

Selina Doran: A Shade Darker? Viewers' Interpretations of Buffy in Season 6 and Understandings of Gender Roles

The paper published by Doran (2012), "The 'Faith Goes Dark' Storyline and Viewers," explored television audiences' reactions to storyline about Faith's transformation in season 3 of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, in relation to the gender roles within the characters of Faith and Buffy. Various *BTVS* scholars¹ have documented the transgression of traditional "femininity" by the main female protagonists in the show. Doran's (2012) audience study and Jowett's (2005) book both found that Buffy is positioned as a "good girl," as opposed to Faith's "bad girl" character. This presentation will follow on from this, examining how viewers interpret Buffy in season 6 of the show when she takes on "bad girl" attributes by having a sexual and violent relationship with the vampire, Spike.² The storyline of this relationship will be traced through the following episodes: "Smashed," marking the beginning of her sexual relationship with Spike; "Dead Things," where she reacts violently towards him when she mistakenly believes she has killed someone; "Seeing Red," featuring a scene where Buffy is sexually assaulted by Spike. Video clips of this storyline will be shown to small audience groups stratified by gender and age group. Discussions will then centre on the role of masculinity and femininity, particularly in relation to sexual behaviour, deviance and criminality. Results will be situated within the existing *BTVS* literature, as well as gender and criminology studies.

¹ See, for example, Buttsworth, 2002 "Buffy and the penetration of the gendered warrior"; Early, 2003 "The female just warrior reimagined"; Jowett, 2005 "Sex and the Slayer"; Symonds, 2004 "Female empowerment, sex and violence."

² The 'dark' nature of seasons six and seven is documented in the edited volume by Edwards, Rambo and South, 2009 'Buffy Goes Dark.'