

Cyndi DeVito-Ziemer: 'Excuse Me, But Your Mascara is Running': How Buffy and Spike Perform Gender

William Shakespeare informs us that all the world is a stage and that we each play different parts throughout our lives. Judith Butler points out that key elements of a life's varied performances are how and which gender is being performed. The garments, accessories and hairstyles worn are what signified class, status, rank and gender to the other 'players' who shared this world stage for much of civilized history. According to Robert Hodge and Gunther Kress "[t]hese broader signifying systems are essential for the smooth operation of systems governing particular semiotic acts. They link the social organization of semiotic participants with social organization on a larger scale." Further, they explain such acts are not merely markers of groups and therefore inclusion, but convey important information and meanings in their own right about social relations. The visual is not mere costuming, but a necessary aspect of the politics of identity and which gender is being performed.

In my paper, I will discuss the performances of gender by Buffy Summers and Spike (William the Bloody, neé Pratt) through the visual. Indeed, Buffy's performance of gender is rooted in the visual. I will build upon my previous art historical analysis of the visuals of a pan-gendered Buffy, and compare/contrast this identity with Spike and his gender performances utilizing the methodologies of visual culture and semiotics. I will discuss hair, make-up and clothing. While scholars such as Lorna Jowett, Marc Camron and Leah Lenk and Denise Lynch among others have addressed gender in the Buffyverse, I will connect gender elements in a specifically visual analysis. Such an analysis allows the consideration of the politics of viewing within the narrative thread.