“All the Better to Know You”: Investigating the Hybrid Monster and Allegories of Self/Other in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

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The *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* episode “Fear Itself” (4.4) pays homage to “Little Red Riding Hood” as Buffy, dressed as Red, and Xander walk to a Halloween party. Xander, who has long-harbored a crush, asks Buffy with a self-knowing, wolfish leer, “What’s in your basket, little girl?” (see Figure 13.1). Buffy responds with a single word as she reveals her basket’s contents, “Weapons.” This interaction between the vampire slayer and her friend is, like the series and Joss Whedon’s oeuvre, multi-referential and generically unstable, here gesturing to comedy, horror, and one of horror’s significant antecedents—the fairy tale. A seeming throwaway, this moment—metaphoric and multifaceted; unexpected, and yet, particularly for long-time fans, completely in character with Buffy and her world—offers a précis of the multivalent nature of *Buffy*, fairy tales, and the horror genre.

Whedon and his collaborators’ use of “Red” in *Buffy*, as in their use generally of fairy tale and horror tropes, is both literal, such as the dialogue and *mise-en-scène* in “Fear Itself,” and figurative; drawing on the allegorical nature of fairy tale and horror texts with their mix of facile, surface meanings and complex, even interrogative, connotations. Thus the “little” girl
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protagonist of "Red" is echoed by Buffy with her childlike name and petite frame, while the tale’s Wolf becomes Buffy’s “monsters”—blending into Sunnydale’s “woods.” Red and Buffy’s narrative arcs offer further parallels—moving from childhood naivety to wisdom through trials of loss, death, and rebirth. The Slayer’s fellow Scoobies, her chosen family, facilitate these trials, like figures in some versions of Red’s tale, with further testing provided by the forces each girl faces—wolf, vampire, or human: the last including Buffy herself. In this chapter I use “Red” as a lens through which to examine the subversive play of Whedon and his collaborators with the comforting, familiar tropes of fairy tales and horror, collectively fairy tale horror, in Buffy’s content, form, and structure, a play facilitated by the figure of the monster—not necessarily a marker of evil but of difference.

Deep connections exist between fairy tales and horror: two forms whose liminality provides a space for imaginative investigations of gender, sexuality, class, and race. Such fluidity is a central argument of Carol J. Clover’s 1992 *Men, Women, and Chain Saws: Gender in the Modern Horror Film*, which addresses the sociocultural aspects of 1970s and 1980s horror. Clover argues that in horror texts, “We are both Red Riding Hood and the Wolf; the force of the experience, in horror, comes from ‘knowing’ both sides of the story.” Clover’s observation foregrounds the expressive possibility of horror’s “knowing” in investigating identity formation: often figured as innocent youngsters, such as Red, gaining experience through violence and confrontations with the nonhuman or monstrous.

As Clover indicates, horror texts, like fairy tales, contain a mutability and expansiveness that encourage viewers to read beyond facile Manichean identity binaries of self/other—that is, human or monster—and dig into the multifold nature of both individual characters and their pairings. To explore how Whedon and company play with the liminality of horror’s “knowing” through their use of “Red,” interrogating identity binaries of self/other through the tale’s Red/Wolf dynamic, I focus on close readings of three Buffy pairings—Buffy/Angel, Buffy/Spike, and Buffy/Buffy. I argue that through the construction and conflict of these pairings the roles of self/other are reimagined, even collapsed. The key to this reimagining lies in the distinctly hybrid representation of the monster, whose liminality foregrounds the compound nature of Buffy itself. I begin with a short theoretical discussion of the nature of identity formation and its relation to the monster before sketching the history of “Red” and representations of the Red and Wolf figures in two seminal versions of the tale. Finally, I use close readings of those Buffy pairings to reflect on fairy tale horror’s impact on the series and how the latter may, in turn, shape the horror genre.

In their characterization of individual characters and those characters’ combinations, both fairy tales such as “Red” and Buffy present identity binaries of self/other that appear clear-cut but are, potentially, complex. First, a definition: discussing the process of identification in *Sex and the Slayer*, Lorna Jowett notes, “The usual construction is that of Self and Other, the Other being anything that is not Self.” Jowett stresses this division’s sociocultural stakes, arguing, “Clearly such definitions of ‘self’ or ‘norm’ are constructed by dominant groups and work to exclude characteristics or identities that do not match those of the dominant group, and the ‘default norm’ is generally white, middle class, and often male and/or heterosexual.” In this process, the monster is seemingly defined as other and separated from the self. However, as Clover indicates, fairy tale horror complicates this through a “knowing” that takes in both Red and Wolf, possible self and other, and mingles the two while, simultaneously, offering a more profound understanding of each one.
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The monster’s disruptive potential is a central aspect of Jeffrey Jerome Cohen’s “Monster Culture (Seven Theses).” Employing Marjorie Garber’s concept of “category crisis,” he argues, “Because of its ontological liminality, the monster notoriously appears in times of crisis as a kind of third term that problematizes the clash of extremes—as ‘that which questions binary thinking and introduces a crisis.’” It is thus the monster’s difference, its otherness, that facilitates identification and, simultaneously, complicates it. Digging into the diverse effects of the monster’s manifold representation in The Horror Film: An Introduction, Rick Worland contends, “the paradox of the monster is that it incites our fear, compels our attention, and quite often courts our empathy and fascination, even though it remains the most remote from any possible reality.” In sum the monster, whether in “Red” or Buffy, is a loaded figure offering a liminal space for viewers’ fears and desires. To unpack the figure of the monster in “Red” and the tale’s influence on Buffy’s content and form, I set up the tale’s origins, the stakes of its portrayal of its liminal human and non-human characters, and its formal hybridity.

“Red’s” origins lie in oral folklore, although contemporary readers and viewers usually connect with the tale’s transgressive themes of fleshly appetite, multiple identities, and disobedience through written stories or contemporary film and television texts. Current iterations of the tale derive primarily from two written versions whose similar, yet distinct, treatment of their Red and Wolf figures significantly impact contemporary descendants. These texts are “Le Petit chaperon rouge” (1696/1697) or “Little Red Riding Hood” by Charles Perrault and “Rotkäppchen” (1812) or “Little Red Cap” by the Brothers Grimm, based on Perrault’s work. Both versions feature a young girl who ventures into the woods to visit her granny and encounters a Wolf who gets directions to Red’s destination, devours granny, disguises himself as her, and then swallows Red; however, their endings differ. In Perrault’s version, the women remain in the Wolf’s belly; in the Grimm version a huntsman saves them, and they eliminate a second Wolf in the tale’s conclusion.

Both versions offer a seemingly simple identity formation in their representation of Red, a human innocent who appears as a version—albeit female not male—of the self, opposed to the trickster Wolf, aligned with the monstrous other. The individual differences of Red and Wolf, highlighted through this pairing, enhance this sense of self/other.
by the active plotting and violence of the tale’s male figures—the trickster Wolf and, in the Grimm version, the dynamic huntsman, a savior figure. Yet the characters’ identities and relationships are not static but dynamic, evolving in each “Red” adaptation and citation. For instance, the Grimm Red does not remain a victim but, reborn from the Wolf’s belly, transforms: helping the huntsman kill the Wolf and tricking and destroying a second Wolf.

This Red’s metamorphosis from victim to participant, using her experience to outwit her assailant, anticipates the often-active roles performed by female protagonists in horror, a generic element played with in Buffy’s character and narrative arc.12 Setting up central aspects of 1970s and 1980s horror through a discussion of Carrie (De Palma, 1976) in Chain Saws’ opening, Clover refers to horror protagonists of this kind as “the female victim-hero”: the verbal combination stressing the figure’s hybridity.13 Clover argues that Carrie is both victimized (by her classmates’ and mother’s beastly acts) and a monstrous hero: a multivalent representation and binary blurring that anticipates Buffy’s own hybridity and that of a handful of the monsters she faces.14

That Buffy is distinctly allegorical, like the fairy tale horror from which it stems, is an essential element of this blurring. The series is, as Whedon notes, built on the metaphor that high school and the passage to adulthood are hell, making the monsters that the Scoobies combat reflective of real-life demons, from self-doubt to toxic romances.15 Lynne Y. Edwards, Elizabeth L. Rambo, and James B. South highlight this metaphor to address Buffy’s essential themes and structural elements while connecting these elements to its network move for seasons six and seven. They argue, “At the heart of Buffy from Season One has been the use of metaphor to explore the conflicts of growth, power, and transgression: characters have dual identities or shadow characters, the show’s style, setting, and plots lend themselves to thematic dualities, and, at last, fortuitously, to the program’s network dualities.”16 The play of Whedon and his collaborators with such duality and its relation to the collapse of self/mother is foregrounded from the first moments of the pilot with its nods to “Red” and fairy tale horror tropes.

The opening beats of “Welcome to the Hellmouth” (1.1) gesture to distinct stereotypes regarding fairy tale horror, such as the binary of victim/monster, and rework these: establishing the ironic, reflexive nature of the series. The episode begins as the camera moves through the darkened, empty Sunnydale High, lingering over uncanny objects in a biology classroom. A young man in a leather jacket, bent on seduction, breaks in, his companion a sweet-faced blonde in a Catholic schoolgirl outfit. A binary of experience and innocence, predator and victim, seems to be established, echoing “Red’s” Wolf and Red figures, although knowledge of those figures’ complexity leaves room for other readings. The combination of ominous music, a shadowy mise-en-scène, and a whiff of teen sexuality evoke horror, particularly slasher films’ displays of endangered nubile couples.17 Death arrives for the couple, dealt not by a monster, human or non-human, out of frame but by the young woman, Darla, who reveals her vampiric face and sinks her teeth into the man’s throat. As their bodies drop out of frame, a cut transitions to the title sequence and images of another blonde—Buffy—in action. This sets up a link between the women as potential protagonist and antagonist and as similar to some degree, positioning Buffy, like Darla, as a hybrid, possibly monstrous, figure.

The play with binaries and viewer expectations here exists on multiple levels, echoing the complexity of Clover’s “knowing.” Viewers may read the human couple as self against the unknown other that might attack them; simultaneously, the drama of seeming experience versus innocence appears to set the man, a libertine in the model of Perrault’s human “wolves,” as other and the woman as self. The revelation of Darla’s mixed nature—human and non-human, vulnerable girl and cunning beast—challenges easy divisions of self and other, destabilizing these readings and rearranging viewers’ expectations. Darla’s mingling of self/monster other anticipates that of her child/lover Angel, the ensouled vampire, and of Buffy, ordinary girl and supernatural slayer. The pairing of Buffy with Angel, variously her ally, lover, and enemy, sets up the first of the binary challenges of Buffy’s complex pairings. I first establish the intricacy of Angel’s characterization and its heredity from horror texts, then explore the significance of the Buffy/Angel interplay in revealing hidden, liminal aspects of both characters through a focus on two episodes: “Innocence” (2.14), in which Angel becomes Angelus, and “Passion” (2.17), in which Angelus stalks Buffy and kills Scooby Jenny Calendar.

As Angel’s backstory as the human Liam, the vampire Angelus, and the ensouled Angel unfolds over Buffy, viewers discover the multifold nature of
each of his identities and the even greater complexity provided by these identities’ combination, creating a truly hybrid monster. Taking these in order, Liam is, despite his humanity, flawed: a drunken philanderer who pursues women like Perrault’s libertines; once turned, he becomes the bloodthirsty Angelus, and then, cursed, the guilt-ridden Angel. The latter personas are seemingly dichotomous, yet not necessarily so. As non-human figures, both Angel and Angelus are aligned with the other, the Wolf; although the ruthless Angelus seems most clearly othered; however, as the layers of Angel’s nature are revealed over multiple episodes, this binary is unsettled. For instance, although Angel has eschewed drinking human blood, he uses violence and intimidation to support Buffy’s mission, behavior that aligns him with Angelus; and while Angelus is predatory, unconstrained by Angel’s empathy and guilt, he is also, albeit in a more limited way, complex: no simple beast but a cunning, self-reflective sadist.

That Angelus maintains a twisted version of his other self’s romantic obsession with Buffy connects the two even as Angelus’s torture of her highlights passion’s dark side: the stalker inside the romantic. Disturbingly, it is increasingly clear that Angel/Angelus exist together, like Jekyll and Hyde in Robert Louis Stevenson’s 1886 Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, each with the potential to become dominant.18 That each persona is aware of the other and impersonates his opposite offers a further collapse of their distinction and echoes the Wolf’s skill in performance and deception.19 Along with Stevenson’s Gothic novella, the figure of Angel and his relationship with Buffy also draws from and further develops the complexity of classic horror films based on novels, particularly Frankenstein (Whale, 1931) and Dracula (Browning, 1931). Elements of the diversity of Angel and other Wolf figures such as Spike in Buffy are anticipated by the creature in Frankenstein, whose child-like wonder and hurt, powerfully played by actor Boris Karloff, complicate readings of him by other characters and viewers as beastly.20 This is particularly prominent in a censored scene in which the creature joyfully joins a young girl in a game and is then bewildered when he inadvertently causes her death.21 To a lesser extent Dracula, released ten months prior to Frankenstein, also complicates the sense of its titular character as monstrous, largely through actor Bela Lugosi’s performance of the Count as a suave mesmerist by whom the film’s younger characters (men and women) are, initially,

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smitten. These diverse elements of Angel’s hybrid monstrosity collide in the pivotal episode “Innocence,” written and directed by Whedon.

“Innocence” illustrates the complicated emotional depths of Buffy’s Red/Wolf pairing of Buffy/Angel with a gravity lacking in the original prototypical “Red” narrative as developed by Perrault and the Brothers Grimm.22 An early scene dramatically reveals Angel’s transformation to Angelus and hints at this metamorphosis’s devastating effects even as it subtly asserts that while this change seems disruptive, it also reveals the potential for violence and cruelty lurking in all the Angel personas. Following a focus on vampire lovers Spike and Dru and the Judge, the arc’s putative Big Bad, the action moves to Angel leaving the bed he has shared with Buffy in their first lovemaking and going outside to an alleyway, where he falls to the ground and struggles in pain, watched by a wearily dressed woman smoking in a doorway. A working girl who is several decades older than Buffy, her blonde hair echoes the Slayer—just as her red clothing parallels the red coverlet on Angel’s bed. She approaches Angel and he rises, face hidden. When he turns he’s in vamp face: a visual shock akin to the pilot’s revelation of Darla’s monstrosity. He feeds, drops her body, and exhales her smoke, clearly no longer Angel but Angelus: the hybrid monster at his most dangerous, seemingly fully othered.23

The serious repercussions of this collapsing of Angel’s identities then build through the episode, particularly in the later scene in which he rejoins Buffy and pretends that he is Angel. In contrast to his killing of the blonde, this scene’s destruction is psychological, its restraint and intimacy emphasizing its brutality. In its focus on physical and linguistic trickery, the scene returns us to the fairy tale and the manner in which the Wolf’s disruptive quality lies not only in his devouring appetite but his mastering of the women’s fates through manipulation: a position of experience poised against innocence that viewers share given that in Buffy, as in “Red,” viewers/readers are aware of the Wolf’s performance and potentially aligned with him even as they orient themselves to the texts’ Red figures; the result is a disturbing “knowing.”

While the episode’s more overt transformation, physical and psychological, lies in Angel’s shift to Angelus, Buffy also shifts, a turning point in the character’s awareness of heroism’s weight and of the darkness—of loss, of violence—she carries as both human girl and Slayer. Much of “Innocence” focuses on Buffy as a vulnerable girl in the mode of
Perrault’s Red: her potential victimhood highlighted by her older-doppelganger’s death at Angelus’s hands, and, later, Angelus’s cruelty while performing Angel. However, Buffy’s wounds do not, unlike the blonde’s, destroy her—instead becoming the impetus for her destruction of the Judge and Angelus’s plans. A Red who combines Perrault victim, Grimm survivor, and elements of the Wolf in her adoption of her opponents’ strategic skills, she increasingly occupies multiple positions like Clover’s “female victim-hero.” Just as the presentation of Angel as predatory Angelus, flawed human Liam, and guilt-ridden Angel forms a distinctly hybrid monster, offering a nuanced “knowing” of the character and his relation to the series’ complex meditation on inhumanity, literal and figurative, so Buffy too is an increasingly ambiguous figure.

Through Angel’s and Buffy’s individual transformations and increasingly combative interplay in “Innocence,” Whedon and company not only create more multivalent characters and higher stakes, but also highlight the connection between the fantasy of fairy tale horror and real-life gender violence and the manner in which the former plays out aspects of the latter, as Whedon highlights in his DVD commentary for “Innocence.” The subsequent narrative arc, particularly in later episodes such as “Passion” with its destabilizing content and form, foregrounds the dark undertones of the couple’s relationship and further highlights Angel’s hybridity.

While “Innocence” disrupts viewers’ expectations by defamiliarizing the nature of Buffy, Angel, and their romance, “Passion,” directed by Michael Gershman and written by Ty King, further dislocates viewers through its use of narrative, visual, and aural elements rarely employed in the series, as Rhonda V. Wilcox notes in “The Darkness of ‘Passion’: Visuals and Voiceovers, Sound and Shadow.” This dislocation begins with a shift in narrative perspective and camera position. Buffy’s narrative normally focuses on Buffy and the Scoobies with the camera a third-person observer; however, in “Passion” Angelus’s perspective directs the narrative and camera position: the Wolf taking over “Red.” Formally, the camera stands in for the murderous gaze of the killer, echoing horror texts such as Psycho (Hitchcock, 1960) and Peeping Tom (Powell, 1960) and the ‘70s and ‘80s films Clover discusses, a shift that realigns viewers’ reading of Buffy/ Angel and creates additional layers of “knowing.”

“Passion” begins in the familiar space of the Bronze with the camera, positioned high overhead, moving over a series of red lights to show the couples dancing beneath: an unusual perspective, literally and metaphorically, offering a fresh angle. This disorienting change sets up a new perspective: Angelus’s. The camera moves to the ground to focus on Buffy and Xander dancing, then switches focus to a red-lit wall. A dancer obscures the view, and then there is Angelus—screaming at Buffy and Xander, his gaze almost direct at camera. Adding to the visual disruption of his dangerous presence is the aural uncanniness of his voice-over intoning a word: “Passion.” As the scene continues, image and sound follow Angelus’s perspective, figuratively and, often, literally, as he moves around the Bronze, the camera sometimes reproducing his gaze and encouraging viewers to share it: an uncomfortable position given Angelus’s brutality. If “Innocence” moves to craft both Angel and Buffy as fully hybrid figures, “Passion’s” formal experimentation further reorients viewers’ relationships with both while setting up a further pairing: Buffy/Spike.

The opening of “Passion” echoes one of the most notable aspects of the horror genre as discussed by theorists such as Clover: an inventive, sometimes disruptive, use of the cinematic gaze to unsettle viewer expectations and create tension. Traditionally reserved from the teens on for protagonists, perspective, literal and figurative, is rarely allowed antagonists for more than a limited period. A shift occurs as early as the 1960s with films such as Peeping Tom and in the 1970s with revisionist horror films like Jaws (Spielberg, 1975) and Halloween (Carpenter, 1978). In these films viewers often repeatedly, and for extended periods, share the monster’s gaze. Such closeness provides a degree of viewer identification with the gazer although, as Clover notes, the nature and effects of such sharing is complex. Other horror films such as An American Werewolf in London (Landis, 1981) develop an even more knotty sharing of the killer’s gaze, with Werewolf employing the gaze of a hybrid protagonist/monster that anticipates Angelus’s gaze in “Passion.” In Werewolf, viewers share the human protagonist’s perspective both before and after a werewolf’s bite, inhabiting his transforming self’s view as he hunts in dreams and, eventually, reality. Viewers’ awareness of the protagonist as both sweet-natured everyman and vicious killer, like Angel/ Angelus and, to some degree, Buffy, makes this sharing fraught. While the use of the killer’s gaze to destabilize viewers is a well-worn practice by Buffy’s creation, it retains the potential to disturb. This may be particularly the case here given that Angelus is no unfamiliar monster but a familiar,
once-beloved figure, and Buffy, object of the gaze, is no disposable anonymous victim.

These formal disruptions in the treatment of Angelus foreground his hybridity—monster and man—and create uncomfortable ambiguity. The calculation of his systematic stalking of Buffy and her friends—culminating in him staging a reunion between Giles and the dead Jenny as a site of Eros but of death—emphasizes that he is no mindless predator, an argument evoked by his words in “Passion’s” opening: “Passion… it lies in all of us. Sleeping, waiting, and though unwanted, unbidden, it will stir, open its jaws, and howl.” Foregrounding passion’s dangerous potential to awaken mankind’s literal and figurative beast, Angelus gestures not only to his own predatory nature but all humankind’s, including Buffy’s, while highlighting their erotic link. “Passion” leads viewers to understand Angelus’s focus on Buffy as not only the fascination of the predator tracking prey, but the shadowy twin to Angel’s obsession, then love, for her, established in “Welcome to the Hellmouth.” As Elisabeth Krimmer and Shilpa Raval note: “For Angelus, the desire to love merges with the desire to kill. He himself gives expression to this twisted conflation when he tells Spike that ‘to kill this girl [Buffy], you have to love her.’”

This rainging of death and Eros echoes “Red,” in which the Wolf’s devouring of Red and graney stands in for sexual appetite. And while Angelus’s violence marks him as monstrous, the character’s darkness mirrors, to some extent, the ambivalence and moral grayness that Buffy and the Scoobies increasingly reveal over the season and in those to come.

Striking in its disruptions of form and narrative, “Passion’s” opening scene is also twinned to an earlier scene, similarly overlaid with both threat and fascination, of Buffy being stalked. That scene, also set in the Bronze, from “School Hard” (2.3), directed by John T. Kretchmer and written by Whedon and David Greenwalt, marks the vampire Spike’s first sighting of Buffy and the beginning of a complicated Red/Wolf pairing that both parallels and diverges from Buffy/Angel. In their matching narrative and visual elements, the scenes link these Wolf figures, reminding viewers of their blood ties (Angelus is Spike’s grandsire) and decades together. This parallel with the lethal Spike highlights Angelus’s distinctly predatory nature, moving him further from his Angel persona even as his resonant voiceover, an emotional element not included in “School Hard,” complicates this. The voiceover foregrounds a desire, albeit twisted and dangerous, whose emotional strength, combined with the sharing of the gaze, may tempt viewers to identify with Angelus: a reception position that threatens to collapse another distinction of self/other—that of viewers/the monster—and implicates viewers in Angelus’s monstrouness.

In contrast to the complexity of this character and viewers’ relations to him, Spike appears a more simple Wolf figure—his relationship with Buffy in “School Hard” clearly predator and prey. However, just as his grandsire evolves, so too Spike. As presented in “School Hard,” Spike represents hard-bodied masculinity and violence: the opposite of the strong, yet tender, Angel of season one; however, his human backstory as the inept poet and caring son William, revealed in episodes such as “Pool for Love” (5.7), complicates this reading and the placement of him as monstrous other against Angel’s self. For instance, while Angel’s backstory reveals his selfish, libertine persona Liam, Spike’s human past crafts him as a sympathetic figure, emotionally and physically vulnerable. And if Angelus’s dialogue in “Passion” as he reproduces Spike’s earlier gaze links the two, it also foreshadows Spike’s shift to amorous, if thorny, desire for Buffy, inviting a retrospective rereading of the earlier Spike and of Buffy/Spike. Spike thus presents, as Jowett notes, a truly hybrid monster who, as she argues, “blurs boundaries between good and bad, ‘masculine’ and ‘feminine,’ hetero- and homosexual, man and monster, comic and tragic, villain and hero.”

Further formal elements such as dress emphasize the vampires’ complexity and binary blurring; for instance, their choice of black clothing unites them, while the presence of red differentiates Spike from Angel and foregrounds not only Spike’s violence but his passionate relationships with his sire/lover Drusilla and, later, Buffy, who in her role as a Slayer and in her echo of Red and that character’s association with bodily transformation is also associated with the color red.

Not only are Angel and Spike represented as multilayered Wolf figures, their complexity inviting a similarly intricate “knowing,” but their pairings with Buffy foreground surprising dimensions in the Slayer. As numerous commentators (Wilcox, 2002 and 2005; Helford, 2002; Dail-Driver, 2008) have noted, Buffy is multilayered, her liminality found in her own multiple identities and their evolution through her interactions with others. If season one presents a character torn between being a normal girl and a Slayer, further seasons complicate both positions and their seeming
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...revealing Buffy in all her identities as both innocent and transgressive, like Red. Numerous episodes display Buffy's imperfections and dark side, including the emotional cruelty she displays in "When She Was Bad" (2.1), her breaking of the law with Faith in "Bad Girls" (3.14), and her pursuit of a sadomasochistic relationship with Spike beginning in "Smashed" (6.9). Her dynamic with Faith, her seeming opposite in background and behavior, offers a particularly interesting, gender-shifted version of Red. Wolf and Red/Wolf, with both women assuming the hybridity of both Red and Wolf characters, a liminality enhanced through the interplay of their differences and similarities. In Buffy's battles with Faith and Mayor Richard Wilkins III, season three's Big Bad, the Slayer reveals new levels of moral ambiguity, perhaps most clearly in her decision to kill Faith to save the poisoned Angel, even if she does not ultimately do so. In Buffy, viewers see a Red who grows beyond youthful self-involvement and naïveté to empathy and wisdom through traumatic trials that can only be survived by her acknowledgment of her own hybrid status as, echoing Clover, "a female victim-hero," one whose identity includes, like Carrie, an association with the monstrous and the other.

In considering the manner in which Buffy addresses horror's "knowing" by offering complex, ever-shifting, Red/Wolf pairings, it is interesting not only to consider how Buffy draws from classic and revisionist horror films but to contemplate how it anticipates contemporary horror texts. A recent example is Showtime's Penny Dreadful (2014-2016), with its reflexive look at classic horror creatures, including Frankenstein's creature and Dracula, and a protagonist, Vanessa Ives, haunted, like Buffy, by her own dark side. Get Out (Peels, 2017), with its playful take on race and class, is another possible Buffy descendant—mixing horror and humor to destabilize viewers and encourage active viewing and critical consideration.

To close, I return to the exchange from "Fear Itself" with which I opened, and the manner in which it illustrates the multivalence in character, narrative, and form of Buffy—a liminality largely built through its citation of fairy tale horror and its use of the hybrid monster. For instance, Buffy, dressed as Red, is both battle-tested warrior, wielding the weapons in her basket, and still-naïve girl, not far removed from the tale's perhaps-not-so innocent girl who faces the Wolf's deceptions. Similarly, Xander is both fellow innocent and lusty Wolf, playing at being a libertine—or more. Even in this fleeting moment, the diegesis defies binaries, invites multiple readings, and helps viewers "know" the characters and, through them, themselves in unexpected, often delightful, sometimes horrific, ways.

Notes

1. Discussing central aspects of the horror film, Rick Woland notes that "another significant dimension of the horror tale is its affinity for the lesser, often metaphysical, implicitly social. Though we will never encounter such unnaturally powerful monsters in the material world, such stories serve as parables or convey a sharp message of warning." Woland, The Horror Film: An Introduction (Malden, MA: Blackwell Publishing, 2007), 8.


4. Ibid., 6.


7. Discussing the tale's origin, Jack Zipes notes that it was "probably a tale told in a French or Italian dialect in the seventeenth century by women about a girl who must demonstrate her prowess when confronted by a werewolf or wolf so that she can be initiated into a sewing society." Zipes, The Enchanted Screen, (New York: Routledge, 2011), 11.

8. Ibid., 346–348.

9. Jack Zipes, The Trials and Tribulations of Little Red Riding Hood: Versions of the Tale in Socio-cultural Context (South Hadley, MA: Bergin and Garvey Publishers, Inc., 1983), 71. Zipes includes the full text, which reads, "One sees here that young children, especially young girls, are often brought up, and from this occurs, it is not to strange: When the wolf should eat them. If they do not know that all the wolves/the docile ones are those who are most dangerous."


11. Gowen, Sex and the Slayer, 12.
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12. Discussing the origins of the series, David Lavery notes, “Whedon’s long-time love of horror movies had led him to wonder what the result might be if the (usually) blonde-girl killed/terrorized by the monster in the alley were to kick his butt instead.” Lavery, Joss Whedon: A Creative Portrait (London: I.B. Tauris, 2014), 88.


14. Ibid, 3–4. Discussing Carrie’s connection to feminism and social change in a response to Stephen King’s discussion of the film in light of Women’s Liberation, Clover notes of the character that “Throughout most of the movie she is the victim of monstrous schoolmates and a monstrous mother, but when, at the end, she turns the tables she herself becomes a kind of monstrous hero... She has become, in short, what I shall throughout this book call the female victim-hero (the hero part always understood as implying some degree of monstrosity, whose status in both roles has been indeed enabled by women’s liberation.”


17. Clover notes that “In the slasher film, sexual transgressors of both sexes are scheduled for early destruction. The genre is studded with couples trying to find a place beyond purview of parents and employers where they can have sex, and immediately afterwards (or during the act) being killed.” Clover, Chainsaws, 33.


19. Diane DeKelb-Rittenhouse notes that Angel and Spike are “in fact the logical evolution of the Vampire Lothario, a literary creature rooted in Eastern European folklore that has been fascinating the public eye ever since Lord Ruthven slunk into the pages of John Polidori’s ‘The Vampire’ in 1819.” DeKelb-Rittenhouse, Sex and the Single Vampire: The Evolution of the Vampire Lothario and Its Representation in Buffy,” Fighting the Forces: What’s at Stake in Buffy the Vampire Slayer (Lanham, MA: Rowman & Littlefield, 2002), 143.

20. The association of the monster with childishness foregrounds Kristina Busse’s argument regarding vampires’ mixed identity. She notes, “The vampire is both a highly sexualized and a peculiarly infantile figure, so that any relationship with and between vampires tends to collapse familial and sexual bonds.” Thus Angel arguably also occupies the position of Red/self as well as Wolf/other, not only in his human past but also in his vampire selves. Busse, “Crossing the

“All the Better to Know You”

Final Taboo,” Fighting the Forces: What’s at Stake in Buffy the Vampire Slayer (Lanham, MD: Rowman and Littlefield, 2002), 212.

21. This scene was censored in some US states on the film’s release. See Worland, The Horror Film, 122–123.


23. Regarding the scene, Wilcox discusses the erotic resonance of Angelus’s smoking, noting that he first kills the blonde “and then, as if to emphasize the coital nature of the encounter, blows smoky air from his lips.” Ibid., 123.

24. In the DVD commentary for the episode Whedon notes, “What we wanted to show was a horror movie version of the idea I sleep with my boyfriend, he doesn’t call me and now he’s killing hookers in alleyways.”

25. Discussing the shift in identification in Psycho after the murder of Marion, the putative protagonist, Worland notes that we are then “uneasily stranded with Norman as the new protagonist. When he sinks Marion’s car in the swamp with her body inside, we listen anxiously to the gurgling sounds as it begins to disappear, then catch our breaths when it won’t go down. The second we fear Norman’s exposure and sigh with relief when the gurgling resumes and the car disappears, the director has aligned our empathy, however unwittingly, with Marion’s killer.” Worland, The Horror Film, 86.

26. Wilcox examines the unusual, destabilizing nature of this point of view: focusing on the voiceover, she argues, “If not an omniscient ‘voice of God,’ a voiceover is usually given to the protagonist, recalling events or commenting as they proceed; normally, the voiceover gives the viewer a place to locate, often a character to identify with or at least pull for. How chilling is it, then, that the most dangerous antagonist gives the voiceover here?” Wilcox, “The Darkness of ‘Passion’”: Visuals and Voiceovers, Sound and Shadow,” Joss Whedon: The Complete Companion, ed. Mary Alice Money (London: Titan Books, 2012), 104.

27. Clover notes of that gaze that “Predatory gazing through the agency of the first-person camera is part of the stock-in-trade of horror” and argues, “The device is probably the most widely-imitated—and widely parodied—device of modern horror.” Clover, Chainsaws, 183, 186.

28. Clover cites Steve Neale’s complication of this construction of the gaze in Halloween with a sense of identification with both killer and victim, noting Neale’s argument that “the identifications of the spectator are thus split: between the polarities of a sadistic, aggressive and controlling position and a masochistic, suffering, and controlled position.” Ibid., 185.


30. As Wilcox notes in “The Darkness of ‘Passion,’” in sharing his view and voice in the episode’s opening “we are immersed in the darkness with him.” Ibid., 105.
32. Drusilla echoes this scarlet shade in her costumes for “Innocence” and “Passion,” the shade reflecting her status as both killer and lover and rhyming with Buffy and the latter’s association with red.
33. The episode “Buffy vs. Dracula” (5.1) plays, both humorously and seriously, with Buffy’s dark side through her interactions with Dracula. In their dialogue, he highlights her capacity for violence, while she dismisses his definition of her, with Dracula noting, “I came to see the renowned killer,” and Buffy denying this identity, arguing, “Yeah, I prefer the term Slayer, you know killer just sounds so...” He fills in her blank with “Naked?” and she replies, “Like I paint clowns or something. I’m the good guy, remember?” For an analysis that focuses on this episode as a sustained treatment of “Red Riding Hood” tropes, see Kristopher Karl Wooster, “Little Red Riding... Buffy: ‘Buffy vs. Dracula’ in Explorations of Intertextuality in Introduction to College English,” in *Buffy in the Classroom: Essays on Teaching with the Vampire Slayer*. Edited by Meghan K. Winchell and Jodie A. Krieder (Jefferson, NC: and London: McFarland, 2010), 169–185.
34. As Wilcox notes, Buffy’s darkness is explored through the characters of Faith and Spike. Setting up a discussion of Buffy and Faith against the background of the work of psychiatrist and psychoanalyst Carl Jung, she notes, “To quote a very simple expression of the idea by Jung, ‘the realm of the shadow... is... the negative side of the personality’ (147). The dark-haired, violent, promiscuous Slayer Faith is Buffy’s Shadow figure.” Wilcox, *Why Buffy Matters: The Art of Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (London: IB Tauris, 2005), 81.
35. Wilcox argues that through Buffy/Faith “simple dualism is not allowed—virgin/whore, devil/angel, hero/villain. Buffy and Faith are both aspects of each other and complex characters in their own right. Either of them might be capable of killing, and the ones they kill are not simply monsters. Killing is not cheap in this world.” Wilcox, "Who Died and Made Her the Boss?: Patterns of Mortality in Buffy,” *Fighting the Forces*, 16.

14

Horror and the Last Frontier: Monstrous Borders and Bodies in *Firefly* and *Westworld*

Karen Herland

The dual frontiers of the American West and outer space have long symbolized the “universal” desire to discover, tame, and ultimately claim, the unknown. Joss Whedon’s *Firefly* (2002–2003) and Jonathan Nolan and Lisa Joy’s *Westworld* (2016–present) mine the intersections of these two rich genres—using a mythical future to explore the borders of culture and of humanity. The Western notion of frontier is revisited in both series, with a Gothic twist. Just as Gothic narratives diverge from archetypal representations, these frontiers do not fulfill the “promise” of settler expansion and conquest. Instead, the borders of the worlds depicted present “a conflict between the inscribed history of civilization and the history of the other, somehow immanent in the landscape of the frontier.”

*Firefly* and *Westworld* offer dark, complex stories that complicate the border between human and monstrous bodies: those manufactured as hosts in *Westworld*, and those deconstructed as the cannibalistic, mutilated/ing Reavers lurking on the edges of *Firefly’s* verse. *Westworld’s* uncanny hosts are built by Delos Corporation to offer the ultimate “authentic” experience for affluent human guests who exploit these