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## **“Where’s the fun?”: The Comic Apocalypse in “The Wish”**



Anyanka: “This is the world we made. Isn’t it wonderful?”  
—“The Wish” (3009)

[1] The alternate reality portrayed in “The Wish” (3009) and “Doppelgangland” (3016) shifts viewers of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* as well as narrative worlds. Such storytelling gambits force the audience to acknowledge the fluidity of this fictional universe in. In doing so, they can make the experience of big and small changes pleasurable to their audience. Potentially, that pleasurable experience can make those audiences less fearful of real-world change.

[2] Most television series, however, do not teach these pleasures. The economic incentives inherent to syndication make it more profitable for producers and distributors to foster narrative stasis and nostalgia. As Margaret L. Carter observes, most mainstream television narratives presume the stability of the primary world, the “real” world we live in (Carter 177). They rigidly contain any fantasy sequences. Consider the “The Bizarro Jerry” episode (8003) of *Seinfeld*. There, Elaine discovers nice versions of George, Jerry, and Kramer, but can’t join them because she’s not nice herself. After this episode, she expresses no regret at the loss and never mentions the experience again. It is as if her character has no memory of them. Scott Westerfield writes that such stories teach the false lesson that “we can’t incorporate the alien into our normal world, because that would imply that the world can change... Like history, middle-class normality is fixed and unalterable” (Westerfield 32).

[3] Yet there’s also an economic incentive to teach that ideology. These alternative realities typically give the illusion of change, of novelty, while still keeping its promise of a familiar narrative. Umberto Eco writes that such serial narratives “must give the impression that [their] new story is different from the preceding ones, while in fact the narrative scheme does not change” (Battis 2-3). Repetition gives the typical series an emotional currency with its audience, for such constancy “consoles us, because it rewards our ability to foresee: we are happy because we discover our own ability to guess what will happen” (3). With *The Simpsons*, any narrative or formal experimentation, however daring it might be, will always be disavowed by the end of the episode, returning the viewer to the principal characters, who will begin the next episode largely unchanged by the events of the previous week. <sup>[1]</sup> Such constancy eventually allows for a sense of nostalgia to set in, which fosters a “beloved” quality so profitable in syndication. This narrative strategy allows the series in syndication to function like a codex. The audience can turn to any “page”—tune in at any point in the narrative—and begin reading comfortably. It allows the programmers at the A&E cable channel to broadcast back-to-back episodes of *Law and Order* from vastly different seasons featuring different main characters.

[4] In contrast to the profitable narrative stasis of *The Simpsons* and *Seinfeld*, "The Wish" (3009) is the first of several episodes that infect the Buffyverse with a productive instability. According to Carter, "The Wish" (3009) teaches the concept that reality is not objective, but rather the product of an unacknowledged consensus. The terms of that consensus are political precisely because they are seen as the way things are. After this episode, there is no necessity to the narrative logic of the dominant storyline. That's first the wit and then the horror here. Black comedies require that viewers know what an ideal world is supposed to look like so that they can compare that world to this one. This genre exposes ideology by asking us to think about how we normally see the world, which raises doubts about the inevitability and naturalness of the status quo. The more that this episode follows its own narrative logic rather than that of the series as a whole, the more that it presents an emergent story rather than a self-contained and deniable alternate reality, the more conscious the audience can become of how much they value the shared text of the series. This series' narrative world emphasizes its crafted quality; it cannot be understood as natural and its injustices cannot be understood as just the way things are (Westerfield 32). If any character can change the entire narrated world, it suggests similar possibilities for the world the viewer exists in. Viewers engage in this intellectual and emotional work, however, not only because they become newly aware of the fictive quality of the Buffyverse through the fantasy genre, but also because they are enticed into it by the delights offered by its black comedy.

[5] For Carter and Westerfield's understanding of the politics of fantasy and alternative realities to matter, audiences have to invest in both fictional worlds. That investment should not be taken as a given. When the fictional world of *BtVS* itself contains fictional worlds that also possess the inner consistency of the Buffyverse's reality, several responses seem possible. The audience might adopt an attitude of fascination, remain in the "arresting strangeness" of well-crafted fantasy, and appreciate the craft of the episode (Tolkien 47-48). A second possibility could be even greater estrangement from the real and the realistic. Such a critical awareness might help ensure the kind of cultural criticism that is a necessary precursor to social change. The possible third response, however, would be outright alienation. Virtuosity for its own sake can become masturbatory. Saturation in fictions leads to a cool critical distance without the emotional commitment necessary to translate insight into meaning or action. If our consensus understanding of the Buffyverse effortlessly trumps the consensus reality in the "Wishverse" then we're above it all. The writers are just showing off. For viewers to find change pleasurable, they can't just be fascinated, coolly critical, or alienated.

[6] At first, there's no question that the alternate reality subgenre of fantasy grants the freedom to vicariously enjoy departures from the norm without much consequence. The scope of the disruption is limited by comedy's implicit promise that it is not too serious and the emotional certainty that all will be well, more or less. It's a process of letting go with a safety net. So we can laugh with delight at seeing what was once strangely familiar be made strange once again. The Bronze is in the bad part of town, which is no longer a half block from the good side of town. Now it's all bad, with techno dance music blaring, adult monsters playing pool, and cages hanging from the ceiling. There's litter in the schoolyard and drab clothing on the kids. The cool jocks all dress like Xander once did, with plaid collared shirts hiding the muscles under their tight tees. The halls of the school are half empty. The sun seems to have lost its warmth, as the shift in the daytime lighting from yellow to cool blue-infused white light mutes the brightness of all the colors. And when Cordelia asks the janitor about her lost "el convertablo," we see the first Latino character in this series, supposedly set in California. Truly, it is topsy-turvy day at the carnival.

[7] And the cast! They're a great deal of fun even when they remain mostly the same. Harmony and her vain crew stay much the same, even if their plumage now draws from a more limited palette. Rupert Giles remains exactly the same, doffing the tweed jacket

perhaps, but still fighting the good fight and getting knocked out while doing it. Men surround him now, as the lone female white hat is soon dispatched. Larry's become the Xander, boiling Giles' "complex thoughts down to its simplest possible form," as he complained in "What's My Line?" (2010). And solid, trustworthy Oz isn't discernibly different at all. Poor tortured Angel now is being tortured for real. He once nailed a puppy to a wall during his time as Angelus. Now Angel is that puppy, only chained instead. The groups remain the same, even if the players change sides. There's a comfort in that fact. Such continuity provides a pleasing sense of predestination that simultaneously reassures us of the importance of free will.

[8] The others have changed so much, but are still so familiar, even when they are not themselves. For Carter, Willow's become a modern Drusilla (Carter 181). There are some similarities. Both like to play the little girl saddened by the mean father, mostly as a means of getting their way. Both are performers, whether it is displayed through Willow's smiles as she watches Xander watching her play with the puppy or Drusilla's attention-getting visions. (The morning paper sometimes inspires Drusilla's visions, but they're also genuine at times.) The difference between Vamp Willow and Drusilla is in the historical era of these naughty little girls. Drusilla's a Victorian's notion of a bad girl, seeing what she oughtn't, speaking uncomfortable truths, and dreaming, always dreaming, things she shouldn't. Willow has a lust for the kill that's more reminiscent of Spike's modern, zesty sensuality (although Willow's costuming in black leathers with maroon fabric at the bodice and sleeves of her corset is more in the Goth style than Spike's glam/punk leather and eyeliner ensembles). Willow's bad girl is modern because it's aggressively sexual in a way that it would probably not even occur to a Victorian woman in any direct manner. Willow's not just sexual. She's sexually deviant, a dominatrix whose victims have no safety word. Drusilla does not perform her sexual desires so overtly, but gratifies them covertly, as with Angelus behind Spike's back or with Darla behind closed bathroom doors. Spike sweeps Drusilla off her feet to carry her when she's ill; one can hardly imagine Vampire Xander doing the same for his ladylove.

[9] Where's the fun? For Arthur Koestler, laughter results from the coexistence of two frames of reference, absurd and plausible: "It is the sudden clash between these two mutually exclusive codes or rules—or associative contexts—which produces the comic effect. It compels us to perceive the situation in two self-consistent but incompatible frames of reference at the same time; it makes us function simultaneously on two different wave lengths" (Koestler 330-2). The comedy lies in seeing self-consistent but incompatible frames of reference at the same time. She's both Willow and not Willow; she's Drusilla, but not quite. We read the alternative versions of these characters carefully in the hopes of revealing what is central to their being. What must Vamp Willow retain to feel recognizably like Willow? What is her essence? In experiencing these clashes between emotion and reason, Koestler wrote, our thought processes change direction nimbly and quickly but our emotions, possessing greater inertia, cannot (Koestler, 330-2). We keep hanging on to old reliable Willow in the face of this new one. Our laughter releases our feelings after a shift of association deprives it of its original object. We laugh because we can't quite place which figure is absurd and which is plausible.

[10] Similarly, "The Wish" heightens our awareness of Alyson Hannigan as well. [2] In particular, Hannigan's range as an actress is revealed through this new layer of complexity, although that is true to a lesser extent of Nicholas Brendon and Sarah Michelle Gellar as well. But it is Hannigan that truly emerges from the role, where before we were encouraged to see only Willow. Willow wore revealing clothing earlier in season two, but the effect was to emphasize the familiar traits of Willow, rather than to make that understanding problematic. In "Halloween" (2018), Buffy encourages Willow to "come as you aren't" both in the spirit of the holiday and to shock Xander out of his complacency. Buffy dresses Willow in a tight black leather mini, a choker, sheer black nylons, and a tummy-revealing maroon top.

But look at what Hannigan's choices there reveal. She didn't strut, rolling her hips to emphasize Willow's sensual nature. No, she bounces happily as she walks and clomps rather than glides. She doesn't strike a pose. She squirms. That kind of quirky particularity undermined any notion of taking Willow as a conventional object of desire. The same technique later occurs in "Doppelgangland" (3016) when Willow declares that she's stalking off. Instead of rushing off, Hannigan uses that same bouncy, shoulder-swaying walk. There's too much personality in her movements to make either one fit the generic narrative meaning of "stalking off" or "strutting her stuff." But in "The Wish" (3009) and "Doppelgangland" (3016), she's straddling Angel, licking her victims, and her walk seems more of a prowl. Obviously, Vamp Willow also foreshadows both Willow's change in sexual preferences in season four and her descent into evil in season six. "The Wish" contains more than the revelation of a doppelganger or an examination of a shadow self here. After this episode, we can now see Hannigan as performing Willow performing little-girl Willow, as Allie Goolrick, one of my former students, put it. The bright and fuzzy clothing, the breathy stutter-step delivery of lines, the gawky walk, and the wide eyes all are part of a performance that emphasizes itself through its slightly excessive cuteness. Vamp Willow reveals Willow's character as performed rather than natural, which makes her excessive stage fright in "Puppet Show" (1009), "Nightmares" (1010), and "Restless" (4022) revealing rather than merely amusing. After "The Wish" (3009), we must reread her character in light of this core of unexpected power and grace and be on the watch for moments where her mask slips. Willow, Vamp Willow, and Hannigan coexist in a manner that makes the distinction between the absurd and the plausible that much more difficult to pin down in this episode.

[11] Like language itself for Ludwig Wittgenstein, "The Wish" (3009) sources its laughs in our delight at discovering families of resemblances, a network of similarities that can be discussed (Horton 4). This episode is an insider's game, and we feel privileged that we know enough to watch the ultimate insiders, the authors of the series, play. Henri Bergson once observed that comedy builds communities, writing, "However spontaneous it seems, laughter always implies a kind of secret freemasonry, or even complicity, with other laughers, real or imaginary" (Bergson 64). The nihilism implicit in enjoying the death of the Buffyverse is so much better when you can share it with a loved one.

[12] But all hierarchies, power, and constructs contain traces of difference, of their own negation and destruction, according to Jacques Derrida (Horton 7-10). Things fall apart, as Tara observes in "Entropy" (6018). Xander and Willow are a part of the disintegration of the laughter in "The Wish" (3009). In the first three seasons, the writers use Xander and Willow to place the viewing audience in the text, for they provide a rationale for explaining how spells and monsters work while fostering identification through their lack of overtly special qualities. So what happens to Xander, the goof so full of energy that he marks his lines with a rapidly shifting expressive face and a multitude of hand gestures? He likes to watch, standing still and quiet. He's not Spike to Willow's Drusilla, though this is what Carter suggests (Carter 181). He doesn't act. He strokes the vertical metal bars of Angel's cage while he watches Willow perform for him. He's a voyeur who gets off on sadism. Is this our mirror image that we're confronting here? What kind of vicarious sadism have we been indulging in? [\[3\]](#) A series about the necessity of taking action in the face of adversity must take positive measures to counteract the fact that watching television habituates its audience to behaviors precisely opposite to its stated message.

[13] And Buffy, the mediating figure between Faith and Kendra, now incorporates the worst aspects of both. She fights like Kendra now, with few kicks, no creativity and a ramrod straight posture, marching stiffly through the dust of Xander's corpse. It's just "plunge and move on," as Giles urges her in "Never Kill a Boy on the First Date" (1005). And she's borrowed Faith's crass vulgarity without any of the sensuality and irreverence. She sniffs decanters of liquor and talks about people wanting to get into her pants. Like Kendra, Buffy's

there because she's been ordered to be there; like Faith, she could care less as to why. Neither one plays well with others, and now that's true of Buffy as well. She's not funny anymore, or fun.

[14] And part of why the fun is slipping away is because we distrust the emotional safety net offered by the genre conventions of comedies. It's not simply that this promise is not explicit, and thus is not completely trustworthy. It's also that the presence of an emotional safety net itself undermines black comedy. What defines a comedy is a contradiction. One understanding of comedy defines it by its narrative movement towards harmony, integration, and a happy ending. An opposed and equally valid understanding defines it by the laughter caused by its anarchic undermining of normalcy. Generally, this difficulty is resolved through an unsatisfying happy ending. The comic figure, Steve Seidman writes, "must be made to conform to cultural values by divesting himself of his creativity, or else face rejection. The generic problems of individual and cultural initiation are resolved at the expense of what makes the genre entertaining" (Seidman 141). The extent to which we feel safe letting go is the same extent that the subversive pleasures of this kind of comedy are contained and undermined. So we want such narratives to mean nothing and everything, both at the same time. We want our Willow back. And that balancing act, on the part of the author of the comedy, is where suspense starts to infect the laughs.

[15] Paul H. Grawe writes that "comedy is the celebration of ongoing life... comedy's emotional power is the power to evoke any emotional response people may have to a remembrance of the faith that the human race is destined to survive" (Grawe 17). But Cordelia's dead, drained in a three-way that grossly makes overt what had always been at least somewhat implicit to this point in the series. Angel and Willow are piles of dust. And Buffy can't possibly subvert the first season's prophecy and beat The Master because she staked Xander. How can the writers drag this episode back from the brink? How are they going to get back to the delightful wordplay after this apocalypse?

[16] In other episodes, the wordplay was fun in precisely Grawe's joyful and hopeful manner. In "The Wish" (3009), all that disappears. Steve Wilson catalogued the various ways that the characters, authors and viewers participate in linguistic play. There's not going to be any more buffoonery, as one can hardly imagine this Xander or Buffy doing a pratfall into an open grave. The prop comedy's gone missing too, as Giles getting shot with a tranquilizer dart or crossbow quarrel would be dangerous and disturbing now. And the ethnic jokes at Giles' expense will never work now, as Larry and Oz just don't seem as acutely American as Xander, Buffy, and Cordelia did. A closeted jock and a werewolf indie guitarist just aren't mainstream enough to hold their own against a stuffy but witty librarian. The puns and pop culture deconstruction are out the window too. Larry's observation about the inherent injustice of the world's fate being tied Cordelia's desires is bitterly ironic, it's true, but *BtVS* has never sought to layer itself in irony, like *The Simpsons*. Cordelia's bitchiness is a piquant dish served cold, but it's not suited to be the main course. Larry would be a poor long-term replacement for her or Xander. The most telling loss, though, would be the absence of the linguistic riffing, the nonsense, and the "free-for-all grammar-implosion," as Wilson put it (Wilson 93). Buffy's stiff vulgarity will never allow for the linguistic flexibility Wilson catalogued, in which she'd make adjectives become verbs ("Gee, could you vague that up for me?"), transform verbs into nouns (Giles: "This leaves me flummoxed." Buffy: "What's the flum?"), have nouns refuse to become adjectives ("I'm sorry, I've been crankiness all day.") or simply eliminate unnecessary verbiage (Buffy: "Raise your hand if 'ew!'") (Wilson 93-4; see also Adams' and Wilcox's 1999 articles on this issue). Willow's sense of playfulness and creativity has been redirected; she'll never verb a noun ("I hate to poop the party.") or say something like, "A doodle. I do doodle. You, too. You do doodle, too." All that "The Wish" (3009) will leave us is the world-weary disaffection, the bawdy bits, the sarcasm, and the putdowns—everybody's "little Miss Seen-It-All," as the Mayor would later describe Faith in "Graduation Day, Part One" (3021). What's worse, the decline in comedic

complexity threatens to make the action and horror genres ineffective. Buffy's foes are "menacing not because they're capable of destroying the fictive world (what competent villain isn't?) but because they're able to get in the last word," writes Wilson (Wilson 81). They've demonstrated an essential and competing space within the narrative potentially as protected as the protagonists. Self-referential post-modernism can only provide so much pleasure before it becomes stale.

[17] Such wordplay is its own reward. It matters in a way that is independent of the politics of the series, or whether it makes you smarter or a better television viewer. Jane Espenson, co-executive producer and writer on *BtVS*, observed that fans and authors used the series to play with language together, when she wrote in Slayer Slang: "With so many of us laboring over so many years and with so many fans writing about the show, and indulging in creative fanfic, together we have extended the language of the Buffyverse" (Espenson ix). The shared Buffyverse isn't just the sunny parts of Sunnydale. It includes the bits of language that insinuate themselves into your speech patterns, encouraging a linguistic playfulness which sometimes got you in the mood to generate your own slayer slang, which you then shared (often inadvertently). "The Wish" (3009) threatens something more fundamental than just the lives of these characters. "The Wish" (3009) reveals that playfulness is a central value of the series by eliminating it.

[18] Some jokes, according to Mary Douglas, afford the "opportunity for realizing that an accepted pattern has no necessity. Its excitement lies in the suggestion that any particular ordering of experience may be arbitrary and subjective.... The strength of its attack is entirely restricted by the consensus on which it depends for recognition" (Douglas 365, 372). That is first the subversive wit and then the genuine horror here. The more that the episode follows its own narrative logic, the more that it resembles an alternate history rather than an alternate dimension, the more valuable our consensus Buffyverse looks. That consensus reality is worth fighting for because now we painfully know how much we've invested in it. These characters are now more than fictions, even as they remain fictional.

[19] There's a feeling of grateful relief upon our return to the status quo of the series, which itself seeks to be a vacation from the stifling normalcy of everyday life and how it's typically envisioned on television. The final shot grants us the warm yellow lighting and the bright greens of leafy trees and chemically treated school lawns. Willow's exchanged her "Mistress of Pain" getup for a long-sleeved top, backpack, and ankle-length skirt ensemble whose flowing lines and complementary purples are very much influenced by Jenny Calendar's pagan chic. Xander's back in drab browns, sitting on the back of the bench as any good slacker would. After her butch sojourn in grey muscle shirts and combat boots, Buffy's back as a femme fashion plate, thankfully restrained with a loose pale green top and knee-length salmon skirt. Form delightfully clashes with function once again. And Giles is back where he belongs, shunted to the side of the frame, pointing at his watch to nag them about the virtues of punctuality, as Willow cocks her head attentively. Buffy's sunny smile never looked so good.

[20] "The Wish" (3009) threatened to be the last laugh, a meaningless exhibition of narrative inventiveness, and an affirmation of its own norm that could only lead to the stagnation of nostalgia, all at the same time. Yet, the consequences of staring into this particular abyss refused to remain contained in that episode. Its narrative virtuosity generated new stories, rather than being a self-contained display of writing technique, ultimately disposable and thus masturbatory. This episode, like *BtVS*, began with a single change and explores its consequences, but those consequences rippled outwards through the series. Cordelia's visit to the "Wishverse" occupied no time in the commonly experienced reality of *BtVS*. "Doppelgangland" (3016) intimated that the "Wishverse" is a separate reality even as it undermined the narrative separateness of "The Wish" (3009). (Even if Cordelia remembered nothing of her experiences, Anyanka evidently remembered her defeat there, as

she complained bitterly to her demonic boss, D'Hoffryn, about it.) Nor do the character revelations sparked by those two episodes remain safely ensconced there. The similarities between the alternate versions of Willow and Xander undermine the founding mythology of the series: "When you become a vampire the demon takes your body, but it doesn't get your soul. That's gone!" ("Angel" 1007). That statement always implied that the vampire and the person shared memories but were two completely separate entities. Just one week after the broadcast of "The Wish" (3009), Buffy herself acknowledges the implications of this revelation in "Amends" (3010), when she says, "I know everything that you did, because you did it to me. Oh, God! I wish that I wished you dead. I don't. I can't." Note the use of the present tense. Angel, not Angelus, did it to her. Angel's suggestion in "Doppelgangland" (3016) that there is a relationship between the vampire's and the original's personality fundamentally undermines the distinction between them. [4] Buffy's silencing glare sought to protect not only Willow and her understanding of Willow, but also a distinction between Angel and Angelus that is necessary for her romance to continue, and the audience's romance with their romance. Xander is right in "Becoming, Part One" (2021): what happened to Jenny Calendar is Angel's responsibility. In fact, Willow further undermines a clear distinction between the characters and their alternate versions by incorporating some of her shadow self at the end of "Doppelgangland" (3016), by going out to The Bronze on a school night. She even accepts the suggestively red apple from Percy. In later seasons, the characters as they evolve in the dominant narrative will start to bear an uncomfortable resemblance to these "Makeover of the Damned" versions of these characters: Buffy loses the fun and Willow starts to get off on it. The final shot of the episode reminds us of whom these four characters are while masquerading as a shot of who they will always be. It is a moment that contains both the harmonious and subversive qualities of comedy. Impossibly, this episode did end up meaning nothing and everything at the same time.

[21] In fact, there's a sneaking suspicion that we brought "The Wish" (3009) on ourselves, for any pleasure we draw from this narrative technique justifies its use by the writers. This episode gives fans what they thought they wanted, so that they could reevaluate such desires. In adopting an iconic storyline of the fan fiction genre, the series acknowledges that some of its viewers are authors too. Fans not only wanted an episode like this one; they wrote it, near enough. Fan response to the alternative world version of Willow in "The Wish" (3009) played some part in motivating an episode designed to give Hannigan a chance to reprise that performance in "Doppelgangland" (3016) (Golden, Bissette, and Sniegowski 137). But we are all involved. Fans may not create the text of the series but we do create our experience of it. We do defend the series and spread the word about it. We create complementary, supplementary and critical texts. And, in doing so, we shape how others experience it first. As guides and teachers, we act somewhat like authors for these new viewers.

[22] With this episode, we are never more aware of our activity as viewers. The virtuoso writing technique indicates an extraordinary faith in its readers. We write our experience of this episode even as we rewrite our experience of the series as a result of this deliberate attention to their world's fictional quality. This episode requires the rapt attention to detail of the fan and the critical distance of the author to fully engage in its pleasures.

[23] In practicing such multiple-mindedness, viewers of this series make the same leap of faith that Giles does to end this episode. The episode teaches us to take pleasure in the redemptive power of change, but not change for its own sake. That belief is the necessary precursor to meaningful action. Fans learn that their creative efforts and reading habits matter. That lesson bore fruit not only in fan fiction, fan web sites, music videos, and slayer slang but also when the fan base expressed their disapproval of what they perceived to be the shabby treatment of Kendra and Faith (cf. Tjardes, Ono, Edwards) and, later, Spike, Tara and Willow (cf. Heineken, Tabron, Ryan). Such critical reading against the grain of the

series itself signals the success of the series, which always sought to show the pleasures of talking back to power. Part of the roots of that success are tangled up in the dying laughter of this episode.

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Dialogue quotations from < [www.buffyworld.com](http://www.buffyworld.com) >

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[1] For example, Homer improbably remains employed at the power plant, despite frequently taking on new professions to comic effect. The characters occasionally joke about that fact, which is a ploy that allows the writers to continue to experiment without risking a fundamental shift in the characters' lives.

[2] In "Once More, With Feeling" (6007), the audience's awareness of the actors is heightened in much the same manner. Part of the pleasure was in discovering the hidden talents of actors like Amber Benson or James Marsters and watching how the series' creators hide the suboptimal voices of Alyson Hannigan and Nicholas Brendon.

[3] Look back to what I talked about in "Innocence" (2014) and "Passion" (2017) in terms of implicating the audience and the author in Angelus' sadistic and voyeuristic excesses in my article: "'Over-identify much?': Passion, "Passion," and the Author-Audience Feedback Loop." *Slayage: The Online International Journal of Buffy Studies*. 5.3. (2006). < <http://slayageonline.com> >.

[4] This understanding of the series' take on the vampire myth makes Spike's belief at the end of "Lies My Parents Told Me" (7017) that the demon inside his newly vamped mother really said all those hurtful things about him a neat bit of repression.