoke for Apollo at Delphi – in a pantheon which was understood as a patriarchal structure with Zeus as its head. Other superheroes consult and take guidance from the male head of society who knows best how to use their special powers of being – Superman talks to the President and Batman to Commissioner Gordon, for instance. Buffy herself knows best how to use her being, and also knows what assistance she needs to learn more, to live and be more effectively. This is demonstrated conclusively in the *Checkpoint* episode, where Buffy tells the Council that their claims to have power over her are false, and where she reverses the balance of power by giving them orders, which they must take, including the re-employment of Giles. Unlike other pop-culture heroes, therefore, the character of Buffy the Vampire Slayer is highly suggestive of alternative spiritual values and political relationships. It is to these two areas that I now wish to turn.

On Patrol, first shift: Religious Symbolism

Beastly women

In the Occidental mythic tradition, as Campbell points out, the division between knowing and being is represented by the Judaeo-Christian Creation myth, of a paradise, the Garden of Eden, containing two trees.²⁹ One tree is the tree of life (and thus has ontological status) and the other tree bears the fruit of knowledge of good and evil (and thus has epistemological status).³⁰ The Fall, and the expulsion from paradise, arose from eating one fruit and not the other, an action which was used by the orthodox Christian church to create the doctrine of Original Sin, and to erect a power system to provide salvation, through the divine agency of Christ. Such salvation was available to all those with souls, which, to the medieval Church, did not

necessarily include women: Eve had been created out of Adam's spare rib, in the creation story they preferred, and while she shared his body, did not necessarily share his soul. Rather, like the vampires slayed by Buffy, women had more in common with animals: *habet mulier animum?* – has woman a soul? – was the perplexing debate of the European Middle Ages.

The numinous female

The *Buffy* series, however, reaches through this traditional Christian interpretation, to alternative viewpoints. Buffy herself dies and is resurrected, and thus becomes a kind of woman-Christ, an idea of the divine feminine which follows the mystical Christian tradition exemplified by Juliana of Norwich, who follows St Anselm and St Bernard in referring to 'our heavenly Mother Jesus'.³¹ So, she exemplifies the redemptive potential which is an important theme of the series, and which, arguably, operates for all of its central characters, on different levels. It is a particular idea of redemption, however, and one which, as Buffy's status as 'woman-Christ' hints, belongs to earlier theologies than that of contemporary state-endorsed Christianities. As Elaine Pagels points out, the doctrine of the bodily resurrection of Christ is a political one, which 'legitimizes the authority of certain men who claim to exercise exclusive leadership over the churches as the successors of the apostle Peter.'³² A letter written by Clement, Bishop of Rome, circa 90-100, makes this clear:

God, he says, delegates his 'authority of reign' to 'rulers and leaders on earth'. Who are these designated rulers? Clement answers that they are bishops, priests, and deacons. Whoever refuses to 'bow the neck' and obey the church leaders in guilty of insubordination against the divine master himself . . . whoever disobeys the divinely ordained authorities 'receives the death penalty!'³³

Plato's Philosopher-King, with special spiritual intuition, is translated into a Bishop of Rome, divinely ordained by God and legitimised by the apostolic succession instituted by a resurrected Christ. This position reflects a struggle for power in the early Christian church, led by Irenaeus on behalf of the 'orthodox' – literally, 'straight thinking' – Christians, which was won by that group when they gained the military support from the converted Emperor Constantine in the fourth century. It eradicated a different theological and intellectual tradition, that of the Gnostics, who believed that divinity was not transcendent but was immanent, that God was not in heaven but was present in everyone on earth. So, as Pagels explains, in the Gnostic tradition, 'self-knowledge is knowledge of God; the self and the divine are identical'; 'when the disciple attains enlightenment, Jesus no longer serves as his spiritual master: the two have become equal – even identical'; and, rather than remaining distinct from the rest of humanity whom he came to save, both Jesus and his followers 'have received their being from the same source.'³⁴ Gnosis, literally 'knowledge', is a particular kind of knowledge: not the 'straight thinking' of mathematics or logic, but self-knowledge and intuitive understanding of others, a discipline of reflection and compassion.

It is this sensibility which informs the spiritual dimension of *Buffy* and of *Angel*. Redemption – not a salvation from a transcendent god, but a here-and-now personal wholeness - is always possible and available, here on earth. This is exemplified by Buffy herself, who, as the Slayer, must face and deal with vampires and demons – powerful symbols for the darkness encountered on any private inward journey. It is

true, too, for those that she saves physically, for they are her friends and neighbours, rather than people from whom she is emotionally distant. These people, though, are not reliant on Buffy for anything other than their physical safety: their spiritual journey is their own work, and a personal redemptive experience equal to that of Buffy's is accessible to them, as the principal characters demonstrate, through their own particular sensibilities. So, Angel explicitly, continually seeks atonement and redemption; Giles leaves the orthodoxy of the Council; Oz seeks control of his werewolf side through yogic meditation; Willow develops spiritually through Wicca; Buffy's mother learns financial and emotional independence; Cordelia develops responsible autonomy; Xander finds self-respect through craftsmanship; Tara realises her complete humanity; Spike's evil becomes ambiguous and then turns to compassion for Buffy (*Fool For Love*); and Faith embarks on a journey of self-discovery and ethical reconstruction. To underline the point that Buffy's death and resurrection are not reserved for her alone, Angel, too, dies and is resurrected, becoming a further 'Christ-analogue', an identity emphasised by the scene in *City of Angels*, evocative of Christ's temptation, when, in the high place represented by the top floor of corporate offices, he refuses worldly authority with his question to Russell Winters, 'can you fly?'

The gnostic writings that remain, known as the Nag Hammadi Library, point to earlier traditions, in which Eve gave life to Adam, at the bidding of a female godhead. The tractate *On the Origin of the World* tells that:

After the day of rest, Sophia sent Zoë, her daughter, being called Eve, as an instructor in order that she might make Adam, who had no soul, arise . . . she said, 'Adam, become alive! Arise up upon the earth!' Immediately her word became accomplished fact.³⁵

Female subjectivity is writ large here, in a Christian account of the creation myth which transsexualises the orthodox tradition, and challenges patriarchal political authority, just as other secret texts – the *Gospel of Philip*, the *Dialogue of the Saviour*, the *Gospel of Mary*³⁶ – replace the apostle Peter's delegated authority with a primary relationship between Christ and Mary Magdalene. So, the *Buffy* series provides an interplay between the redemptive and the creationary aspects of the sacred female. The re-creation of Angel, naked like Adam, is brought about by Buffy-Zoë's silent invocation of him, symbolised by the placing of her Claddagh ring at the place where she killed him (*Faith, Hope and Trick*). Angel-Adam, returned from hell, is also Angel-Christ, on an equal footing to Buffy-Christ, whose death and return to life is emphasised in the same episode by her mother being told of it. As in the gnostic sensibility, therefore, the relationship between Buffy and Angel is not only primary, but also equal, so that Angel's redemption is of his own willing as well as of Buffy's action – as Giles points out, 'there are two kinds of monster. The first can be redeemed, or more importantly, wants to be redeemed' (*Beauty and the Beasts*).

The moon

Baring and Cashford point out that the gnostic tradition draws on earlier theologies which valorise the numinous female,³⁷ the earliest written account of which, in Western civilisation, is the collection of myths, verse and hymns from Sumeria in 2,000 BC, concerning Inanna. The relationship between Faith, Buffy and Angel seems to find resonances with the longest of those hymns, *The Descent of Inanna*. In

the Sumerian account, the goddess Inanna turns her attention to her 'dark side', to her sister-goddess, Ereshkigal:

From the Great Above she opened her ear to the Great Below.
From the Great Above the goddess opened her ear to the Great Below.
From the Great Above Inanna opened her ear to the Great Below.

My Lady abandoned heaven and earth to descend to the underworld.³⁸

Her entry into the underworld is a process of progressive stripping of authority and power, and Ereshkigal fiercely kills Inanna, and hangs her corpse on a hook, to rot:

Then Ereshkigal fastened on Inanna the eye of death.
She spoke against her the word of wrath.
She uttered against her the cry of guilt.

She struck her.

Inanna was turned into a corpse,
A piece of rotting meat,
And was hung from a hook on the wall.³⁹

At the pleading of her faithful woman-servant, Ninshubur, the gods allow Inanna to be rescued by tiny, cross-gendered creatures, the *kurgarra* and *galator*, who bring Inanna back to the world above. But Ereshkigal must have a sacrifice of some sort, and Inanna is pursued by the *galla*, demons of the underworld. In her place, therefore, Inanna first gives Ereshkigal her husband, Dumuzi, and then, on the lamentations of his sister, Geshtinanna, agrees that for half the year, Dumuzi will dwell in the underworld, and that for the other half of the year, Geshtinanna will take his place.

The secular explanation for the myth is that it reflects the universal concern with the cycle of the moon – which goes into darkness each month for three days, as Inanna lies dead in the underworld – and the cycle of the seasons, with the earth lying fallow during Autumn and Winter. Its analogues with orthodox Christian belief are obvious – the three days spent in hell by Christ, the theme of resurrection – and indeed, the same preoccupations with new life, death and resurrection form a central motif in Western theologies from Inanna onwards, with some of the same language: Inanna, like the Virgin Mary, was Queen of Heaven and Star of the Morning, and Dumuzi, like Christ, was the shepherd. The *Buffy* series, too, echoes the same themes. Buffy must visit her 'dark sister', not once but time and again. Ereshkigal is represented most obviously by Faith, the Slayer-gone-bad, who figuratively kills Buffy by taking her body from her (*This Year's Girl*), but that darkness is also represented by the First Slayer (*Restless*) who haunts Buffy's dreams; by her negative reaction to Willow coming out as a lesbian, so that her 'sister' becomes sexually threatening (*New Moon Rising*); and by Glory, whose giant snake Sobek stands in place of the *galla*, pursuing Buffy's sister, Dawn (*Shadow*); and most explicitly by the 'death-wish' which, Spike tells Buffy, led to the death of previous Slayers (*Fool For Love*). A similar journey towards understanding the hidden aspects of the self, as part of a necessary movement towards spiritual growth and wholeness, affects other key characters in the series:

Willow first becomes aware of her lesbian identity when her 'dark-side' enters the world as Vampire Willow (*Doppelgangland*), while in his past, Giles was known as 'Ripper' and was a member of the dark cult of Eyghon (*The Dark Age*). Angel perpetually holds in balance his dual identity as vampire and human, literally lives in hell for an unspecified period of time, and on his return, finds it necessary to leave Sunnydale for Los Angeles, where he is joined by Buffy's sister-slayer, Faith, for whom he provides a release from her darkness, as Dumuzi does for Geshtinanna.

To move to a more generally familiar mythology, Buffy is like that Greek aspect of the moon-goddess which was personified as Artemis. Like Artemis, Buffy is a hunter, with the 'Scoobies' – named for the cartoon Great Dane – acting as the dogs which traditionally accompany Artemis. Like Artemis, too, she is chaste – her primary relationship, with Angel, precludes sexual intercourse. As Artemis's slaying of animals represents the natural apotheosis of life, so Buffy's slaying of vampires restores them to the natural order of life and death. Artemis has other aspects, as goddess of childbirth and as Hecate, death-hag of the crossroads, because she is a moon-goddess, representing, like Inanna, the transformation of the moon from new, to full, to waning, darkness and re-birth. It is this transformative potential, this cycling through dark and light – enacted literally by Buffy's daytime school and college, and her night-time slaying – that is the theologically and philosophically important aspect of Buffy. Spiritually, it is what keeps her alive, where other Slayers die, since she is 'tied in' to the world of loving relationality, as Spike tells her: 'The only reason you've lasted as long as you have is you've got ties to the world... your mum, your brat kid sister, the Scoobies. They all tie you here but you're just putting off the inevitable' (*Fool For Love*). Philosophically, it keeps her alive since it represents education, rather than training, the potential for transformation by shared inquiry and personal reflection, rather than instruction in skills to be performed under direction. Kendra has neither relationality nor education: she was taken from her parents and trained according to the handbook. Where Buffy has subjectivity and is encouraged to develop autonomy by Giles, Kendra is only an object, a token in the 'exchange of women'⁴⁰ which forms the patriarchy of the Council and her Watcher, and her willing acceptance of this abjection means that, in every political sense, she is dead already.

Archetypes

It is not that there are exact correspondences between the spiritual universe of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and either gnostic Christianity or goddess theologies. Rather, it is that the sensibilities of *Buffy* resonate far more convincingly with those earlier spiritual traditions than they do with orthodox Christianity. Indeed, it might be argued that the artefacts of orthodox Christianity – the Cross, Holy Water – belong more forcefully to the world of the vampires and demons, since they have an obvious effect on them, which is not extended to the Scoobies: Buffy and her team use these icons but they do not worship them, or attend a place where they are worshipped, any more than they worship the other esoteric artefacts which appear in the series, such as the Glove of Myhnegon, or the Orb of Thesulah. Rather, recognition of the virtuous nature of Christian artefacts and use of them, means that they take on an archetypal nature, and are given universal significance. The orthodox Christian cross and crucifix become translucent to the universal Tree of Life, the erica-tree of Osiris, the pine-tree of Attis, Odin's world-ash, the Shaman's journey, the Maypole of country ritual.⁴¹ Similarly, Holy Water becomes translucent to the tears of Christ, the Flood from which the world was reborn, the blood of the Grail, the Water of Life which has

represented the generative power of the natural world from the European Upper Palaeolithic period onwards.⁴²

Equally, the spiritual vision of *Buffy* is an immanent one, one which exists on earth, not a transcendent one in an unattainable heaven. The demons and monsters exist in the present, on earth, and although other dimensions are acknowledged, their existence is parallel with, not separate from, the lived, daily one of Sunnydale. Sunnydale is, literally, the site of the hell-mouth, the point at which earth and other dimensions meet, and the regular fighting of monsters takes place on its streets. Spiritual pain and spiritual loss are perpetually present, just as spiritual grace is perpetually accessible, in the here and now. Transformation is achieved at an individual level, by the use of personal agency, and by the extension of that agency to others, through compassion.

A universal dimension of this is the resonance which the series sets up with earlier theologies than that of orthodox Christianity. Gnosticism was only one of the religious beliefs that the orthodox Church outlawed: its monotheism and its vigorous creation of a politically dominant, patriarchal structure, meant that all other beliefs were equally outlawed and ruthlessly suppressed. So, for example, another set of beliefs, at one time a dominant theology of the Western world, were the Eleusian Mysteries, sacred to Demeter and Persephone, enacting, like the *Descent of Inanna*, the lawfulness of the natural world and its cycles, and supporting adherents in the human necessity of making friends with death.⁴³ The little we know about them comes, in the main, from the attacks made on them by early Christian writers, before their final destruction. Similarly, Mithraism, which challenged Christianity as the mass-religion of the Roman empire, and which celebrated the birth of the divine male, (with Mithras standing in place, in Persian culture, of Sumerian Dumuzi, Egyptian Osiris, Greek Attis, and other transliterations of the new life brought forth by the earth) was suppressed and destroyed, with unsuppressable remnants being absorbed into Christian myth. So, Mithras's title, *Sol Invictus* - 'Unvanquished Sun', light eternal - was adopted for Christ, and the celebration of his birth, at the winter solstice, was fixed as 25 December, just as, replacing another tradition, the summer solstice became St John's Day.⁴⁴ These mysteries were, therefore, part of the enduring consciousness of western civilization, reappearing in many different forms, but always with the same principle of the numinous female at their centre, as Apuleius points out in the wonderful Eleusian invocation he gives in *The Golden Ass*:

I am Nature, the universal Mother, mistress of all the elements, primordial child of time, sovereign of all things spiritual, Queen of the Dead, first also among the immortals, the single manifestation of all gods and goddesses that are. My nod governs the shining heights of Heaven, the wholesome sea-breezes, the lamentable silences of the world below. Though I am worshipped in many aspects, known by countless names and propitiated with all manner of different rites, yet the whole earth venerates me. The primeval Phrygians call me the Goddess of Pessinus, Mother of the Gods: the Athenians, sprung from their own soil, call the Minerva of Cecrops' citadel; for the islanders of Cyprus I am Paphian Venus; for the archers of Crete I am Diana Dictynna; for the trilingual Sicilians, Stygian Prosperine; and for the Eleusinians, their ancient Goddess Ceres. Some know me as Juno, some as Bellona, others as Hecate, others again as the Goddess of Rhamnus, but . . . the Egyptians, who excel in

ancient learning and worship me with their appropriate ceremonies, call me by my true name, Queen Isis.⁴⁵

The point is, that Buffy represents a feminist spirituality which locates the sacred in the personal, and which accepts personal responsibility, within a subjective, relational framework, for individual actions – for the sense of ‘goodness’ she has. By contrast, at the point at which Angel leaves Buffy, and moves to Los Angeles, he leaves his point of access to the immanent. His reason for leaving signals this: he does it because he is persuaded that it is for Buffy’s own good, that is, he removes from her the reasonable right to speak for herself, to identify her own desires, and instead invokes some transcendent ideal of right behaviour – a paternalistic, ‘daddy knows best’ ideal of women as obedient to men – by which to guide his actions. *Angel*, sadly beyond the scope of this essay, demonstrates the limitations of the orthodox Christian ideas by which he then measures his conduct. He actively seeks atonement of what he now understands to have been his sins, hovering on despair, and constantly thwarted in his attempts to ‘earn’ some mechanistic redemption, by one good act or another. Instead of the dark, inward journey Buffy takes, to meet her inner guide in the form of the first Slayer, her most fundamental self, when she believes herself unable to love (*Intervention*), Angel is deluded into objectifying his inner dilemma as ‘sin’ and projecting it onto externalised others, whom he tries to save in the same way that he tried to ‘save’ Buffy - by his agency, not theirs. If the series runs true to the myth, then it will be only when Angel returns to the simple, human scale of values, that he will be redeemed.⁴⁶

The religious symbolism used in *Buffy* draws on a tradition of a numinous female, therefore, who exists in a nurturing and powerful relationship with natural order, and this valorisation of woman thus provides a political standpoint as well as a theological one. I now wish to turn to that political significance.

On Patrol, second shift: Political Significance

Citizenship

Politics may be understood, on the one hand, as the politics of public life, the state, and political parties, with Sunnydale as a microcosm of Western democracy. On the other hand, though, politics may be understood as relationship, located less narrowly in the public sphere, and, in feminist interpretations, focussing on gendered systems, the distribution of resources, and the location of power. These two ideas are conjoined in the notion of citizenship, which represents the relationship between public and private life. The issues of frontiers and boundaries, raised at the start of this essay, are important in all three ideas, both in physical terms of crossing borders, and in moral terms. At the heart of the relationship between politics and citizenship, too, lies the question as to ‘whether the citizen is conceptualised as merely a subject of an absolute authority or as an active political agent.’⁴⁷ The thrust of Platonic democracy, I have argued, is towards citizens as subject, while the thrust of the Scoobies – especially Buffy and Willow - I shall argue, is towards citizen as active political agent. This agency, I wish to show, is demonstrated by their transgression of boundaries, their rejection of authoritarian systems of control, their exclusion from socially accepted norms, and their creation of alternative ways of living.

Participation

Buffy herself is implicitly transgressive, because of her unique, embodied reconciliation of epistemology and ontology, and thus she provides an immediate political challenge to the order of life in Sunnydale. This political challenge is extended by the community formed by herself and her friends, which, like Gnostic communities, is based on a participative model rather than a hierarchical one. Leadership shifts, from Buffy to Giles to Willow to Angel to Oz to Xander to Riley, depending on who is functionally appropriate at any one time. They form an 'Outsiders' Society', which, like that envisioned by Virginia Woolf, has no funds, no office, no committee and no secretary. Rather, each person is valued for different qualities, as the collaborative spell used to destroy Adam – the monster created by the Army and thus the personification of a male, hierarchical, authoritarian viewpoint – demonstrates, to which Willow contributes 'Spiritus' [spirit], Xander contributes 'Animus' [heart], Giles contributes 'Sophus' [mind] and Buffy contributes 'Manus' [hand] (*Restless*). This integrated, equal, participation provides a deliberate contrast to the political order represented by Adam: Buffy says 'You could never hope to grasp the source of our power', as she pulls out Adam's mechanical power supply (*Restless*).

The Scoobies' contingent, contextualised, functional, form of participative management is in strong contrast to the enforced, patriarchal, hierarchical structures which typifies the series' evil leaders - The Master, Principal Snyder, The Mayor – and which is embodied in the terms of vampirism: vampires 'sire' other vampires, in a linguistic association of rape, insemination, and kingship. The Master kills retainers who under-perform, as the Three did (*Angel*). Principal Snyder rejoices in using his public position to violate the personal rights of individuals – 'This is a glorious day for principals everywhere. No pathetic whining about students' rights. Just a long row of lockers and a man with a key' (*Gingerbread*) and the Mayor continues to seek power and control from beyond the grave, leaving a video-tape of instructions for Faith (*This Year's Girl*).

Surveillance

As Foucault points out, surveillance is a principal agency by which hierarchies enact power.⁴⁸ Such surveillance is contingent on separating the tasks to be performed in the workplace or community, from the knowledge and craft needed to perform them – a deliberate division of ontology from epistemology. From this, as Braverman demonstrates, arises 'the degradation of labour', a system of production and social control in which a hierarchical management pre-specifies the tasks to be performed by labour and supervises their work.⁴⁹ It is a surveillance arrangement such as this that Buffy explicitly refuses at the start of her relationship with Giles (*Welcome to the Hellmouth*):

Buffy First of all, I'm a Vampire Slayer. And secondly, I'm retired. Hey, I know! Why don't you kill 'em?
Giles I-I'm a Watcher, I-I haven't the skill...
Buffy Oh, come on, stake through the heart, a little sunlight... It's like falling off a log.
Giles A, a Slayer slays, a Watcher..
Buffy Watches?

Giles Yes. No! (sets down the books) He, he trains her, he, he, he prepares her...

Buffy Prepares me for what? For getting kicked out of school? For losing all of my friends? For having to spend all of my time fighting for my life and never getting to tell anyone because I might endanger them? Go ahead! Prepare me.

They just look at each other for a moment. Buffy exhales, turns and leaves the library in disgust.

Even when Buffy does quit, and retires to Los Angeles, her return is sparked off by a demon which enslaves humans into absolutely degraded labour – ‘You work, and you live. That is all’ – in a dark, brutalizing iron works, lit by vats of molten metal and flying sparks (*Anne*), an image of industrialized hell used from Charles Dickens onwards.⁵⁰ That it is Buffy’s agency which creates a different relationship from the usual surveillance one, rather than a quality implicit in *Slayers*, is made clear by the way in which Kendra accepts the surveillance and control of her Watcher, just as Faith does with the Mayor. Supporting ontological subordination is, of course, a denied epistemological agency, the control-model of Kendra’s training and Faith’s relationship with the Mayor, as opposed to the negotiation of Buffy’s educational contract with Giles.⁵¹

Autonomy is available, but action is required to gain it: otherwise, *Slayers* and other citizens are merely pawns of an absolute authority. While Buffy provides an implicit political challenge, therefore, Willow provides the series’ most explicit challenges. Her ‘nomadism’, her crossing of social and moral boundaries, is frequently underlined. She transgresses usual school social expectations by having an unusually able intellect, by being unfashionably dressed (*Welcome to the Hellmouth*) and by dating a werewolf. She transgresses her family religious boundaries (*Passion*):

Willow (nailing crosses around her French doors) I’m going to have a hard time explaining this to my dad.

Buffy You really think this’ll bother him?

Willow Ira Rosenberg’s only daughter nailing crucifixes to her bedroom wall? I have to go to Xander’s house just to watch ‘A Charlie Brown Christmas’ every year.

and then goes through a deeply personal, inward journey, to find a further transgressive identity as a lesbian Wiccan. In this context, it is clear that Willow’s Wiccan identification is a political one, rather than a religious one. As *Buffy the Vampire Slayer: the Monster Book* points out, Wicca ‘is an established and legitimate religion’ into which it would be an anomaly ‘to keep throwing demons’ since ‘they do not believe in demons or the Christian mythology of devils.’⁵² Further, representations of Wicca in the influential works of Gerald Gardner⁵³ and of Vivianne Crowley,⁵⁴ are fundamentally heterosexist, rather than lesbian, developing from a notion of a union of male and female principles, rather than one of female and female. Finally, Willow makes it clear that she is concerned with the alternative power-base that the craft offers, and it is that shared interest which attracts her to Tara (*Hush*):

Willow Talk! All talk: blah blah Gaia blah blah moon, menstrual life force power . . . I thought after a few sessions we'd get into something real but . . .

Buffy No actual witches in your witch group.

Willow Buncha wannabessedbe's. It's just a fad. Nowadays every girl with a henna tattoo and a spice rack thinks she's a sister to the dark ones.

Tara I thought maybe we could do a spell - make people talk again. I'd seen you in the group, the Wicca group you were... you were different than them. I mean they didn't seem to know . . .

Willow What they were talking about.

Tara I think if they saw a witch they would run the other way.
She smiles and laughs.

Willow How long have you been practicing?

Tara Always, I mean, since I um, was little... my, my mom used to, she had a lot of power, like you.

The political orientation of that power is demonstrated in *Family*, where Tara's father tries to persuade her that she will become possessed by a demon when she becomes twenty-one, and that she should therefore give up her independent life in Sunnydale and return to keep house for the men of the family. It becomes clear that this demonisation is a lie, aimed at the subjugation of women who have power, one through which Tara's mother was suborned, a literal piece of the patriarchy which Tara breaks.

As Jeffreys points out, there is a long tradition of 'lesbian' being used as a term of opprobrium, for independent women,⁵⁵ while Purkiss points to the relationship between stories of witch-burning and feminist concerns in which:

Domestic and sexual violence against women were foregrounded as the representative crimes of patriarchy . . . sexuality was to identified as the site of women's oppression in the sense that property was for Marx the site of class oppression. Rape, sexual violence, pornography, wife-battering and (eventually) child sexual abuse became the central signifiers of patriarchy⁵⁶

In the context of citizenship, lesbians occupy the position of 'immoral others',⁵⁷ those excluded from the community and denied the rights of citizenship. Lesbian Wicca, therefore, offers a means of exploring women's physical and spiritual being, outside the patriarchal structure, a theme taken up by contemporary lesbian writer, Sarah Dreher, in her Stoner McTavish novels. Dreher, like the *Buffy* and *Angel* series, offers a synchronic spiritual viewpoint, in which Wicca and shamanism interact, and a location in which seedy derelicts 'might really be angels disguised as old coots',⁵⁸ just as in *Angel*'s Los Angeles, demons might be benign.

That all of the Scoobies belong to the 'Outsiders' Society', by association with Willow, is demonstrated in the *Gingerbread* episode. There, Willow is linked to Buffy, through 'the monsters, and the witches, and the Slayers', to Xander via the generic 'freaks and losers', to Giles who has his books confiscated and burned, and to

the ‘dozens of others [who] are persecuted by a righteous mob. It’s happened all throughout history.’ Interestingly, though, the patriarchal authority which the mob are exercising in their witch-persecution is delusional, a product of a [literal] demonisation which initiates the moral panic. In a political context, the episode seems to be suggesting that the subjugation of women is equally delusional, that the apparently ‘objective’ evidence collected by Principal Snyder by invading the privacy of students’ lockers, has no truth in fact. Rather, a radical, feminist view of history, history as affinity, is foregrounded, in a process which ‘refuses the various positions of detachment which define the historian’ and ‘values highly emotional, involved, “personal” pleasure and engagement’.⁵⁹ Willow and Buffy are saved from burning by their friends, especially by Cordelia (in contrast to Xander and Oz’s clumsiness) who both share and refuse their demonisation, and create both a counter-discourse to it, and a counter-action.

Similarly, in *Checkpoint*, the prologue provides a montage of Giles objecting to Buffy’s ‘test’ in *Helpless*; of Buffy rejecting the Council in *Graduation*; and Buffy, Giles and Joyce protecting Dawn in *Triangle*. These views of education, hierarchy and community are reiterated and extended in the episode, where Buffy advances ‘a different perspective’ of history and is publically humiliated by her male teacher for doing so; the Council attempts to impose a surveillance model of management on the Scoobies by inspecting them; and Buffy understands and rejects this as a power-play, and asserts an ‘alternative government’ of relationality, allowing willing Council members to join the group to fight Glory.

Back in the Library: Conclusion

In a world where woman is so abjected that, as Irigaray says, she is virtually non-existent in political and psychological terms, *Buffy* may be read as an attempt to call her into being and knowledge. The struggle which takes place, the killing of vampires, then, is a political struggle, in which the spiritual, as well as the personal, is political. As simple allegory, the girl-Slayer fights against the problematics of growing up in a patriarchy, with her interior conflicts expressed as literal demons and vampires which she must slay. As more complex symbol, she reflects a Western culture in which successive waves of feminism have analysed these problematics, where woman is now valorised, as having both knowledge and existence which is self-authenticating. The Slayer thus embodies the combination of knowing and being, and the challenge to Western male capitalism which this represents: Buffy’s secret night-time slaying, done as well as her public attendance at school, stands for women’s unacknowledged labour of reproduction, which provides a central feminist criticism of Marxist analysis.

Buffy herself is an embodiment of what Grosz calls the ‘wayward philosophies’ which refuse a mind/body split and insist on alternative readings of what it is to be human.⁶⁰ It is not sufficient to construct an idea of ‘woman’ from that which exists already, since what exists already is abjected woman, as the cyborg, April, demonstrates: she is literally man-made, made by Warren to love and obey him, so that ‘I’m only supposed to love him. If I can’t do that, what am I for?’ and ‘if you call her and she doesn’t answer, it hurts her’ (*I Was Made to Love You*). Rather, autonomy

within relationality is required: as Buffy realises in the same episode, 'I don't need a guy right now. I need me. I need to get comfortable being alone with Buffy'.

To return to Virginia Woolf, like her women's committee, Buffy and the Scoobies are all Outsiders. The idea of country, the boundaries that represents, exemplifies the patriarchal limitations they seek to break. Instead, they shift between boundaries, individually, collectively and in relation to each other. Individually, they all transgress established boundaries: Xander, a failure in the prescribed learning of state education, turns out to be a skilled craftsperson in adult life; Willow is a lesbian and a witch; Angel a 'good vampire'; and so on. Collectively, they form the Scoobies, the Outsiders' Society, and move between the interpenetrating worlds of humans and demons, heaven and hell, the sanctioned and unsanctioned social, political, spiritual worlds. In relation to each other, they are almost always in a position of forbidden love, between women, between demon and human, between Slayer and vampire.

The solution of *Buffy* is inclusivity, and the creation of what Francis Stuart calls 'Alternative Government', relationality through the imaginative powers which are the starting points both of compassion and artistry.⁶¹ What is required, is for individuals to wish to enter, to want to become part of that community. Dawn, the Key, is as much a created being as is robot-Anna, but she identifies at a fundamental, personal level with the Scoobies: she is Buffy's political sister as well as her literal sister. This alternative government, then, is one in which, in Irigaray's formulation, citizenship comes as right of existing within the community, outside hierarchies of money or birth so that 'Law is thus no longer a straightforward obligation emanating from an omnipotent master, who is both legislator and executor. Law guarantees the identity of each man and woman and his or her own mastery of that identity'.⁶² Thus, Anya is a vengeance demon, but she may also lawfully join the alternative community of the Scoobies, and Tara, rejected by her own father and brother for being a disobedient female, is re-identified as part of Buffy's 'family'. In terms of feminist theory, this position reflects the destabilisation of categories brought about by trans theory. For intersexed people, gender identity can *only* be found through identification, at a personal, essential level. The transitions made between male and female, in response to that personal essentialism, has extended fundamentalist 'Fortress feminism' notions of what constitutes woman in terms of sex, and what constitutes lesbian in terms of sexuality.

In spiritual terms, the transgression of boundaries is exemplified by what Campbell calls 'the hero's journey':

A hero ventures forth from the world of common day into a region of supernatural wonder: fabulous forces are there encountered and a decisive victory is won: the hero comes back from this mysterious adventure with the power to bestow boons on his fellow man.⁶³

In this journey to the land below the sea, the world inside the mountain, the dark forest, the 'decisive victory' is one of will, not necessarily of action. Often, the hero fails to perform the task: she drinks what she should not, he cannot answer the question, or, like Buffy, there is an endless production-line of vampires, more than she could possibly ever kill. But the monomyth tells us that to try is enough, that intention rather than achievement is the measure of human relationality. At the heart

of this worldview lies the idea not of a fallen humanity separated from the godhead by inherited sin, but the idea of what radical educationist A. S. Neill called 'original good', the view that 'a child is innately wise and realistic.'⁶⁴ Where it is accepted that the automatic impulse of people is towards their own happiness, through the love and friendship of others, then they may be judged by their intentions, the bond of the heart, by an intentionality which holds the actor's ethical position.

Finally, then, it is this essentially ethical standpoint, this continuous working-out of what individuals need to do and be in order to find personal apotheosis, which marks out *Buffy* from other beat-em-ups. Usually, the face-off is between the black hats and the white ones, with a decisive victory for the whites: only rarely are the complexities of personal action and choice explored, in, for example, John Ford's *The Searchers* or Clint Eastwood's *The Outlaw Josey Wales*. *Buffy* subverts the set conventions, and seeks to create a new articulation of what it is to be autonomous woman. This is done in a context of inclusion, not separation from the world of men, on terms which refuse the dominant cultural ideologies of woman as secondary, sinful and subordinate. Of course, these ideas, together with the idea of the perpetual potential for change and redemption for all people, take place within the imagination, on the level of symbol, not fact, and through the ephemeral medium of popular television. But as William Blake points out in his *Vision of the Last Judgement*:

The Nature of Visionary Fancy, or Imagination, is very little Known, & the Eternal nature & permanence of its Existent Images is consider'd as less permanent than the things of Vegetative & Generative Nature; yet the Oak dies as well as the Lettuce, but Its Eternal Image & Individuality never dies, but renews by its seed; just so the Imaginative Image returns by the seed of Contemplative Thought.⁶⁵

Postscript: The First Slayer

When the First Slayer walked the earth, in the Palaeolithic period, a new sensibility appeared all across the world. Incised stone, engraved bone, carved figures and decorated cave walls testify to a new relationality, explored through art, which, in France's Dordogne, produced a remarkable sculpture and set of cave paintings.⁶⁶

The paintings show the myth of the hunter, the drama of survival: in one notable scene, a speared bison dies, while a rhinoceros shits the manure of new life, and the shaman-hunter dreams their mutual interdependence.⁶⁷

Outside, a sculpture shows a woman, pointing to her pregnant belly with one hand and with the other, holding aloft a crescent-shaped bison horn, incised with the thirteen days of the waxing moon and the thirteen months of the lunar year. As above, so below, the figure indicates, as the moon waxes, wanes and is born anew, again and again, so is all life.

The painted myth of the hunter is about taking life as a ritual act in order to live; the sculpted myth of the goddess is about transformation, rebirth, and life in all its aspects. To a modern mind, the two instincts seem antithetical, the one about separation and survival, the other about relationship and meaning. How can Buffy

both be a hunter, a Slayer, and live within the everyday relationality of her family and friends? Why does the First Slayer tell her, 'death is your gift'?

To live only within the myth of the hunter is to live for survival, in time, where death is final and the experience of life, despair. It is Angel's tragedy that after leaving Buffy, denying their relationality, his sensibility is reduced to that. To return to her is to return to the sacred feminine, the Palaeolithic goddess that links the First Slayer with the last, through a myth which contains that of the hunter and places it in the larger continuum of relationship, an eternal image of recurrence, of the whole.

When one Slayer dies, another is called: when one moon goes into darkness, another becomes. Innanna's journey to Ereshkigal is re-enacted time and again, the necessary death and concomitant new life, transliterated into the Christian religion as the festival of the new child at winter solstice, darkness turning light, and as death at Easter, the pagan festival of fertility goddess Eostre, at the equinox where winter turns to spring.

The myth of the goddess contains the myth of the hunter, but the myth of the hunter cannot contain the myth of the goddess. Death is Buffy's gift in time when, as the Slayer, she hunts vampires for survival: but to stay there would be to share Angel's now tragic existence. Death becomes her gift in eternity, as the deepest part of her – the First Slayer – already knows, when she realises that, as mother, she must go into the darkness to save Dawn, now her child, as Demeter did Persephone, as eternity must always redeem time. Together, Buffy and Angel rise again, made anew, as the moon does, as we all do, bound into a participative consciousness from the time of the First Slayer, a sense of eternity which vampires, those creatures caught in time, may disturb, but cannot end.

Annex for series 6 & 7

A lesbian is the rage of all women condensed to the point of explosion.
Radicalesbians *The Woman Identified Woman* c 1970

The essential myth of the moon is the myth of transformation.
Jules Cashford *The Moon: Myth and Image* 2002

Seasons 6 and 7 of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* operate as two aspects of a single movement. The emotional keynotes of Season 6 are isolation, loss, despair, emptiness, loneliness, and the impossibility, for the Scoobies, of finding a way in which life can be tolerable, both in spite of and because of their mystical super-powers and formerly close-knit set of friendships. They are, in short, inhabiting the mythological area of the Wasteland, an emotional landscape of futility, failure and fear, a dark night of the soul in which there are no external signposts to say (*Once More With Feeling*) 'where do we go from here?' Season 7 maps the struggles each of the Scoobies goes through in their search for personal authenticity and a new way of being in the world, an essentially interior journey counterpointed by the external

dissolution of the old order, as across the world, Watchers and Slayers are attacked and slaughtered by the new 'big bad', which is also the oldest evil, the First Evil in the world. This brief commentary focuses on two levels, therefore, the personal and the universal, and their integration into the single new world view, which the philosopher Owen Barfield typified as 'final participation.' At the same time, it also suggests the continuation of the interplay in the series between the political and the personal, in the form of Willow's lesbian identity and Buffy's role in the labour market.

At the personal level, the closeness felt by the Scoobies for each other, their mutual interdependence, becomes eroded. Their magical resurrection of Buffy from the dead is not technically an offence against the natural order, since it is the supernatural resurrection of someone who was killed by supernatural forces: but Willow's justification of her act is undercut by her decision to carry out the sacrifice of the fawn, which represents the 'blessed one,' in isolation and her obvious distress at the act. Even though she completes the formal invocation (*Bargaining*) 'Accept our humble gratitude for your offering. In death you give life. May you find wings to the kingdom' her breaking voice makes it clear that she is not being emotionally truthful to herself, but rather following accepted forms and patterns which go against her grain of feeling. This typifies the failure of all of the Scoobies, in one form or another: they obey convention, and thus dishonour their real feelings, forcing themselves into an impossible mode of life, a kind of emotional living death. Xander is unable to articulate his fear of marriage to Anya; beneath the running gag of an ex-vengeance demon turning into part of the retail industry, Anya is unable to conceptualise her and Xander's relationship outside the formalities of a consumer magazine 'ideal wedding'; Giles feels that he has no role and leaves for England; Dawn is unable to talk about her loneliness and isolation and turns to shoplifting and lying; Willow is too emotionally insecure in her relationship with Tara to work through their quarrels and so abuses magic to make Tara forget; Spike is tormented with desire for Buffy, to the extent of trying to rape her when she rejects him; Buffy, torn from heaven by her resurrection, feels unable to tell her friends what they have done and how (*Afterlife*) 'hard and bright and violent' she finds life in the world, and alternately, she compensates by sex with Spike (which she is equally unable to tell her friends about) and then hates herself for using him. Small wonder that all this false saccharine behaviour brings forth a demon ironically named 'Sweet' (*Once More With Feeling*) who obliges everyone to sing aloud their actions and feelings – 'I'm just going through the motions', 'I'll never tell' - in a dance of death.

Their quest is inward, and archetypally, the Scoobies are engaged on the Grail quest described in Europe's Middle Ages by Wolfram von Essenbach's *Parzival*. Contemporary mythologist Jules Cashford, commenting on Joseph Campbell's interpretation of *Parzival*, points out that in honouring the knightly code he was taught, Parzival dishonours his heart: out of this comes his failure, and the continuation of the world in a Wasteland. She says 'Only the Grail can redeem the Wasteland . . . but what is the Wasteland? For Campbell it is simply the inauthentic life, a state of being which is barren of the truth of who you are . . . In practice, this means that you put what (you think) is expected or required of you (the social 'ought') before the impulse of your own heart, wherever it may lead . . . the often beguilingly reasonable claims of the society are never valid, Campbell insists. To be persuaded that they are is the third temptation of the Buddha – "Perform your Duty to

Society”. Your duty to society is no good, he insists, unless it is to you. First, you have to be an individual, and it takes a hero to be one.’ Parzival redeems himself and the world through his compassionate question to the Fisher King, ‘What ails thou?’ – ‘the spontaneous *natural* impulse of a noble heart’, as Cashford puts it, just as Xander saves the world and Willow by reiterating his simple, unconditional love for her. The authentic life, the Grail, redemption, are sought and found by each of the Scoobies, not always in a single act – Spike’s regaining of his soul is only the start of his process of reintegration – but always by refusing to prefer social mores over the human spirit.

The Grail myth is essentially a lunar myth, with the Grail as cup being symbolically transparent to the crescent New Moon, or (when it is a stone as in *Parzival*) to the Full Moon. The links to the myth of Inanna and to Gnostic thought which the Buffy series makes so powerfully, also testify to this lunar inheritance, which underlies both of those traditions. With fortunate synchronicity, as series 7 comes to its closure, a new, pivotal work on lunar mythology, *The Moon: Myth and Image* has been published, which will be important for all those who wish to explore the archetypal structuring of *Buffy*, or, perhaps, alternative ways of being in and seeing the world. In this lunar sensibility, the movement from the Wasteland’s desolation of the heart, to a new life, is reflected by the cycle of the moon, from waning, through the three days of darkness, to the birth of the New Moon. The apocalypses which (almost) end each series of *Buffy* are thus transparent to ‘the idea of archaic apocalypses, such as flood or deluge, where the old is obliterated to make way for the new, [which] can be traced to the lunar model of cyclical renewal which gives meaning to catastrophe . . . It is an optimistic vision because, just as the disappearance of the Moon is not final, so the disappearance of human beings is not final either, neither individually nor as a race: they have a history beyond time.’

The Moon in its phases – Waxing, Full, Waning – represents time: but the Moon in its cycle of birth, growth, decline, death and rebirth, represents eternity. The world of vampires, timebound creatures, is one of perpetuity, an infinite multiplication of moments of time, which stands in relation to eternity as temporal life (*bios* in the Greek) stands in relation to eternity (*zoe*): *zoe* contains and transcends *bios*, eternity contains time, but *bios* can never contain *zoe*. The crescent New Moon, which has stood as a symbol for regeneration from the fifth millennium BCE to present-day symbolism in Islam and orthodox Christianity, is both the product of the death of the old order and the initiation of the new: the Moon is ‘the destroyer of barren and outworn forms *in order that* new forms may emerge’. The first shadow-caster used in *Get it Done* places the crescent Moon above a rocky earth, as ‘Creation’, and in the series finale, Buffy draws from a stone a mystic scythe, wavy edged with the crescents of both New and Waning Moons - a lunar analogue for eternity conquering time, used by Druids before orthodox Christianity turned Death’s sickle into a metaphor for fear rather than a symbol of transformation. Buffy as Artemis – sharing the root of the name, *Art*, with the hero Arthur and ‘King Arthuring’ the scythe from the stone – appears here in her aspect as ‘the gentle Bear Mother who guards her young [the Potential Slayers] with the ferocity of a hunter’ and in so doing, from the same etymological root, bears, gives birth to, a new order. The error of the ‘three wise men’ (*three? wise? men?* as the old lesbian joke goes) was to imbue the First Slayer with the demon, to turn *zoe* over to *bios*, as a projection of their own fear and

weakness. Buffy rightly refuses this violation, as Parzival rejects the idea of God and the dualities of good and evil, right and wrong, which it represents, and in so doing, reaches for a new way of being. For as von Essenbach says, 'Every act has both good and evil results,' and the Moon contains in its cycle newness, fullness, dissolution and death: darkness devours the Moon, as Ereshkigal devours Inanna, yet both are reborn, in a qualitative view of time, at 'the right time'. Similarly, Spike's 'right time' has not yet come, yet he will recognise it instinctively when it arrives.

Willow flays Warren in a literal act of madness, but a symbolic act of removing his temporal bounds – the skin that locates him in a particular time and place – as Ereshkigal flays Inanna, and as the snake sheds its skin to be born again, as life to the world, in the Sumerian *Epic of Gilgamesh*. Warren is released to eternity, as a manifestation of the One, the oldest evil, the darkness which attends the Moon's death. The rage which inspires Willow to this is caused by his unintentional murder of her partner, Tara, and the powerful magic which she imbibes, which makes her feel all the suffering of the world and decide to end it by ending the world. Mythologically, her anger is transparent to the rage of Demeter, in the Homeric Hymn, who refuses to let the earth yield or life continue, in her grief at her loss of Persephone, raped to the underworld, just as the First Slayer has been by her three Watchers, or Sweet threatens to take Dawn (*Once More with Feeling*). Demeter's and Willow's acts are 'lunar-cy,' arising from a fusion of rational mind and feeling, as in the dictum of the Aitareya Upanishad that 'the Moon became mind and entered the heart.' Only equivalent feeling will assuage them: the starving to death of 'the mortal race of human beings' (as a new Penguin edition of *The Homeric Hymns* puts it) in Demeter's case or the potential destruction of the world in Willow's. Xander is the Wise Fool who provides Willow with an alternative viewpoint, the unexpected, unnumbered, linking card of the Tarot Major Arcana, and who allows her to understand the 'Great Web of Life' (another lunar quality) as complete interconnectedness, beyond the dualities of suffering and pleasure.

Politically, this may be understood as a progression from the separatist radical lesbian agenda of the 1970s, to a different sensibility, which accepts the possibility of other modes of being, while nevertheless refusing simple assimilation. When Anya turns to Tara and Willow as a likely source of a curse for Xander, since they are lesbians and he is a man (*Entropy*) they shrug and accept men as likeable people although not desirable partners. Willow's fight against the seductive power of magic parallels popular representations of lesbians from the 1950s onwards (such as Ann Bannon's pulp fiction and films like *The Killing of Sister George*) as doomed to misery through taking to drink: however, as self-harm, it operates as a symbol of her offence against her own sense of right action, in killing the fawn (*Beginning*) and is thus a portal of discovery, as much as an error. The interconnection of sisterhood between Willow and heterosexual Buffy is made clear by the forgiveness which is extended to Willow, and which is resented by Amy (*The Killer in Me*) – 'she almost destroyed the world and everyone keeps loving her.' In the same episode, Willow's guilt-driven transformation into the male Warren, does not alienate her new female partner, Kennedy, who transforms her back to her female form with a fairytale kiss, indicating a loving acceptance of her that goes beyond the transitory physical.

At another level, Willow is politically linked to Buffy through their workplace identities. Buffy continues to represent the unacknowledged labour of reproduction,

as the bank manager tells her that ‘You have no income. No job’ (*Flooded*) and she discovers that she cannot be paid for slaying. Her paid employment potential (*Doublemeat Palace*) means that, as Dawn says, ‘she’s gonna have crap jobs her entire life, right? Minimum wage stuff,’ immediately reminiscent, in the UK at least, of the inequal position that women still occupy in the labour market, and especially lesbian women, who have no substantive employment rights as well as lower wages and poorer career prospects than men.

The overall process, and the focus of the episodes, is for the Scoobies gradually to develop a new consciousness, as each follows through their individual quest. Sometimes this is expressed in starkly psychoanalytic terms: Spike and Principal Wood are linked by their focus on their mothers, Spike through a classic Oedipal relationship with his mother, enacted by his ‘siring’ her in a displaced act of penetration when he bites her to make her a vampire, to give her eternal life so that they can always be together: in her new-found power, she rejects and humiliates him. For Buffy and Willow, it is expressed by her need to break through what Northrop Frye calls ‘mythological conditioning’, the process of questioning the assumptions about the universe on which their interpretations are founded. This requires a leap of faith, the combined need and self-belief which enables Parzival to seek out new ways of being, beyond conventional wisdom or action. In universal terms, the thrust is towards a new way of understanding and living in our world.

Lunar myth was supplanted by solar myth – the myth of the warrior-hero – by the patriarchal, conquering tribes of the Iron Age in Old Europe. A consciousness of eternity, relationality and transformation was submerged by one of the lone hero, pitting the force of his short life against the natural world to try to conquer it, as in the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the earliest of these tales. Nature and Spirit were divorced, and life was found wanting, since ‘the further away the Sun, Moon, goddesses and gods went, the more human beings became alone.’ That sense of loneliness, with no way of assuaging it, is the despair which ‘devours from below’ and which the series finale sets out to conquer. The last Guardian represents the unbroken lunar tradition, dying as Waning Moon (or Crone, in Wiccan tradition) and passing her inheritance to Buffy, whose role as Slayer ends, and role as Guardian begins (New Moon, Wiccan Maiden, Christian Virgin), as Buffy acknowledges in her description of herself as ‘cookie dough . . . I’m not finished.’

Crucially, though, the series finale operates not through conflict between lunar and solar myth, but by their resolution. This has been the coherent theme of the whole series, since the meeting between Giles and Buffy in the first episode: Giles, as Watcher, is inheritor of the ‘Shadow-Men’ who enslaved the first girl-slayer to work against her instinct, and thus is representative of solar myth, since ‘sun-worship is essentially a *learned* cult . . . it had to be calculated.’ However, breaking all the rules, he and Buffy work together, in functional partnership rather than hierarchical line management, to a shared end. This reinstatement of the lunar into relationality with the solar is the constant mythopoeia of the series, a reconciliation of opposites and redemption of Nature and Spirit, *bios* and *zoe*, time and eternity, which lies at the heart of the mystery traditions of Eleusias, of Dionysias, and of Gnostic Christianity, and which Alchemists call the ‘sacred marriage’ of ‘Sol and Luna.’

Literally, ‘when the Moon is closely lined up with the Sun at New Moon and Full Moon, their tidal forces accumulate, causing bigger bulges [in the Earth’s surface] and

larger tides.’ Alchemically, the *coniunctio* of Sol and Luna provides ‘a structure of transformation in which the individual dies to the old self and is reborn into a new mode of being.’ Sacred marriages take place between Faith and Wood as sexual coupling and subsequent friendly banter; between Angel and Buffy, when they kiss and she ‘basks’ in his presence; between Willow and Kennedy as their continued relationship; between Buffy and Faith, when Buffy gives Faith the scythe and Faith returns it; between Andrew and Anya when he tells her ‘you are the perfect woman’ and they wheelchair-fight; between solar-Giles and the Moon when he bites into a Jaffa Cake, in reference to the TV advert which makes the lunar-Jaffa analogy; between solar-Anya and the Moon through her hatred of ‘bunnies,’ since the ‘rabbit in the Moon’ is flung there in punishment in many myths; between solar-Xander and the Moon, since his blinded eye is analogous with the left eye of Horus in Egyptian myth, which was plucked out in battle with the dark god Seth and became the ‘Wejdat Eye’ which, as Full Moon, was restored by Thoth, guardian of time and timelessness; and crucially, between Sol-Spike, who bursts with burning brightness and Luna-Buffy, as she and he reconcile their troubled physical relationship through love at the emotional, symbolic level – ‘I love you.’ ‘No you don’t. But thanks for saying it.’ With a brief glance to the *Angel* series, one might note the difference between this sensibility and the tragic/pathetic arc of Cordelia, whose lunar process/progress ends in her entire betrayal by the Powers and her becoming first, through possession by Jasmine, her Dark Half, and then, by her coma, frozen as the Dark Moon. *Angel* operates consistently to a solar mythology which places dark and light perpetually at war with each other, which makes death final and tragic, and which falls into all of Parzival’s early errors of perception and action: transformation through shared human feeling and instinct, rather than rigorous self-sacrifice to social duty, awaits a future series.

The presiding political principle is that of reconciliation of the individual and the community, through a valorisation of lunar qualities. Dark Willow’s hopeless rage at the pointless, random violence of the solar patriarchy is truly the rage of all women condensed to boiling point. It is ‘the darkest place that I’ve ever been’ but her fear that ‘what lies beyond that’ may be deeper darkness is unfounded: beyond the Dark Moon lies the New Moon, and her spell to ‘use the essence of this scythe to change our destiny’ suffuses her with moonlight, as White Willow, in a moving image of personal redemption. Lesbian Willow is ‘more powerful than all of them [the ‘powerful men’] combined,’ as Buffy tells the Potentials (‘some thirty-odd pimply girls,’ the number of days in the Moon’s cycle and its marked face) and is able to release both herself and the rest of the world from the constrictions of the patriarchy simply because she links with all the other Wiccans in the world so that the scythe-Moon-Grail’s power may be shared. The Guardian who was once ‘one of many’ and is now ‘alone in the world’ has her communal identity recreated, as Slayer-Buffy, ‘one girl alone,’ deliberately ensures that ‘my power is our power’ so that ‘any girl in the world who might be a Slayer, will be a Slayer,’ wonderfully giving birth to a new community of ‘Slayers, every one of us,’ while at the same time losing her isolated position so that now, at long last, redemptively, she can find her own humanity, and ‘live like a person.’

Finding the Grail ends the Wasteland and restores everyone: Parzival, the Fisher-King, and the kingdom. Contemporaneously, at the level of the physical world, the thrust is towards new views such as James Lovelock’s *Gaia*, which offers a scientific

vision of the interconnectedness of the Earth and Moon, which Willow and Buffy experience so strongly. At the level of the imagination, the requirement is for what Barfield, in *Saving the Appearances*, calls ‘Final Participation’, described by Cashford as ‘a return to the old participative relation to nature, not in the old, original way – which is any case impossible, consciousness inevitably moving on – but at a new *level*, through the Imagination.’ This involves a relation in which we experience Nature as separate from us, but in which we create a new poetic union by participating with the natural world, consciously and imaginatively. In this vision, it is through the imagination that we will be redeemed, as it is through her creative, imaginative leap - ‘we change the rules’ – that Buffy redeems the world, transforming hopeless odds and an impossible situation, by an act of felt autonomy, as unexpected and unforeseen as all acts of artistry. In offering this viewpoint, the series not only provides redemption to Sunnydale’s world, but extends a similar possibility to viewers, who may feel the resonance of its archetypes, and perhaps will be moved by them to wonder more about their own ways of being: after all, as Rilke says in the *Duino Elegies*, ‘O Earth: invisible! What, if not transformation, is your urgent command?’

Zoë Playdon

London, 2001

¹ An edited version of this paper is published as Z J Playdon, ‘Religious imagery and its political significance: a feminist reading,’ in *Reading the Slayer*, ed. R Kaveney (London: Tauris Books, 2001)

² V. Woolf, *Three Guineas*, ed. M. Barrett (London: Penguin Classics, 2000; first published The Hogarth Press 1938), p. 234.

³ Woolf, *op. cit.*, p. 232.

⁴ For non-*Buffy* fans, ‘dusting’ is the term given by the series to slaying vampires, since they turn to dust when a wooden stake is pushed into their heart.

⁵ L. Irigaray *Speculum de l’autre femme* [*Speculum of the other woman*] (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1974)

⁶ J. Raymond, *The Transsexual Empire* (London: The Women’s Press, 1980).

⁷ G. Greer, *The Whole Woman* (London: Doubleday, 1999).

⁸ British feminism separated from USA feminism in the early 1980s, since the USA adopted an homogenising view of ‘woman’ which elided differences such as class, race, and gender, while Britain embraced an emancipatory welfare feminism which included diverse counter-cultural projects. Raymond and Greer’s works fall into the liberal, totalising tradition of USA feminism, while *Buffy* interestingly appears to fall into a British and European ideology.

⁹ D. Haraway, *Simians, Cyborgs and Women: The Reinvention of Nature* (London: Free Association Books, 1991), p. 149.

¹⁰ Braidotti, *op.cit.*, p. 5.

¹¹ L. Irigaray, *Speculum de l’autre femme* [*Speculum of the other woman*] (Paris: Les Editions de Minuit, 1974)

¹² M. Wittig, *The Straight Mind and Other Essays* (Hemel Hempstead: Harvester Wheatsheaf, 1992). These processes, of lesbian abjection and nomadism, are further explored in, for example, Sally Munt (1998) *butch/femme: inside lesbian gender*, London: Cassell which deals with issues within lesbian communities, and Jaye Zimet (1999) *Strange Sisters: the Art of Lesbian Pulp Fiction 1949-1969*, London: Penguin, which critiques the presentation of lesbianism in society at large.

- ¹³ For example, L. Feinberg, *Transgender Warriors: making history from Joan of Arc to RuPaul* (Boston: Beacon Press: 1996) and Taste This, *Boys Like Her: Transfictions* (New York: Press Gang Publishers, 1998). Feinberg's work demonstrates how women's oppression and trans oppression intersect, while *Boys Like Her* compounds the literal process of border-crossing with that of transgressive gender performativity.
- ¹⁴ L. Feinberg, *Transgender Warriors: making history from Joan of Arc to RuPaul* (Boston: Beacon Press: 1996).
- ¹⁵ Taste This, *Boys Like Her: Transfictions* (New York: Press Gang Publishers, 1998).
- ¹⁶ G. Deleuze, 'Nomad Thought', [first published 1978] in *The New Nietzsche: Contemporary Styles of Interpretation*, ed. D. B. Allison (Cambridge, MA: MIT Press, 1985), for example, provides an important forerunner of Rosa Braidotti's work on nomadism, while a general debt is owed to Michel Foucault for works such, for example, Foucault, M. (1963). *Naissance de la clinique [The birth of the clinic]*. Paris, Presses Universitaires de France; Foucault, M. (1969). *L'archaeologie du savoir [The archaeology of knowledge]*. Paris, Gallimard; Foucault, M. (1975). *Surveiller et Punir [Discipline and Punish]*. Paris, Gallimard.
- ¹⁷ R. S. Peters, 'What is an educational process?', *The Concept of Education*, ed. R. S. Peters (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1967), p. 15.
- ¹⁸ R. S. Peters, *Ethics and Education* (London, Allen & Unwin, 1966), p. 30.
- ¹⁹ Op. cit.
- ²⁰ For a discussion of these areas, see L. Stanley, *Feminist Praxis* (London: Routledge, 1990) and L. Alcoff & E. Potter, *Feminist Epistemologies* (London: Routledge, 1993).
- ²¹ L. Althusser, 'Ideology and ideological state apparatuses (notes towards and investigation)' in S. Zizek, *Mapping Ideology* (London: Verso, 1994 [first published 1970]).
- ²² See, for example, C. Pateman, *The Sexual Contract* (Cambridge: Polity, 1988).
- ²³ Aristotle replaced spiritual intuition with empiricism and logic but maintained the same division between epistemology and ontology, with the same political consequences and a similar role for 'education' as propaganda.
- ²⁴ Plato, *The Republic* in 'Great Dialogues of Plato', trans. Warmington E. H. and Rouse P. (London, The New English Library, 1956) p. 273, 274.
- ²⁵ Ibid., p. 302.
- ²⁶ Ibid., p. 214.
- ²⁷ Ibid., p. 278.
- ²⁸ See, for example, D. Beetham & K. Boyle, *Introducing Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1995); D. Held, *Models of Democracy* (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1996); S. Lakoff, *Democracy: History, Theory and Practice* (Oxford: Westview Press, 1996).
- ²⁹ Joseph Campbell, *Oriental Mythology* (New York: Viking Press, 1962).
- ³⁰ Genesis 2:9.
- ³¹ Juliana of Norwich, *Revelations of Divine Love* [circa 1343-1443], translated by Clifton Wolters (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1966), p. 172. See the novels of Irish writer Francis Stuart, especially *The Flowering Cross* (London: Gollancz, 1950) for contemporary explorations of this theme.
- ³² Elaine Pagels, *The Gnostic Gospels* (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1982) p. 38.
- ³³ Op. cit., 60.
- ³⁴ Op. cit., p. 19.
- ³⁵ 'On the Origin of the World', *The Nag Hammadi Library*, ed. J. Robinson (New York: Harper Collins, 1977) 170-189, p. 182, 115:31-116:5.
- ³⁶ *The Nag Hammadi Library*, ed. J. Robinson (New York: Harper Collins, 1977).
- ³⁷ A. Baring & J. Cashford, *The Myth of the Goddess: evolution of an image* (London: Viking Press, 1991).
- ³⁸ 'The Descent of Inanna' [circa 2000 BC] *Inanna: Queen of Heaven and Earth*, D Wolkstein & S. N. Kramer (New York: Harper & Row, 1983), pp. 51-89, p. 52.
- ³⁹ Ibid., p. 60.
- ⁴⁰ See Claude Lévi-Strauss, *Structural Anthropology*, translated by Claire Jacobson & Brooke Grundfest Schoepf (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1968) for a discussion of the kinship structures maintained by men exchanging women between them.
- ⁴¹ See R. Cook, *The Tree of Life: image for the cosmos* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1974) for a discussion of the tree as univocal symbol.
- ⁴² See M. Gimbutas *The Language of the Goddess* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1989) for a discussion of the various symbols used to represent water in Old Europe.

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- ⁴³ See C. Kerényi, *Eleusis: archetypal image of mother and daughter*, translated by Ruth Manheim (Princeton: Bollingen, 1967) for a detailed discussion of the Eleusian Mysteries.
- ⁴⁴ Baring & Cashford, p. 561-2.
- ⁴⁵ Lucius Apuleius, *The Golden Ass* [circa 123-180] translated by Robert Graves (Harmondsworth: Penguin, 1950), p. 183.
- ⁴⁶ Interestingly, in the UK run of the series, at the time of writing, Spike has begun to find personal redemption through identifying real relationality in his obsession with Buffy. Contrasting the 'Buffybot' which represents his projected, unreal version of her with his refusal to betray Dawn to Glory, Buffy kisses him simply and says 'that was real'.
- ⁴⁷ Brian Turner, 'Outline of a theory of citizenship', *Sociology*, (1990)24, 2, pp. 189-218, p. 209.
- ⁴⁸ See, for example, M. Foucault, *Surveiller et Punir [Discipline and Punish]* (Paris: Gallimard, 1975).
- ⁴⁹ Harry Braverman, *Labor and Monopoly Capital* (New York: Monthly Review Press, 1998).
- ⁵⁰ Charles Dickens, *The Old Curiosity Shop* (London: 1841); a powerful evocation of an American context is provided by the short story by Martin Savela, 'The Gaffer', *The New Anvil*, Aug-Sept 1939.
- ⁵¹ It may be tempting to read Giles as being a 'father substitute' for Buffy, as Sam Zambuto is for Kendra and the Mayor is for Faith. Reader, beware! The notion that women constantly seek fathers is only patriarchal fantasy. More particularly, that role is explicitly rejected by the series, through the *Doppelgangland* episode in which it is made clear that any relationship between Joyce and Giles is out of the question, and by the creation of a financial contract between Buffy and Giles – she is the agency of him being re-hired as Watcher, in the *Checkpoint* episode – in which she is clearly the most powerful person.
- ⁵² C. Golden, S. R. Bissette & T. E. Sniegotski, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer: the Monster Book* (New York: Simon & Schuster, 2000), p. 165.
- ⁵³ Gerald Gardner, *Witchcraft Today* (New York: Magickal Child, 1954).
- ⁵⁴ Vivianne Crowley, *Wicca: the Old Religion in the New Millennium* (London: Harper Collins 1996).
- ⁵⁵ Sheila Jeffreys, *The Spinster and Her Enemies: Feminism and Sexuality 1880-1930* (London: The Women's Press, 1985).
- ⁵⁶ Diane Purkiss, *The Witch in History* (London: Routledge, 1996), p. 15.
- ⁵⁷ David Evans, *Sexual Citizenship: The Material Construction of Sexualities* (London: Routledge, 1993).
- ⁵⁸ Sarah Dreher, *Shaman's Moon* (Norwich, VT: New Victoria Publishers, 1998), p. 11.
- ⁵⁹ Purkiss, p. 11.
- ⁶⁰ Elizabeth Grosz, *Volatile Bodies: Toward a Corporeal Feminism* (Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994).
- ⁶¹ Francis Stuart, *Alternative Government* (Dublin: Claddagh Records, 1982).
- ⁶² Luce Irigaray, *I love to you: sketch for a felicity within history* (London: Routledge, 1996).
- ⁶³ Joseph Campbell, *The Hero with a Thousand Faces* (New York: Bollinger Foundation, 1949); Abacus edition 1975, p. 31.
- ⁶⁴ A. S. Neill, *Summerhill: A radical approach to education* (London: Gollancz, 1962), p. 4.
- ⁶⁵ William Blake, 'A Vision of the Last Judgement' [1810], *Complete Writings*, edited by Geoffrey Keynes (London: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp. 604-617, p. 605.
- ⁶⁶ P. G. Bahn & J. Vertut (1997) *Journey through the Ice Age*. London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson.
- ⁶⁷ Baring A. & Cashford J. (1991). *The Myth of the Goddess: Evolution of an Image*. London, Viking. pp. 3-45.