

Elizabeth Gilliland: Not Much with the Damseling: Gothic Heroes, Heroines, Subversions, and Shadows in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*

Much has been written, by both academics and fans, in discussion of Buffy Summers' love life, particularly in regards to her three main love interests on the series: Angel, Riley, and Spike. Some intriguing work has already been done by Whedon scholars looking at some of these romantic heroes as shadows or doubles of Buffy herself, including Stacey Abbott; J. Michael Richardson and J. Douglas Rabb; Rhonda Wilcox; and Delores Nurss. Building off that research, this paper expounds on those ideas by addressing Angel, Riley, and Spike not only as shadow figures of Buffy, but also as subversions of traditional literary Gothic figures (Angel/Angelus as Jekyll/Hyde; Riley as Frankenstein's monster; and Spike as a Byronic hero). Focusing on the combination of these two elements in Buffy's romantic counterparts indicates not only how her character is both shaped and revealed in relation to them, but also points to what each lover and his ties to a classic Gothic narrative can tell us about Buffy's fears and anxieties in facing her role as the Slayer, and in becoming a woman. This paper argues that Buffy's romantic partner at any given stage of the series acts as a physical manifestation of these Gothic fears, and thus become tied to the personal obstacles that must be overcome in order for her to ultimately transition into adulthood.