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Character Formation in Fan Fiction Based on  
Popular TV Series

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## 1. Introduction

To write is to produce the text; to read is to receive it from someone else without putting one's own mark on it, without remarking it. In that regard, the reading of the catechism or of the Scriptures that the clergy used to recommend to girls and mothers, by forbidding these Vestals of an untouchable sacred text to write continues today in the "reading" of the television programs offered to "consumers" who cannot trace their own writing on the screen where the production of the Other – of "culture" - appears. (de Certeau, 169)

Michel de Certeau's clear distinction between what he perceives to be two separate practices, namely writing and reading, gets blurred when applied to fannish practices. One fannish practice in particular challenges de Certeau's theory: the writing of fan fiction. This powerful fannish tool reflects both the fans' fascination with a particular source text as well as their frustration with it because it cannot fulfil all their needs.<sup>1</sup> In many cases, this combination leads fans to attempt to remedy perceived flaws of their favourite source text by literally rewriting it. Most often, this does not take place in private, but is shared with other likeminded fans via the internet. Thus, this fan practice cannot be dismissed as an ineffectual attempt of some frustrated fans to shape the object of their adoration according to their liking. On the contrary, the internet allows fan fiction to reach large communities of people who share the same interests. Commonly, it influences the way a fan community understands the source text. Therefore, fan fiction clearly annihilates the clear-cut distinction between writing and reading, production and consumption. It has to be acknowledged that fans do not aim to simply reproduce a given source text. As this fan practice does not only reflect fannish adoration, but to a large extent also fannish frustration, it actually aims to interpret, appropriate and reconstruct the source text.<sup>2</sup> Therefore, fan fiction is not just a copy of something else, but a distinct artistic product that is merely based on a particular source text.

It is the aim of this study to examine how fan fiction writers incorporate the source text into their stories. More precisely, it is concerned with the way members of media fandom manipulate characters of two contemporary television shows – *Buffy the Vampire Slayer (BtVS)* and *Veronica Mars (VM)* – to suit the purposes of heterosexual romantic fan fiction. The first part of this study will take a closer look at

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. Jenkins, *Poachers*, 162.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Jenkins, *Poachers*, 162.

media fandom in general, and at *BtVS* and *VM* fandom in particular. Assuming that it is not so much the shows themselves that capture the audience's interest and ensure fan fascination, but actually the characters and their relationships, the first part will also examine these two factors more closely. The second part of this survey will then concentrate on the close analysis of actual fan fiction stories. Deborah Kaplan claims that fan fiction is predominantly treated as a sociological, but not as a literary form.<sup>3</sup> In contrast to that, this study is interested in the literary content of fan fiction. Accordingly, the second part of this study will examine the content of romantic *BtVS* and *VM* fan fiction of varying length, in order to discover how characters that are based on a canonical source text are constructed in fan fiction. Distinct character formation strategies applied in *BtVS* and *VM* fan fiction shall be identified and analysed. Thus, it is the aim of this study to create a typology that explains character formation processes in romantic fan fiction based on episodic television series. A similar classification scheme does not yet exist. Nevertheless, the theoretical framework constructed to facilitate a close analysis of distinct fannish character formation processes necessarily coincides with other methodologies of adjacent fields of literary and cultural studies.

A study that is concerned with fan fiction stories that deal with the romantic heterosexual relationship of two characters is inevitably also concerned with female fan communities. Fan fiction in general, and relationship centred fan fiction in particular, are predominantly written and read by women.<sup>4</sup> Thus, this study does not only aim to show that female consumers have indeed found a way to influence their favourite television shows – and, thus, to somehow “trace their own writing on the screen” –; but it is particularly concerned with how they do so.

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<sup>3</sup> Cf. Kaplan, 134.

<sup>4</sup> Cf. Bury, 2-3.

## **2. The Shows, the Characters and Their Fans**

### **2.1. The Shows, the Fans, the Fiction**

#### 2.1.1. The Shows

In recent years, few shows have caused a fan upheaval similar to that created by *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) and *Veronica Mars* (2004-2007). What makes this development particularly remarkable is the fact that both shows managed to create loyal, strong, and very active fan bases, despite their chronically rather low viewer ratings. These faithful fans, which remain actively devoted to their favourite shows even after their cancellation, have founded the cult status that is now assigned to both programmes. This is not the only thing these formats have in common. The resemblances are numerous and frequently pointed out.

First aired in the year 1997 on the public network the WB, Joss Whedon's creation *Buffy the Vampire Slayer (BtVS)*, which was produced by his company *Mutant Enemy*, was actually based on a Hollywood movie of the same name from 1992, that was also created by Whedon. A few years later, he was asked to turn his concept of a young girl, who is chosen to protect humankind from vampires, into a TV show. Although, the show was not very successful in the beginning, it steadily gained fans. When it moved to UPN in 2001, it was one of the WB's most successful programmes. However, the show's ratings always remained lower than those of successful broadcasts on other networks. After seven seasons and 144 episodes with an approximate length of 45 minutes each, Buffy actress Sarah Michelle Gellar decided to leave the show in the year 2003. Her departure marked the definite end of the series. Even though *BtVS* is no longer aired, the canon is continued in a different form, namely through the comic book series *Buffy season eight*, which has been produced since March 2007 by Joss Whedon.<sup>5</sup> Moreover, there are countless academic, as well as fannish publications that keep the show alive.

With three seasons and 64 episodes with an approximate length of 45 minutes, the lifespan of Rob Thomas' show *Veronica Mars* was considerably shorter than that of

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<sup>5</sup> See *Wikipedia* s.v. 'Buffy the Vampire Slayer (TV series)'.

Whedon's more successful *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*.<sup>6</sup> It premiered in 2004 on the public network UPN and although, the show constantly received high praise from critics, viewer ratings were low from the beginning. Only the support from renowned critics, and a very loyal and vocal fan base, helped the format to survive the first season. The viewer ratings of the show about a teenage girl, who works as a detective, did not improve much during the second season. Still, when UPN and the WB merged to form the new network the CW in the fall of 2006, the show was picked up for another season. It now aired on Tuesdays right after *Gilmore Girls*. The network officials hoped that this would push viewer ratings, as *Gilmore Girls* was a very well established show with a similar audience. When this tactic did not succeed, *Veronica Mars* was cancelled in 2007 after three seasons. However, Thomas is continually hinting that the series may not be dead for good. He is not only thinking about a *Veronica Mars* movie, but also considers a comic book series in the style of *Buffy season eight*.<sup>7</sup>

The content of *Veronica Mars*, which is basically quite similar to that of *Buffy*, and other parallels to the antecedent show, practically invite comparison. The fact that *VM* appeared shortly after the cancellation of *BtVS*, consolidated *Veronica's* status as *Buffy's* successor even more. Many *Buffy* fans recognised the resemblance between the tiny blonde detective and the tiny blonde slayer and, thus, embraced the new format as a means to fill the void left by *Buffy's* departure. Indeed, the perceived similarities between the shows are pretty valid: A petite blond girl has to fight against vampires and other monsters and saves those around her from torture and death. A petite blond girl investigates criminal cases and saves those around her from injustice, deception, and possible death. Of course, this description of the shows is very superficial, ignoring the complex universes surrounding both formats. Nevertheless, it clearly shows that the basic concepts of *VM* and *BtVS* are noticeably similar. Thus, it is no wonder that many *Buffy* fans should feel drawn to the other programme, avidly trying to find correspondences between their favourite shows.

The way the series' officials deal with this development makes clear that the fans' comparison of the shows is not only welcome, but quite actively encouraged. Rob Thomas himself acknowledges that there are resemblances between the series that

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<sup>6</sup> See *The Internet Movie Database* "Veronica Mars".

<sup>7</sup> See *Wikipedia* s.v. "Veronica Mars".



invite comparison. Although, he stresses that he has never really watched *Buffy*, and that *Veronica Mars* was definitely not deliberately designed to resemble that show, he confirms that he is not averse to possible comparisons. “I would catch an episode here and an episode there. But I knew, certainly, going into this that it would be the show that we would be compared to most, and it was a comparison that I welcomed.” (Havrilesky, “The man behind Veronica”) The actions taken by the producers of *Veronica Mars* suggest, however, that the similarities to *BtVS* are not quite as accidental as Thomas likes to pretend. Not only were the former *Buffy* actors Alyson Hannigan (Willow) and Carisma Carpenter (Cordelia) hired to play minor roles in *Veronica Mars*, but even *Buffy* creator Joss Whedon made a guest appearance in the show. These cameo appearances served to actively emphasise the shows` close connection. Furthermore, Whedon continually praised the show in public. On *Whedonesque*, a website dedicated to Joss Whedon and his shows, he enthusiastically raved:

Best. Show. Ever. Seriously, I've never gotten more wrapped up in a show I wasn't making, and maybe even more than those. Crazy crisp dialogue. Incredibly tight plotting. [...] These guys know what they're doing on a level that intimidates me. It's the Harry Potter of shows. There. I said it. People should do whatever they can to check out this first season[.]  
(Whedon, “Post: Joss Luvs Veronica”)

This makes clear that any association between the shows is not merely inadvertent, but a clever and actively planned strategy to promote *Veronica Mars*. After all, it can never be bad for a new and relatively unknown show to be compared to such a well-established format.

Fact is that both shows were designed by relatively small networks to appeal to a particular niche market that – though rather small – would secure a consistent base of regular viewers: cult TV fandom. The fact that cult TV fans tend to be very loyal to their favourite show – commonly maintaining their commitment even after it has ended – naturally appeals to smaller TV networks, as it virtually guarantees steady viewer ratings. Matt Hills supports this assumption by stating that “[f]andom has begun to furnish a model of dedicated and loyal consumption which does, in point of fact, *appeal* to niche and non-terrestrial TV producers and schedulers operating within a fragmented multi-channel media environment.” (Hills, 36) Both networks that aired *Buffy* can count as niche networks. Warner Bros. and UPN were both

founded in 1995 by large business corporations (AOL Time Warner and Viacom-CBS respectively), and were considerably smaller than big networks like ABC or NBC.<sup>8</sup> Also the product of the merging of the two networks, the CW, is significantly smaller than the aforementioned bigger networks. At its highest the viewer numbers of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* amounted to 4.5 million viewers per episode. Compared to other shows at bigger networks like E.R. (*Emergency Room*) at NBC (22.5 million viewers) the viewer ratings of *Buffy* were rather low. However, for the WB and later UPN, the viewer numbers of this show were very impressive. Moreover, the series had a loyal fan community among a very important viewer group, namely young educated white viewers.<sup>9</sup> The situation was similar with *Veronica Mars*. Although, viewer ratings remained rather low throughout three seasons, the show managed to secure a loyal fan base among young white educated viewers and, therefore, appealed to a target market that was very important for UPN, and later the CW.<sup>10</sup> Their extremely loyal fan communities mark both shows as cult TV programmes. It has already been mentioned that cult TV fans are commonly very dedicated to their favourite show. Although, this dedication proves to be beneficial for the interests of TV broadcasters, it also poses a potential problem for them. Hills claims that fannish devotion to a particular show does actually not agree with the unstable nature of the TV industry. He argues that “[t]he fans’ emotional investment also results in (and is compounded through) an attention to detail and programme continuity which is often at odds with the producers’ need to tell new stories over the duration of a TV series”. (Hills, 28) Nevertheless, cult TV fans remain a very desirable target group that holds a considerable fan power and is therefore actively pursued by smaller networks.<sup>11</sup> Thus, the similarities between *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Veronica Mars* stem from the fact that they are both designed to attract the same niche market. Both shows were meant to inspire cult TV fandom; and both managed this task successfully.

For the most part, fans of the shows appreciate the similarities. However, there are also critical voices who demand that *Veronica Mars* should be respected for its own accomplishments, instead of simply being worshipped because of its resemblance to

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<sup>8</sup> Cf. Williamson, *The Lure*, 90.

<sup>9</sup> Cf. Williamson, *The Lure*, 90.

<sup>10</sup> See *Wikipedia* sv. ‘Veronica Mars’.

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Hills, 36-37.

*Buffy*. In a reaction to an article titled `*Veronica Mars: Better than Buffy` on Chicago Tribune Com Carrie wrote:*

I honestly get a little tired of the repeated comparisons of the two shows. Why can't VM just be recognized as awesome in its own right, instead of people trying to squish it into a "Buffy" mold [*sic!*]? Okay, they're both shows that feature blonde protagonists in high school, and they both have so-called cult followings. But they're completely different genres, and each is worthy of praise for what it is, not what it might possibly maybe sort of resemble if you look at it one particular way.

(Carrie, "Comment on '*Veronica Mars*': Better than '*Buffy*'?")

It is important to note that it unquestionably would be wrong to treat *Veronica Mars* simply as a copy of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*. Despite the many correspondences, both shows remain individual products that create different reactions among the audiences they attract. Accordingly, *Veronica Mars* did not just catch the attention of *Buffy* fans, but it appealed also to people who didn't like the other show because of its fantastic content.<sup>12</sup> Thus, *VM* is not simply a refuge for *Buffy* fans in desperate need of a new addiction. It is a separate broadcast with a separate fan base; a fan base that, again, invites comparisons to that of *BtVS*, as both are extraordinarily active and persistent.

### 2.1.2. The Fans

Fandom is a very complex concept. Its flexibility and the variety of shapes it can take make it hard to grasp. There are countless different fan cultures. When looking at a fannish product that is based on popular TV series – as it is the case with *BtVS* and *VM* fan fiction – one has to concentrate on a very particular form of fan-culture, namely media fandom. Henry Jenkins defines this particular fan culture as “an amorphous but still identifiable grouping of enthusiasts of film and television” (Jenkins, *Poachers*, 1) According to him:

This group is largely female, largely white, largely middle class, though it welcomes into its ranks many who would not fit this description. This subculture cuts across traditional geographic and generational boundaries and is defined through its particular styles of consumption and forms of cultural preference. (Jenkins, *Poachers*, 1)

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<sup>12</sup> Cf. Ryan, “‘*Veronica Mars*': Better than '*Buffy*'?”.

This group of predominantly white, middle class women takes already existing materials and appropriates them to fit their own needs. In the case of *BtVS* and *VM*, fans take the material provided by the series and work with it in a way that makes it meaningful to them. This does not necessarily mean to write fan fiction, but can involve all kinds of activities that are related to these TV shows. Accordingly, fans may discuss their favourite shows in online discussion threads, found or join online communities concerned with their favourite shows, characters, or character pairings, make photo galleries or fan videos (fanvids) featuring their favourites, or come together at fan conventions to meet actors and producers of the show, as well as to buy the latest fan articles. Thus, this kind of fandom can obviously take many forms.

Not every member of the fan community is involved to the same degree. There are many different levels and ways of engagement. However, no one lives entirely within this fan culture. Media fandom exists between mass- and everyday culture. The fact that it consists of women, who insist on making meaning from materials that others have considered insignificant, makes this form of culture an outsider culture.<sup>13</sup>

Fan culture in general is usually treated cautiously. The stereotypical conception of the fan as an emotionally instable person, who is unable to deal with reality and instead devotes all of their time to things that are commonly considered to be unimportant and useless, forces fans into the defensive position of the Other, and bans fandom to the margins of society.<sup>14</sup> This prejudiced stance towards fandom is taken one step further when it comes to female fandom. Even within online fan communities, female fans are marginalised. Rhiannon Bury argues that, although, computer mediated communication (CMC) was originally meant to avoid discrimination based on physical markers, the reality is different.<sup>15</sup> Very often, female internet users were recognised, ostracised, and even humiliated by male users because of their opinions and statements. For that reason female cyberspaces were formed. Bury identifies sites that are dedicated to particular characters and/or actors, as well as fan fiction sites – particularly those that are relationship-centred – as typically female cyberspaces.<sup>16</sup> These cyberspaces enable women to talk about the

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<sup>13</sup> Cf. Jenkins, *Poachers*, 2-3.

<sup>14</sup> Compare Jenkins' description of the stereotypical perception of fan culture, 17-19.

<sup>15</sup> Cf. Bury, 3.

<sup>16</sup> Compare Bury's conception of female cyberspaces, 2-3.

topics they like in the way they like. But as already mentioned, these female cyberspaces, and female fans in general, are frequently put at the fringes of fannish society. Fangirl is a particularly derogatory term for female fans who openly admire male stars.<sup>17</sup> It implies that female fans generally harbour an improper sexual desire for their favourite characters and/ or actors, and suggests that all female fandom is actually driven by childish longing. However, recent developments show that female fans have appropriated this term to suit their own purposes. Many refer to themselves as fangirl. Their definition of this term diverges from the popular description of the obsessed and frequently hysteric female, who is madly in love with a fictional character or an actual movie star, and who has lost any touch to reality. In contrast, they define a fangirl as a woman, who openly expresses her appreciation for a male fictional character and/or a male celebrity, but who is fully aware that her adoration is just that, and will never lead to something more. These attempts to redefine an initially derogatory expression show how female fans fight to uphold their right to engage in fannish activities without having to endure ridicule and humiliation. It becomes clear though that even within the marginalised fan culture there is always someone, who is regarded to be more extreme or peculiar, and is then marginalised and put in the position of the Other.

Milly Williamson shows that confrontations between fans are not restricted to matters of different sexuality or different fandoms. Taking the official Anne Rice's Vampire Lestat Fan Club (ARVLFC) as an example, she demonstrates that hostility does also commonly occur between fans of the same fandom. Distinguishing between official fans (those who are members of officially recognised fan clubs) and ordinary fans, she shows that fandoms have hierarchies, and that these hierarchies commonly lead to considerable struggles between the members of a fandom.<sup>18</sup> Using Anne Rice fans to exemplify her claims, she shows that both the official and the ordinary fans make a point to draw distinctions between their own fannish practices and beliefs and those of the other party. The collection of items connected to Anne Rice and the characters of her books and films, turns out to be considered a very important mark of distinction between official and ordinary fans. Members of the

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<sup>17</sup> Cf. Bury, 37.

<sup>18</sup> For more detailed information on Williamson's concept of fan hierarchies and the resulting problems within fandoms see Williamson, *The Lure*, Chapter 6, 119-141.

official fan club commonly tried to distinguish themselves from the ordinary fans by stressing that they only collected items of economic value, while the other fans collected just about anything. Most ordinary fans, on the other hand, stated that they thought the artistic value of an item to be more important than its economic worth.<sup>19</sup> Thus, Williamson concludes that “[t]he collecting habits of the unofficial fans seem to be more in-line with the autonomous values of cultural production”. (Williamson, 124)

This issue corresponds to Matt Hills’ theory on the status of economic consumption in fannish societies. Hills shows that there exists “an expressed hostility within cult fandoms towards commercialisation and commodification” (Hills, 28), which leads fans to make a distinction between ‘good’ fans and ‘bad’ consumers.<sup>20</sup> This distinction is based on the assumption that devoted fandom is incompatible with economic matters. However, Hills claims that it is impossible to separate the imagined subjectivities of the fan and the consumer, as fandom always also involves consumption.<sup>21</sup> Applying this model to the collecting habits of the official and ordinary fans of Williamson’s study shows, how consumption habits are used to justify distinct fannish subject positions. By stressing their own exclusive taste concerning the collection of fan memorabilia in contrast to the unrefined collecting habits of the ordinary fans, the members of the official fan club tried to stress that in the light of the immaturity of their opponents, their sophistication justified their higher status in Anne Rice fandom. In contrast to that, the ordinary fans – in accord with Hills’ distinction between ‘good’ fans and ‘bad’ consumers – claimed that their lack of interest in the economic worth of fan items marked them as ‘true’ fans, as it showed that they were interested in the subject of their fandom and not in their own economical enrichment. Both parties tried to use the subject of consumption habits to assert their claims. This shows that economic consumption, and how to incorporate it into ‘good’ fannish practices, is an important issue within fandom. It also serves to stress the fact that the diversity of fannish societies does not only lead to hostilities among members of different fandoms, but frequently also among the members of the same fandom. Thus, the amorphous and varied nature of fandom makes it impossible to treat its members as one uniform group of people.

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<sup>19</sup> Cf. Williamson, *The Lure*, 124-127.

<sup>20</sup> Cf. Hills, 27.

<sup>21</sup> Compare Hills’ concept of consumption in cult fandom in Hills, Chapter 1, 27-45.

Analogous to the changeability of media fandom, *VM* and *BtVS* fandom is very diverse and copious. Sites and communities are dedicated to the shows in general or particular characters, pairings, and/or actors depicting them. Fanvids, picture galleries, fan fictions, discussion threads, and fan conventions cover virtually any possible aspect of these broadcasts. One factor that promotes this enormous degree of fan activity is that it is explicitly encouraged, and even actively promoted by the creators and producers of the shows. In contrast to many other series, where fan involvement is barely tolerated, Joss Whedon and Rob Thomas actively seek the contact to the fans and cleverly use it to their own advantage. This active involvement of the series' creators in fan activities is yet another aspect that marks the two shows as cult TV programmes. Matt Hills claims that it is typical for cult TV formats to possess an identifiable author figure, which he calls *auteur*. This *auteur* comes in the form of an "Executive Producer-Creator-Writer figure" (Hills, 132), who signs responsible for the program, and whose name is inextricably linked with the show.<sup>22</sup> Both Joss Whedon and Rob Thomas fulfil these requirements and, thus, play the part of the *auteur*. They act as mediators between the media world of the series and the media fandom of the fans. This causes them to occupy a hybrid position, because they "are both the producers of fans' preferred cultural products and objects of fandom themselves". (Williamson, 132) That the *auteur's* close contact to the fans does not only serve to assert their strong involvement with the show, but actually influences the development of the fandom, becomes apparent when taking a closer look at Joss Whedon's involvement in the affairs of the *Buffy* posting board *The Bronze*. It was created as a forum for *Buffy* fans, where they could meet and discuss the onscreen and offscreen developments of their favourite show. What made this posting board special from the beginning, was the fact that Joss Whedon did not only acknowledge its existence, but became an active member of the community. Along with writers and actors of the show, he used this format to stay in contact with the fans.<sup>23</sup> This contact was deepened when the first Posting Board Party that was meant as an informal meeting between fans, actors, and series officials, was held in 1998. However, what was supposed to be an opportunity to bring the media world and the media fandom together, actually served to divide the fan community, as the members who attended the party used this experience as a

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<sup>22</sup> Cf. Hills, 132-133.

<sup>23</sup> Cf. Zweerink, Gatson, 247.

means to justify their higher status within the community.<sup>24</sup> Similar to the developments in Anne Rice fandom mentioned above, fans divided into two groups, namely those who actually met Joss Whedon and the cast, and those who did not. The former soon took over leading roles in the organisation of the website, as well as in the planning of the next Posting Board Party, whereas the latter felt themselves to be excluded and increasingly pushed to the margins of this fannish society. Thus, the close connection of this community to the series creator and other officials caused it to split.<sup>25</sup> However, although Joss Whedon's involvement did cause the fan community's crisis, it also enabled it to survive. The fact that *The Bronze* was the only website Whedon actually used, made it the exclusive place to get into contact with the makers and actors of the show.<sup>26</sup> Therefore, this online community continued to exist despite its problems. Nowadays, another website rivals *The Bronze's* status as the only place to get into contact with Joss Whedon. The online discussion board *Whedonesque.com*, which has already been mentioned above, was founded in 2002. In contrast to *The Bronze*, it is not dedicated to one of Whedon's shows, but to him and his works in general. Thus, the focus of this fannish community lies not so much on the product but on the *auteur* himself. Much like at *The Bronze*, Whedon and many of his writers and actors actively participate in the activities of this posting board. Therefore, *The Bronze* seems to have lost the exclusive status of Whedon's preferred website. Yet, the case of this online community shows that an involvement of the *auteur* in fannish affairs does not necessarily have positive effects on the fandom concerned. Still, Whedon's close contact to the fans proved to be beneficial for both sides: it enabled the fans to get in contact with the actors and the crew of their favourite show, and it enabled Whedon to reinforce the fans' commitment to his product.

Like Joss Whedon, also *Veronica Mars* creator Rob Thomas maintains the contact to the fans via the internet to secure their dedication to the show. He in particular, knows the power of the *Veronica Mars* fans, as their extraordinary commitment to the show, and their willingness to take active measures to save it, managed to keep the format alive for three seasons. He tries to mobilise this fan power by staying in

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<sup>24</sup> Cf. Zweerink, Gatson, 242-243.

<sup>25</sup> For more detailed information on Joss Whedon's relationship to *The Bronze* see Zweerink, Gatson, *www.buffy.com – Cliques, Boundaries, and Hierarchies in an Internet Community*.

<sup>26</sup> Cf. Zweerink, Gatson, 247.



touch with them. In a letter to the members of *Neptune Rising*, a community of *Veronica Mars* fans, who fight for a *Veronica Mars* movie, Thomas writes:

I know there are many who would like to know the specifics on when and if I'll be able to continue the VM story. I'm afraid I don't have a definitive answer other than to say I want to do it. Unfortunately right now, I need to pay the bills, and I'd have to write the movie on spec. It's difficult to consult on a show, develop new pilots and knock out comic books and/or a feature script. I'm grateful that there are fans anxious for it, and I remain motivated.  
(Thomas, "Letter")

Obviously, Thomas does not only aim to reassure the fans, but obliquely encourages them to keep going. The reactions to this letter were very positive, as most community members fervently vowed to fight for a *VM* movie.

Thus, the female fans are not just silly girls, whose mad crush on some male character or star borders on obsession, but they are actually a considerable force that can - to some extent - influence the television landscape. However, this fan power is not always used in favour of the shows. It has already been established that fans are not just passive recipients who mindlessly worship their favourite broadcasts. They are willing and able to openly express their disapproval with any given aspect of a program. They even go so far as to attempt to remedy perceived flaws. The most prevalent method to do so is fan fiction. The following part will take a closer look at this popular fan activity.

### 2.1.3. The Fiction

Henry Jenkins argues that the fans' commitment is shaped by a combination of fascination and frustration. Their fascination with a certain medium makes it impossible for them to dismiss it, and forces them to find ways to deal with the frustration they feel when their favourite show fails to satisfy them.<sup>27</sup> This makes clear that fans do not passively accept what they are given, but they actively make meaning from the texts they receive. Michel de Certeau refers to this phenomenon as "poaching". He argues that readers do not simply accept the writer's intended meaning, but shape the meaning of texts after their own liking. He compares readers to travellers: "they move across lands belonging to someone else, like nomads poaching their way across fields they did not write[.]". (de Certeau, 174) Henry

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<sup>27</sup> Cf. Jenkins, *Poachers*, 23.

Jenkins adopts de Certeau's concept and calls fans "Textual Poachers". But in contrast to Michel de Certeau, who keeps up a sharp distinction between readers and writers by stating that the meaning readers produce is short-lived, as it is not recorded anywhere; Jenkins assumes that the meaning made by fans is not fleeting and inconsequential, but actually quite powerful and significant.<sup>28</sup> As most fannish activity takes place in a larger community, interpretations are shared among the community members and, thus, influence the way they perceive the source text. Moreover, this strict distinction is further destroyed, as fans actively produce their own series-related products.<sup>29</sup>

One of the most popular fannish produced goods that mirrors the fascination as well as the frustration fans experience with their favourite media, is fan fiction. Sheenagh Pugh identifies two motivation factors for fans to write fan fiction: they either write because they want `more of`, or `more from` the source material.<sup>30</sup> Thus, they either write because they feel there is not enough of the source text, or because they are not happy with it. This makes clear that fan fiction does not only serve to express appreciation of the source text, but also to alleviate frustrations. A large part of fan fiction is written because the writers are unhappy with the canon, or want to explore certain aspects of it that they feel are not satisfactorily elaborated. If everything played out the way fans wanted it to be, there would be no need for fan fiction. Therefore, it is beneficial to this genre if the canon does not spell everything out, but leaves space for fannish interpretation and debate.<sup>31</sup> Such gaps are necessary for fan fiction.

Jenkins claims that fans frequently emphasise the subliminal romantic elements of the source text.<sup>32</sup> Because of that, it is no wonder that a large part of fan fiction is concerned with the romantic relationships between characters. In this sense, *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Veronica Mars* provide the ideal conditions for fan fictions dealing with the relationships between Spike and Buffy (*Spuffy*), and Logan and Veronica (*LoVe*). Stories dealing with these particular ships – a term used in fan communities to refer to the romantic involvement of two particular characters – are

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<sup>28</sup> Cf. De Certeau, 174.

<sup>29</sup> Cf. Jenkins, *Poachers*, 45.

<sup>30</sup> Cf. Pugh, 19.

<sup>31</sup> Cf. Pugh, 41.

<sup>32</sup> Cf. Jenkins, *Poachers*, 135.

promoted by the canonical treatment of these pairings. Both shows bring these characters together in, more or less, romantic relationships, but in both cases these couples eventually break up. The fans are denied to experience a happy ending and, therefore, are practically forced to create it themselves. The complicated and, for fans, mostly frustrating relationship between these characters is the reason why stories dealing with *Spuffy* and *LoVe* pairings are by far more popular than stories based on any other possible ship. Thus, when it comes to the romantic relationships of their protagonists, *BtVS* and *VM* leave plenty of gaps for authors to explore.

However, fan fiction authors have to be very careful how to fill these gaps. It is not possible for them to simply change canonical characters or events in any way they like. Modifications of canonical circumstances have to be as realistic and comprehensible as possible. Here, two terms, which play a major role in fan fiction, become relevant: canon and fanon. These concepts are closely linked. However, it is not entirely clear how the relationship between them should be defined. The notion of canon is quite clear-cut: canon includes all characters and events that have been established by the source text. Thus, canon provides the basis for fannish activities. It names a common ground for the fan community.<sup>33</sup> It gets more difficult when it comes to the concept of fanon. Sheenagh Pugh defines the term as following:

Now and again, a fanfic writer's addition to canon seems so apposite to other writers in that fanfic universe that it becomes "fanon" – i.e. although it was never part of the canon it is generally accepted and used by other writers. [...] The logical end of this process is entire fanfic "universes" spinning off the source canon and it frequently happens. (Pugh, 41)

According to this definition, every new invention of fan fiction authors influences the way a fan community views and interprets the source text, and, therefore, adds to a larger "universe" surrounding the canonical source material. Because of that, every new addition to this "universe" is part of the fanon. Deborah Kaplan supports this theory by stating that "*fanon*, the noncanonical knowledge about a source text, is the sum of the community's shared interpretive acts". (Kaplan, 136)

A slightly different view of fanon is promoted by Catherine Driscoll. Her approach looks at fanon in terms of realism and fantasy. Thus, fanon is seen as fantastic

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<sup>33</sup> Cf. Driscoll, 88.

deviation of the reality of the source text, which is based on the needs and desires of an individual writer. Consequently, fanon inspires rather negative associations. It is not only linked once again to immature women who harbour a silly crush on a certain character and/or celebrity, but it is also associated with inferior writing styles.<sup>34</sup> From this perspective, fanon is no longer simply an addition to canon, but a negative outcome of fannish interpretation and fan fiction. However, fanon is acceptable as long as it stays as realistic – meaning as close to the source text – as possible. Thus, the production and consumption of fan fiction ideally happens at the “intersection of realism and fantasy”. (Driscoll, 88)

To summarise, fan fiction is a tool that allows fans to dip even deeper into the world of their chosen medium. It enables them to expand their favourite universes, and to do it in a way that corresponds to their wishes. But the possibilities of the fan as textual poacher are not as unlimited as it first seems. In fact, fanfic writers have to stick to certain rules that ensure the fan community’s approval of their work. Accordingly, deliberate, incomprehensible changes of the source material are not approved of, and viewed as immature and inferior pieces of fanon. Fanon is only acceptable as long as it is sensible, and as faithful to the canonical conditions as possible. It becomes clear that in fan fiction really everything is allowed on condition that it stays convincing.

## **2.2. Breakout Characters: Spike and Logan**

### 2.2.1. The Development of the Term

Spike came in and I started getting fan mail and everything. Everybody was pleased. And Joss took me aside and said: “Dude, this is not the “Spike-Show”. It’s not gonna be the “Spike-Show”. You are here because we don’t want to have to kill off a villain every single episode, so it doesn’t become *Scooby Doo*. (James Marsters Interview. *Best Of Buffy Collection 4: Spike*, 00:02:30 – 00:02:49)

*Buffy the Vampire Slayer* never became “The Spike-Show”, but it definitely was tremendously influenced by this character, which originally was only planned to last for a few episodes. Spike’s development from a minor character to one of the most

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<sup>34</sup> See Driscoll’s concept of fanon, 88-90.

important and adored members of the whole cast exemplifies what defines a breakout character.

The term breakout character was coined fairly recently. The online encyclopaedia *Wikipedia* defines the concept as following:

A breakout character is a fictional character in different episodes, books or other media (TV, comics, literature, games etc) that evolves from a minor role to a major role, sometimes becoming the main character of the show. In television programs, movies and other episodic media, a character that becomes the most popular, talked about, and imitated is a breakout character. Most often a breakout character in a series captures audience's imagination and popularizes it, sometimes inadvertently. Breakout characters are known to come from intended single appearances. (*Wikipedia* s.v. `Breakout Character`)

It is important to note that this definition is accompanied by an explicit warning concerning the veracity of the statement. Users are warned that this entry may contain “unverified claims” as well as “poor or irrelevant examples”.<sup>35</sup> Thus, in order to get a broader and more reliable view of this concept, and to back up the claims made by *Wikipedia*, it is necessary to turn to the source of its development, namely to online communities.

When researching “breakout character” on the internet, it quickly becomes apparent that the term, although it is increasingly used, is far from common knowledge. Thus, it is a common feat to introduce the term before starting a discussion about it. Accordingly, the *SitcomsOnline* Discussion Thread on breakout characters was started with an explanation of the term: “Many shows seem to develop supporting characters that become so popular that the show's plots gradually change to give the “break-out character” more to do.” (“Break-out characters”, *SitcomsOnline*) A similar discussion thread on the online role-playing community *City of Heroes* starts with the words: “A “breakout character” is a minor character, often meant to only be used once, who ends up growing into a major role. It can be an Alt that turned into your Main, or a RP character you made for one story who ended up being used everywhere.” (“Who’s Your Breakout Character? “, *City of Heroes*) The J.R.R. Tolkien online encyclopaedia *Tolkien Gateway* marks the *The Lord of the Rings* character Legolas as a breakout character: “Playing Legolas in the trilogy was

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<sup>35</sup> Cf. *Wikipedia* s.v. `Breakout Character`.

Orlando Bloom's breakout route to superstardom. His handsome features and Legolas' "coolness", so to speak, as depicted in the film, have led to the character becoming an unprecedented fan favorite with both fangirls and fanboys, not to mention other Tolkien fans." (*Tolkien Gateway* s.v. `Legolas`) Thus, Peter Jackson's movie adaptation has not only made the secondary character Legolas a breakout character, but also the actor who portrayed him.

The message of all three descriptions is basically the same and conforms to the definition supplied by *Wikipedia*. Hence, a breakout character typically starts out being rather unimportant and disposable, but develops into a leading character for various reasons. Furthermore, these entries verify that the term is used in various areas of popular culture – ranging from TV, to literature, comics and video games – which proves that the claims of the *Wikipedia* entry are quite accurate. What is even more important is that it seems to be accepted among users. On 9 Nov. 2007 a discussion thread concerning the top ten breakout characters was started on *The List Universe Forums*. Unlike the previous examples, this thread did not start with a description of the term but jumped directly to the matter at hand. However, the reaction of another user, who apparently had never heard of the term, prompted Brian Moo, who started the thread, to post an explanation:

According to the Wiki: "A breakout character is a fictional character in different episodes, books or other media (TV, comics, literature, games etc) that evolves from a minor role to a major role, sometimes becoming the main character of the show. In television programs, movies and other episodic media, a character that becomes the most popular, talked about, and imitated is a breakout character. Most often a breakout character in a series captures audience's imagination and popularizes it, sometimes inadvertently. Breakout characters are known to come from intended single appearances.[“] (“Top 10 Breakout Characters?”, *The List Universe Forums*)

The *Wikipedia* definition of breakout character, then, is not only accurate, but also accepted among fans. Therefore, all further mentions of this term in the course of this thesis will be based on the definition provided by this online encyclopaedia.

It may be tricky to work with a concept that is still so novel and seemingly unexplored; it is necessary, however, when dealing with *VM*- and *BtVS* fan fiction concerned with the characters Logan and Spike. Both can be classified as breakout characters. Moreover, this status is commonly acknowledged and reinforced by their

fans. *Bestuff*, a site which invites its members to vote on the best of pretty much anything, “whether it be a song that inspires you, your favourite little Indian restaurant, or the best explication of Kantian aesthetics” (“About Us”, *Bestuff*) also hosts a voting for the best breakout character. Both Spike and Logan are included in the list of possible choices. Logan’s nomination is justified by the statement: “He’s on basically everyone’s shaglist. Played by Jason Dohring in “Veronica Mars”. Originally intended to be the antagonist to Kristen Bell’s Veronica, the character’s popularity grew, and by season 3, Dohring was promoted to leading male.” (“Logan Echolls”, *Bestuff*) Correspondingly, Spike is recommended as best breakout character with the words:

Spike (aka William “The Bloody”) is a character created by Joss Whedon for the cult TV series “Buffy the Vampire Slayer” and Angel. Portrayed by James Marsters, he is considered a breakout character. Spike evolved from villain – to comic relief – to hero – lover of the titular character, Buffy – and coming to parallel Angel in terms of motivation. He became one of the show’s primary focuses in its final season, and then moved to its spin-off Angel. He appeared on the Angel season 5 DVD covers alongside its titular character. (“Spike”, *Bestuff*)

This description bears a remarkable resemblance to an entry in *Wikipedia* that also named Spike as a breakout character.<sup>36</sup>

This shows that these two characters do not only formally fit the description of a breakout character, but are also actively acknowledged as such by their fans.

### 2.2.2. “Who do you kill for fun around here”- Spike

It has already been established that the two series have quite some things in common. Thus, it is not really surprising that also the development of the two male breakout characters the shows have produced should be remarkably similar. Although, one is a bloodsucking vampire, and the other is a conceited rich kid, these two characters have a lot in common.

First appearing in the season two episode “School Hard”, Spike, or William the Bloody, was originally meant to serve as a disposable villain.<sup>37</sup> Even in his very first episode, the vampire with the striking resemblance to Billy Idol attempts – and

<sup>36</sup> Compare the character description of Spike at <[http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Breakout\\_character](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Breakout_character)>.

<sup>37</sup> For more detailed information see episode 2.3 “School Hard”.

nearly succeeds – to kill the slayer. Even though Spike was portrayed as a dangerous enemy for Buffy, he and his vampire girlfriend Drusilla were designed to be killed off by the slayer and her friends. However, when it became apparent that Spike was very popular with the fans of the show, Joss Whedon decided to refrain from killing him just yet, and merely injured him instead.<sup>38</sup> In her book *The Lure of the Vampire*, Milly Williamson takes a closer look at Spike’s ascend from a disposable secondary character to one of the main stars of the show. She describes this development as following: “Joss Whedon, who is a well-known ‘lurker’ in *Buffy* Internet newsgroups, was surprised by the fan response to Spike, but he responded to it by developing Spike’s character and story arc in line with the more complex ‘vampire star’ that engages fans”. (Williamson, 75) The character’s change into a “vampire star” does not become apparent immediately, as the rest of the season sees Spike quite amusingly bidding his time in a wheelchair. Only the final two episodes of season two hint at an upgrading of his status: without help, Spike manages to regain his strength and decides to help his archenemy to stop the world from being sucked into hell. His explanation for his very “un-evil” decision is actually quite reasonable:

We like to talk big. (indicates himself) Vampires do. 'I'm going to destroy the world.' (looks at the officer) That's just tough guy talk. (steps over to the car) Strutting around with your friends over a pint of blood. (sits on the hood) The truth is, I like this world. (pulls the cigarette pack from the officer's shirt pocket) You've got... dog racing, Manchester United. (pulls one out and drops the pack on the officer) And you've got people. (exhales) Billions of people walking around like Happy Meals with legs. It's all right here. (lights the cigarette and takes a drag) But then someone comes along with a vision. With a real... (exhales) passion for destruction. (takes another drag and looks at Buffy) Angel could pull it off. Goodbye, Picadilly [*sic!*]. Farewell, Leicester Bloody Square. You know what I'm saying? (Transcript, episode 34 “Becoming Pt. II”)

This speech already hints at the character’s increasing complexity. Spike is slowly brought away from the picture of the thoroughly bad villain, and gains additional layers to his personality. This development is explored further from season four onwards, when the “Big Bad” becomes a regular cast member. He was intended to fill the void left by Angel and Cordelia, who left the show to star in the *BtVS* spin off *Angel*. Thus, Spike did not only have to fill the position of resident vampire, left vacant by Angel, but also had to provide the snarky antagonism of Cordelia, which

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<sup>38</sup> See *Wikipedia* s.v. ‘Spike (Buffyverse)’.



prevented the show from becoming too sleek and fluffy.<sup>39</sup> Actor James Marsters described the role of his character as following: “I was supposed to be the one who stood at the side and said “Buffy, you’re stupid and we’re all gonna die.” (James Marsters Interview, Buffy Season Four DVD: *Introducing Spike*, 00:03:41-00:03:47) In order to enable this character to fulfil this new role, the writers and producers had to alter his status from enemy to ally. This was achieved by implanting a computer chip in his head that makes it impossible for him to hurt humans. “Neutered” like this, the vampire is forced to seek shelter with the slayer and, eventually, to grudgingly help her to fight evil. The personality of this vampire, who takes up more and more space in the show, becomes even more complex when he develops an obsessive crush on Buffy in season five. This love for his enemy influences all further development of this character. Spike, whose ability to love always set him apart from other vampires, slowly reveals more and more features that mark him as different. Not only does his affinity for human food, soap operas, and poker games add a definite human side to this character, but flashbacks in various episodes throughout the series slowly reveal his past as a shy human gentleman in Victorian England, as well as his history as a vampire. At the end of season five, Spike is a far cry from the purely evil vampire that first entered the show. His violent love affair with the slayer, and its nearly fatal ending in season six, add another tragic layer to his personality. Season seven brings about yet another change, not only in his personality, but also in his relationship with Buffy. Disgusted with his attempted rape of the woman he loves, Spike goes to Africa to get his soul back. His re-ensouled status then enables him to reconnect with Buffy. A strong relationship based on mutual respect and trust that even hints at the possibility of a romantic relationship establishes at the end of season 7. The final episode, however, destroys this possibility, as Spike sacrifices himself to save the world.

True to the laws of the *BtVS* universe, where to die does not necessarily mean to be actually dead, Spike is resurrected for the final season of *Angel*, where he takes over a leading role as well. It was rumoured that series creator Joss Whedon had planned to grant the punk-vampire his well earned reunion with the slayer; however, problems with the contract of Sarah Michelle Gellar defeated this enterprise.<sup>40</sup>

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<sup>39</sup> See *Wikipedia* s.v. ‘Spike (Buffyverse)’.

<sup>40</sup> Cf. Höhl, 46.

Anyhow, the turbulent history of this character and his slow but steady development from minor villain to leading man, unquestionably make Spike a breakout character.

### 2.2.3. “Sometimes, I’m up all night, just thinking about myself” - Logan

Like Spike, Logan Echolls was originally planned to serve as a stereotypical villain, antagonising the show’s heroine Veronica Mars. Series creator Rob Thomas commented on this character:

It’s been repeated many times. Logan was never meant to be a Veronica love interest. I created him to be the antagonist – the “psychotic jackass” who would foster confrontation and keep Veronica in her place (which, certainly, was not the 09-er table).” (*Neptune Noir*, 170)

Which is exactly what he does during the first few episodes of *Veronica Mars*. As the son of two famous Hollywood stars, Logan is the unrivalled leader of the 09-ers, a group of rich kids, who live within the prestigious 09 zip code. The first episodes of the series firmly establish him as the heroine’s adversary. In the very first episode, Veronica introduces Logan with the words “And let’s not forget Logan Echolls. His dad makes twenty million a picture. You probably own his action figure. Every school has an obligatory psychotic jackass. He’s ours.”(Transcript, Episode 1 “Pilot”) Throughout the episodes that follow, Logan is shown to use every opportunity to hurt and humiliate Veronica. Nevertheless, fans of the show reacted enthusiastically to this character, because of his perceived chemistry with the heroine. Logan’s fixation on Veronica and the way he continually stares at her were easily interpreted as signs of his underlying feelings for his archenemy.<sup>41</sup> The producers reacted to this development by granting this character a larger and more diverse role. Similar to the tactics the *BtVS* writers employed to add layers to Spike’s character, flashbacks were employed to reveal new facets of Logan’s personality. Thus, it is revealed that Logan and Veronica actually have been close friends before the murder of Logan’s girlfriend Lilly Kane, who was also Veronica’s best friend. Feeling betrayed and helpless, Logan blames Veronica for all that has happened and uses his power as the most popular guy in school to ostracise Veronica, causing the sweet and naïve girl to turn into the tough fighter that is portrayed in the show. Insights into his family life further add to the complexity of this character. His father Aaron is shown to be a cruel adulterer who abuses his wife and son, while his mother

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<sup>41</sup> Cf. Hook, 172.

Lynn turns out to be an alcoholic and drug addict. This display of Logan's abuse and his frantic attempts to hide it put this character and his actions into a different perspective. The façade of the perfect family starts to disintegrate when Lynn Echolls commits suicide. This event also brings Veronica and Logan closer together. A tentative friendship starts that rapidly develops into a secret love relationship. Still, doubts, distrust, and their past prevent a real relationship, and eventually cause them to break up, when Aaron Echolls is revealed to be Lilly's murderer, and Logan is accused of having murdered another student. Season two, similarly to season one, starts out with the two protagonists being estranged and hostile towards each other. Logan reverts to the old destructive behaviour of the "psychotic jackass" Veronica makes him out to be. However, their re-established antagonistic relationship does not prevent Veronica to try and prove Logan's innocence in the murder. Like season one, season two shows how they slowly reconnect, until they come back together in the final episode. Season three, then, features a much matured Logan, who wants to use college as a new start, and is willing to work hard to make his relationship with Veronica work. However, her tendency to constantly bring herself into dangerous situations, and her unwillingness to trust him, put a strain to the relationship. Logan's behaviour turns into that of an overprotective boyfriend. The already tense relationship ends when it turns out that Logan has slept with an old enemy of Veronica. The series ends ambiguously with Logan and Veronica sharing a meaningful glance after Logan beats up a man, who humiliated Veronica.

Rob Thomas attempted to continue *Veronica Mars* for another season, in which he wanted to show the heroine's life a few years into the future. The cast list also included Jason Dohring, who portrayed Logan Echolls. However, the show's host network, the CW, did not pick it up for another season.<sup>42</sup>

#### 2.2.4. How to Become a Breakout Character

When taking a closer look at the history of these two characters, it becomes apparent that, although, factors like the talented play and the good looks of the actors surely cannot be disregarded, the chemistry they were perceived to share with the show's leading lady, seems to be one of the most important reasons for their elevation from minor villain to leading man. Thus, it can be deduced that the success of these male

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<sup>42</sup> See *Wikipedia* s.v. `Veronica Mars`.

characters - to a large part - is due to the relationships in which they featured. Hundreds of websites, threads, and fan fiction stories dedicated to these relationships, validate this claim. It seems that no matter how good and original a series is perceived to be; only an intriguing romantic constellation can hook the predominantly female fans irrevocably to the show. In her contribution to *Neptune Noir Unauthorized Investigations into Veronica Mars*, assistant psychology professor Misty Hook provides a very fitting account of her personal experience with this phenomenon:

I liked it. It was smart, funny, poignant, highly entertaining, and extremely well-acted. [...] I looked forward to it every week but I wasn't obsessed. I sometimes only just remembered that it was on. That wee bit of sanity about the show, however, remained only until The Kiss, which is what diehard shippers (as in those who favor specific relationships) call the first time Veronica and Logan Echolls locked lips. After that I was a goner. I bought the first season DVDs, joined fan forums, attended a fan event in Austin, read fanfiction about the couple, and eagerly scoured the Internet for all things *Veronica Mars*. (Hook, 171)

Obviously, a truly engaging romantic relationship has the power to not only improve the status of one character, but to improve the status of the whole show. As long as a romantic pairing is sufficiently intriguing – possessing the right amount of chemistry to keep the viewers' interest – it is not even necessary that the relationship is a happy one. It actually seems to be enough to keep up the possibility of a happy ending.

This phenomenon ties in with Martha Nochimson's concept of screen couple chemistry. According to her, screen chemistry is a very rare occurrence that generates a partnership between two onscreen characters "that [takes] on a life of its own, beyond the plans of the individual actors, the creative teams that made the movie, and even the studios that theoretically controlled all the materials and personnel concerned". (Nochimson, 1) Nochimson calls onscreen couples who possess this special kind of onscreen chemistry Synergistic Couples, claiming that the energy of such couples is so intense that it becomes a synergy between the two actors.<sup>43</sup> The author states that true Synergistic Couples become bigger than the medium they star in. The relationship becomes more important than the story, and it is therefore also the onscreen couple that fascinates the audience and creates loyal

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<sup>43</sup> Cf. Nochimson, 3.

fan communities, and not the film or series that features said couple.<sup>44</sup> It is also important to note that there is no narrative recipe for the creation of a Synergistic Couple, meaning that it is virtually impossible to deliberately create such a couple. The special energy of the Synergistic Couple is due to the chemistry between its members. It is unique to the two particular actors and cannot be artificially reproduced.<sup>45</sup> Applying Nochimson's concept to the two onscreen couples discussed above, it becomes apparent that both pairings fit the description of a Synergistic Couple. The partnership of both actor pairings unquestionably took on a life of its own, as both were initially never meant to become a couple. They were not deliberately created, but brought together by the tremendous chemistry they were perceived to share. Furthermore, it is plainly obvious that once they came together, both pairings became bigger than the shows they appeared in. As mentioned above, it is not the shows that fascinate the fans, but the romantic relationships they feature. Thus, the chemistry between two actors proves to be a very important factor in film making. However, Martha Nochimson concedes that it is very hard to put this phenomenon into theoretical terms:

Chemistry, though a central feature of the mass media concept of entertainment, lurks vaguely on the periphery of informed discussion. For good reasons. It is unquantifiable, a given rather than a constructed phenomenon, difficult to study – much like the challenge for physics of dealing with smoke and clouds. (Nochimson, 8)

Even though the concept of screen chemistry is very hard to define, it is still a very important factor that obviously does not only influence the development of certain characters and their story arcs, but is powerful enough to have an impact on the success of a certain movie or television show.

It is important to note, however, that the screen chemistry between two characters may be a significant factor, but it is not the only reason for an insignificant character to gain importance. In the case of Logan and Spike, another feature plays a vital role for their unexpected appeal to fans, namely their outsiderdom. Milly Williamson claims that the success-oriented nature of European and Anglo-American culture automatically produces outsiders, as it demands a level of personal success which

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<sup>44</sup> Cf. Nochimson, 4-5.

<sup>45</sup> Cf. Nochimson, 9.

many cannot achieve.<sup>46</sup> Their inability to fulfil the societal demands puts them at the margins of the community, and marks them as outsiders. Also Logan and Spike occupy the role of an outcast. What lets these characters stand out is the way their outsiderdom is depicted. Far from being pathetic or shameful, their outsiderdom is rather glamorous and appealing. As a vampire, Spike is forced to exist at the margins of society, but the romantic idea of vampires as dark and rebellious – doomed to lead their existence at night and struggling with this fate and their need to kill in order to live – constructs an alluring notion of vampiric outsiderdom. This idea of glamorous vampirism started with Byron and survived well into the present day, also aided by Anne Rice` popular depiction of the tormented but noble vampire.<sup>47</sup> Spike corresponds to this image, which automatically makes him a stock character, although, he himself tries to escape this stereotype. He refutes the romantic notion of vampirism by mocking: “People still fall for that Anne Rice routine. What a world!“. (Transcript, episode15 “School Hard”) However, Spike cannot escape the idea of the glamorous outcast that is strongly linked to the vampire. Furthermore, it is not only his status as a vampire that makes him an outsider. Throughout the series Spike is constantly rejected and ostracised. He is not only abandoned by his sire and the whole demonic community for helping the slayer, but also by the slayer herself as well as by her friends. Thus, the way this character is depicted deliberately links him to the romantic notion of the vampire as a fascinating but misunderstood outsider. Thus, Spike remains a stock character. Also Logan fits the description of the stereotypical glamorous outcast. Although, his status as the leader of the most popular group of students at school first suggests otherwise, it soon turns out that Logan is actually all alone. He has no real friends and cannot count on the protection of a loving family. Hence, he is forced to deal with his problems alone. However, both characters do not meekly accept their situation, but are shown to defiantly embrace it. By doing so, they offer an appealing way to deal with difference and to accept situations that are commonly deemed unacceptable by society.<sup>48</sup>

But *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and *Veronica Mars* do not only inspire the formation of fandom related to the series. The way the shows depict outsiderdom speaks to

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<sup>46</sup> Cf. Williamson, *Spike*, 294.

<sup>47</sup> Compare Williamson`s description of the history of the sympathetic vampire in *Spike, Sex and Subtext*, 293.

<sup>48</sup> Cf. Williamson, *The Lure*, 1.

members of fandom in general. The misconceptions and presumptions that are associated especially with media fandom definitely make this fan culture an outsider culture. Fans who are part of this movement can relate to the outsider status of these two characters. They know what it is like and feel sympathy towards them. Very often, this sympathy even leads to attempts to remedy the situation of these characters by means of fan fiction. Thus, the fact that Spike's and Logan's status as outsiders strikes a chord within many fans clearly is a considerable reason for their immense popularity.

It can be concluded that both the energy created by the onscreen couple, and the appealing outsiderdom depicted in both shows, add to the popularity of these two male breakout characters. The next chapter will take a closer look at the female members of these two Synergistic Couples, and at how they contribute to their onscreen chemistry.

### **2.3. Action Chicks – Buffy and Veronica**

#### 2.3.1. The New Tough Action Heroine

Recent years have seen the rise of a new kind of action hero. This new hero is tough, witty, and independent; not needing the help of others to survive.<sup>49</sup> This alone isn't all that new. In fact, this description neatly fits that of the average male action hero. As a matter of fact, this new kind of hero isn't different from the "normal" action hero, apart from the fact that this hero is actually female. Of course, this development isn't entirely new. Tough female heroes like Wonder Woman, Red Sonja, Emma Peel, or the girls from Charlie's Angels, have charmed and fascinated their audience for years.<sup>50</sup> However, it is a quite recent occurrence that the toughness of these women reaches a level that can be compared to that of the male action hero. Former action heroines might have been tough compared to other women, but they could never have competed with their male colleagues. Furthermore, their toughness never showed in their outward appearance. No matter how strong and dangerous they were, they always appeared like the picture of an attractive, beautiful, and sexually desirable woman.<sup>51</sup> This trend has only changed in recent years. The heroine's

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<sup>49</sup> Cf. Inness, 12,13.

<sup>50</sup> See Inness' history of action heroines, 2-3.

<sup>51</sup> Cf. Inness, 3.

toughness-factor does not only equal that of the male hero, but it also shows in their physical appearance. Heroines like Buffy, Xena, Nikita, and Sidney Bristow, do no longer represent the ideal of the soft, curvy, yielding female. On the contrary, their bodies are wiry and well muscled, corresponding to their male counterparts' bodies of steel.<sup>52</sup> This does not mean that beauty is unimportant for this new sort of action heroine. Good looks still play a major role in the overall construction of these characters. However, they stand for a new kind of beauty; one that reflects their toughness at a physical level. On the surface, this development appears to be a crucial step for the emancipation of women from patriarchal oppression. These new heroines are clever, strong, and independent, thus, capable to fight on their own. They call into question the conventional gender roles of patriarchal society. In this fashion, they can serve as role models for women.<sup>53</sup>

It is important to note, however, that these new images of female action heroes are not as independent from patriarchal conventions and traditional gender role expectations as the first impression suggests. The new action heroine is predominantly white, coming from upper- or middle class, and being styled in a way that is conventionally considered heterosexually attractive. Their well trained bodies may be impressive for a woman, but is still nothing compared to that of a man. Similarly, their independence and their freedom to act violently lie within certain boundaries. Their violence is only allowed to an extent that is not threatening to men. Their violent behaviour is not to diminish their sexual attractiveness, in the sense that the heroine triggers fear in men rather than lust.<sup>54</sup> This means that female action heroes might look and be tough, but only to an extent that is still considered female by patriarchal society.

Nevertheless, the importance of these new images of women is not to be underestimated. They show that a woman can be considered womanly and desirable, even if she does not conform to the stereotypical notion of the weak, soft, and docile female. A woman can be tough, violent, and independent, and still be considered utterly feminine and sexually attractive.<sup>55</sup> Thus, the new action heroines do much to

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<sup>52</sup> Cf. Heineken, 1.

<sup>53</sup> Cf. Inness, 8.

<sup>54</sup> Cf. Inness, 8.

<sup>55</sup> Cf. Inness, 15.



open up a new gender role for women; one that allows them to be tough without being considered shrewish.

### 2.3.2. Buffy and Veronica as Action Heroines

“See ... I've had a lot of people talking at me the last few days. Everyone just lining up to tell me how unimportant I am. And I've finally figured out why. Power. I have it. They don't. This bothers them.”(Transcript, Episode 90 “Checkpoint”) With this speech, Buffy frees herself from the council of watchers, a group of men, who try to control her as the slayer, and who continually play down her importance and capability as a fighter. This short speech also sums up the ongoing struggle seemingly every action heroine has to face: men being jealous and unable to face a woman more powerful than them, consequently, trying to negate her power and to break her. Therefore, action heroines do not only fight against whichever adversary they might have to face, but they also always fight against patriarchal domination. This phenomenon can also be witnessed when looking at Buffy and Veronica. Both in their own way do not only have to fight against antagonistic forces, but also against problems and preconceptions that automatically arise for tough females in a male dominated society. Although, the two characters represent quite different versions of female action heroes, their problems are strikingly similar.

Buffy Summers, the heroine of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, is a model example for this new type of action heroine. As the slayer – the one girl in the world chosen to fight vampires and other monsters that endanger the survival of mankind – she has enormous physical powers; powers that are reflected in her well-trained, muscular body, and displayed through her astonishing fighting skills. Nevertheless, this girl is not the hard, emotionless killer one might expect a character with such a profession to be. Quite the opposite, she is the girly blonde cheerleader-type, who likes to wear frilly clothes and is not immune to the kind of teenage angst that might befall a sixteen-year-old girl. Consequently, she fights against her adversaries wearing high heels and mini skirts, while fretting over her relationship with her emotionally unavailable boyfriend. In spite of her outward appearance and her personality, there is no doubt that she is an extremely dangerous and deadly predator. But the real problems this girl has to face are not demons or impending apocalypses, but life and its many trials and dangers. Moreover, it is not only the life of a superhero that

troubles her, but the life of a young girl who tries to find her place in the world. This circumstance is one of the reasons for the series' success. Despite its fantastic content, it invites the viewers to identify with the characters and their emotional world. Thus, in between fighting ghastly vampires and averting looming apocalypses, the characters have to deal with the problems common to teenagers and young adults.<sup>56</sup> They experience love, lust, loss, friendship, future-angst, and sorrow, and they invite the viewers to experience these things right along with them. The enormous online fan activity surrounding *Buffy* shows that the concept works. Fan communities discuss their favourite characters and their relationships, and countless fan fiction stories attempt to explore these characters and relationships even further. It becomes apparent that it is not Buffy's superhero status that fascinates fans in the first place, but Buffy the girl, who hopes, loves, and dreams like every other young woman her age. Of course, the fact that this young woman has supernatural abilities to boot only makes her more attractive for identification.

In short, Buffy may not fit the picture of the emotionally and physically tough superhero. She is tough, but she is also a girl who is far from being able to live her life without the aid of others. The combination of two essentially stereotypical female roles – the tough action heroine and the cheerleader – creates a new complex character that appeals to fans and stirs their fantasies.

This concept also works with *Veronica Mars*, even though the heroine of this series represents another type of action heroine. Unlike Buffy, she is not physically powerful. Her toughness operates on a different level. Veronica Mars stands in a long tradition of female detectives who solve their cases with wit and logical thinking, rather than with physical force. Her status as an action heroine is not legitimated by a divine calling, but comes as a result of her decision to work as a private investigator. Nevertheless, her being a P.I. is as important for the formation of the whole character, as Buffy's being the slayer. The way this petite blond girl acts in her function as a private eye, makes her the high school version of the hardboiled detective.<sup>57</sup> In his article *The Simple Art of Murder*, Raymond Chandler defines the hardboiled detective as following:

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<sup>56</sup> Compare Heinecken's description of *Buffy*'s appeal to its viewers, 94-101.

<sup>57</sup> Cf. Vaughn, 35.

He is a relatively poor man, or he would not be a detective at all. He is a common man or he could not go among common people. He has a sense of character, or he would not know his job. He will take no man's money dishonestly and no man's insolence without a due and dispassionate revenge. He is a lonely man and his pride is that you will treat him as a proud man or be very sorry you ever saw him. He talks as the man of his age talks, that is, with rude wit, a lively sense of the grotesque, a disgust for sham, and a contempt for pettiness. The story is his adventure in search of a hidden truth, and it would be no adventure if it did not happen to a man fit for adventure. He has a range of awareness that startles you, but it belongs to him by right, because it belongs to the world he lives in. (Chandler, 1950)

When looking at Veronica, it becomes clear that she fits this description. She deals with biker gangs, catches philandering spouses, and solves murder cases in a fashion that would make Mike Hammer proud. Consistent with the typical female detective, she has an ambivalent relationship to class and money. As a private investigator she is part of the working class. Her income is not steady, but she is independent and gets to do things usually only done by men.<sup>58</sup> Moreover, the way she does her job suggests that she is as good in it as her male counterparts. But, of course, similar to *Buffy*, her profession is only part of the story. Series creator Rob Thomas summarises the content of Veronica Mars as following:

Executives always tend to ask you the question, "What's it really about?" Well, it's about a seventeen-year-old girl who happens to be a detective.... "No, what's it about?" Oh, that. The zeitgeist, etc.? It's about this prematurely jaded generation of teenagers who are exposed to too much too soon. They can access anything. They are sexualized too early. Veronica will be the poster child for loss of innocence. (*Neptune Noir*, 194)

The loss of innocence, and the struggle to cope with the repercussions of the event that caused said loss, is one of the main concerns of this show. In a way, the whole concept is very similar to that of *Buffy*. Being called as the slayer at the age of 16 – consequently being pushed into a world full of horrific monsters – Buffy loses her innocence and is forced to grow up very early in life. Similarly, Veronica is ripped from her sheltered life when her best friend is murdered. Ostracised by her former friends, she has to learn to cope with their cruel behaviour towards her. A second horrific incident eventually causes her to lose her innocence in every sense of the word, and triggers her change from innocent girl to tough fighter. This change is also reflected in her physical appearance. Flashbacks reveal that after the party, where she was drugged and raped, Veronica abandons the long blond hair and girly dresses of

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<sup>58</sup> Cf. Mizejewski, 4.

innocent “Pink Veronica”, in favour of the funky haircut and the biker boots of tough “Veronica 2.0”.<sup>59</sup> (Fig.1, Fig.2) With the changed looks comes a changed attitude. This new Veronica is not a passive victim, but gives as good as she gets. Moreover, she helps other victims to get justice. Thus, much like Buffy, she fights to protect innocents from dark threats.

Veronica the hardboiled detective is witty and tough, but Veronica the girl faces problems and fears just like every other teenage girl. With parents, who are aiming to get divorced, a mother, who is an alcoholic, an ex-boyfriend, who dumped her seemingly without a reason, and her blooming crush on said ex-boyfriend’s best friend, her problems are all too normal. Again, it is this normal side of her that attracts fans. Fan discussions are usually not concerned with Veronica’s latest case, but with the latest development in her relationships. Likewise, most fan fictions do not depict her exciting assignments, but her struggles in the love department.

This shows that the female action heroes do not simply need to be tough to catch the interest of the audience. It is their softer side in particular that fascinates their fans and causes them to get emotionally involved with the shows and the characters.

### 2.3.3. The Quest for Normality

The two female characters find themselves in similar circumstances: their job plays a vital role for both heroines, and both harbour the secret wish for a normal life (meaning the life of an average white, middle-class, heterosexual female). Of course, Buffy’s being the slayer is obviously more than a mere job. Yet, the way in which Veronica’s relationship to her chosen profession is described suggests that it is also more than a mere job. It actually more resembles a calling. This calling starts with the death of her best friend Lilly Kane, which changes her life drastically. She does not only lose her friends, but is also forced to give up the lifestyle she is used to after her father loses the prestigious position as the sheriff of Neptune. Her struggle with these changes is closely linked to the struggle to find Lilly’s murderer, who is actually responsible for the changes in her life. Thus, the quest to solve this murder case is symbolic for Veronica’s quest to find her place in this new world. Only if Veronica manages to find the person that ended Lilly’s, and changed her own life

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<sup>59</sup> These terms are frequently used in *Veronica Mars* fandom to refer to the different versions of this character.

forever, will she be able to deal with, and to accept, said changes. Consequently, Veronica does not simply choose to be a private investigator, but she needs to be one, in order to cope with her life.

Compared to that, the situation in *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* is more straightforward, even if not easier for the heroine. Buffy's being the slayer is explicitly presented as her calling: "In every generation there is a Chosen One. She alone will stand against the vampires, the demons and the forces of darkness. She is the Slayer." (Transcript, Prelude *BtVS*) Buffy has no choice; she was called as the slayer and is now forced to deal with the consequences. In this respect, her situation is very similar to that of Veronica; as are the ways she tries to handle it. Both women are forced into a situation they do not like, and both have to find ways to deal with it and succeed. Nevertheless, secretly they both wish to lead a normal life as an average white, middle-class, female teenager, away from their calling. Sara Crosby argues that this secret longing for normality is typical for, what she calls, an "ideal republican heroine".<sup>60</sup> She states that these heroines "would prefer to be "just a normal girl" who shops, adorns herself, and bakes cookies but, instead, finds herself forced from her "natural" protective cover and discovers mainly misery in the adventure." (Crosby, 162) This longing is particularly strong in Buffy, who continually struggles to unite her calling with her desire to be normal. In *Veronica Mars* this longing seems to be subdued, but traces of it can still be detected on various occasions. Probably the strongest indication for Veronica's secret longing for a normal life is presented in her dream in the episode "Not Pictured" that fans of the series commonly refer to as her "graduation dream". The night before her high school graduation, Veronica dreams of how her graduation could play out had her life not undergone such drastic changes. The dream features Veronica, once again with long blond hair, wearing a nice dress. Her parents are not divorced, her old friends never abandoned her, Logan presents the picture of the perfect boyfriend, and Lilly returns from college to watch her best friend graduate. But the downsides of this version of her life become apparent even in the dream. Veronica's new best friend Wallace is nothing but a stranger, and her naivety causes some amusement among her friends.<sup>61</sup> Thus, even in her dream, Veronica realises that her old normal life would not necessarily be a better life. It is when they get the chance to live a normal life that

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<sup>60</sup> Cf. Crosby, 162.

<sup>61</sup> For more detailed information see episode 2.22 "Not Pictured".

these heroines discover that normal is not meant for them. Accordingly, in the season three episode “Anne”, Buffy, who has left her family and friends behind to live as the human waitress Anne in Arizona, realises that she cannot escape her calling.<sup>62</sup> Similarly, Veronica cannot give up her profession after solving Lilly’s murder case. Instead of embracing a normal life with her normal boyfriend Duncan Kane, she finds that she cannot simply stop to think and act like a private investigator.

The lack of normality, and the constant struggle to deal with it, is also reflected in the love relationships of the heroines. Nothing is normal when it comes to their love life. They continually fall for the bad boys, and even if they occasionally date a good reliable guy, they inevitably turn out to be bad. However, good and bad are relative categories, also in the *BtVS* and *VM* universes, where psychotic jackasses turn out to harbour a heart of gold, and reliable boyfriends hide dark secrets. In general, the instability of character is a major issue in both series. Buffy continually has to question the genuineness of identity, as the whole series is based on the concept that evil has penetrated everyday life and often comes in an unrecognisable guise.<sup>63</sup> Likewise, Veronica uncovers dark secrets and the true character of people that appear to be perfectly harmless. Therefore, it is no wonder that this instability of character should play into the love relationships of these heroines. Their special status as action heroines predestines them to also have relationships that are out of the ordinary.

Correspondingly, Buffy has a tendency to fall in love with vampires, who should actually be her prey. But even among vampires there are some that are more evil than others. Her first boyfriend Angel falls more into the light category of the evil vampire. Cursed with a soul, he walks on a path to redemption. That, together with his love for the slayer, motivates him to suppress his evilness and act as her protector. His constant concern for her safety, and his refusal to acknowledge that Buffy is not a helpless girl but a powerful fighter, lets him appear more like an overbearing boyfriend, than a darkly mysterious vampire. In turn, Buffy acts like a girl around him and tries to ignore her slayer side. This ends abruptly, when her first sexual encounter with the vampire causes him to lose his soul, consequently, turning him into cruel, heartless Angelus. Buffy, then, is forced to deal with him as the slayer

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<sup>62</sup> For more detailed information see episode 3.1 “Anne“.

<sup>63</sup> Cf. Heineken, 106.

and eventually kills him in order to save the world. Fan fiction picks up on Angel's inability to accept Buffy's slayer side. It is common in *Spuffy* fan fiction, to show Buffy trying to act on Angel's wish for her to be normal. Naturally, her attempts fail. True to the canonical assumption that Buffy needs "a little monster in her man"<sup>64</sup>, it takes Spike to show her that a normal life would never be good enough for her. He is shown to be the right man for Buffy, because he cannot only match her strength, but also acknowledges her as a girl, as well as, as the slayer. Because of that, he can help Buffy to come to terms with her calling and accept her special status as the slayer. This notion is actually quite accurate, and supported by the source text. Writer and Director David Fury states: "He is definitely in many ways her counterpart and closer to her than a lot of the other characters. He goes to the dark side of what Buffy is. He goes to what slayers are and what it means to be different in this world." (David Fury, Buffy Season Six DVD: *Season 6: Überblick*, 00:12:20-00:12:35) However, his acceptance of her superhero persona and the strength that comes with it is not enough. Their relationship in season six is depicted as being thoroughly unhealthy for both of them. No matter how sincere his love for her might be, Spike is still a soulless demon, and as such, he draws her onto the dark side and sullies her calling as a fighter for the good.<sup>65</sup> Thus, his demonic nature cannot be unified with her heroic nature. Spike finally accepts that and concludes that he needs to change in order to have a chance with her. Spike actor James Marsters remarks: "He is in love with someone truly good. And so he's gonna try to be the kind of man that Buffy would like to have." (James Marsters, Buffy Season Four DVD: *Introducing Spike*, 00:06:22-00:06:28) Thus, a bit of monster is good – even necessary – to satisfy the slayer; but the monster has to be tamed and neutered as not to sully her calling.

The same applies to Veronica's dating situation. Although, she tries to date "good guys", in the end it is "bad boy" Logan who manages to hold her interest. For that reason, her reliable boyfriend deputy Leo gets dumped after Logan kisses her for the first time. Moreover, she has to learn that her first love Duncan Kane is not as desirable for her as Logan. Like Angel, Duncan ignores his girlfriend's calling, picturing her as sweet and innocent instead. And just like Angel, also Duncan eventually leaves Veronica behind. Veronica, like Buffy, is left to wonder why

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<sup>64</sup> Spike tells Riley that Buffy needs a monster in her man in the episodes "Into the Woods" and "As you were". For more detailed information see the transcripts of episode 88 and 115.

<sup>65</sup> Cf. Heinecken, 120.

normal is not meant for her. When she gets back together with Logan, he, like Spike, has to admit that their relationship can only work when he abandons his self-destructive behaviour. Because of that, season three features a matured Logan, who is trying to change his ways in order to make their relationship work.

It seems that the tough action heroine needs an equally tough and partly antagonistic man who is able to accept her calling and offers her a challenge to keep her interested. However, said man must neither be too strong, nor too antagonistic, as to not put her hero status in danger.

## **2.4. The Concept of the Other**

### 2.4.1. The Heroes and Their Otherness

The heroines' toughness and the heroes' status as glamorous outcasts put them at the margins of society and, therefore, automatically put them into the position of the Other. However, theirs is an appealing Otherness. It has already been mentioned that both series depict the outsiderdom of their characters in a way that appeals to fans, and opens up new ways to deal with situations that are not accepted by society. Thus, the concept of the Other is very useful when dealing with these characters. It will become apparent, however, that their Otherness loses its appeal when it comes to romance.

[T]he term the Other (or sometimes an Other) refers to any person or category of people defined as different from – and functioning outside the convention of – the dominant social group. Virtually any ideology involves the identification of some group as the Other, whether by virtue of language, ethnicity, class, gender or sexuality. (*The Bedford Glossary*, 320)

Both the male and the female heroes of *Veronica Mars* and *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* fit into this category of the Other as someone who does not conform to the expectations of the dominant social group. As already discussed, Veronica and Buffy cannot live like other young women their age; no matter how hard they try. Their status as a heroine with a calling automatically sets them apart from most other people and, thus, marks them as the Other. As their special abilities and occupations make it impossible for them to blend into the normal crowd, they surround themselves with other outsiders instead.



The series pilot introduces Buffy as the new girl in school. She is keen to seize the opportunity for a new start, after her calling has caused her to be expelled from her old school. However, she quickly realises that it is impossible for her to start anew as a member of the popular crowd. Eventually, she finds true friends in the geeky students Willow and Xander, who are willing to ignore her reputation as a troublemaker, and can even accept her dangerous after-school activities. It is only when Buffy accepts her Otherness that she finds the comfort and support of true friendship. This friendship is provided by people, who – like her – are considered to be the Other. The situation is similar in *Veronica Mars*. In some way, the series pilot introduces Veronica as the new girl in school as well. The new tough and spirited Veronica is nothing like the shy, sweet girl she used to be. The dominant group, represented by the 09-ers, considers her as a traitor and a freak, thus marking her as the Other, who is not to be associated with. Still, like Buffy, Veronica attracts the attention of other outsiders, who prove to be loyal friends.

The friendship shared by these Others is depicted as very strong and sincere, whereas the friendships among the dominant social group are shown to be shallow and based only on opportunism. Thus, being an outsider loses its sting in these series, as they depict outsiderdom in a way that makes it preferable to being popular. Whereas, the existence of the popular kids is marked by dull loneliness, the heroines' Otherness is their ticket to an exciting life filled with friendship and love. Similar to the depiction of the male breakout characters' glamorous outsiderdom, this positive depiction of Otherness aims to appeal to fans.

However, the Otherness of the male heroes of these series works in a different way. It has been mentioned before that their status as the lonely tormented outsider awakens recognition and sympathy in the fans and consequently, not only causes fannish identification but also the urge to remedy their situation by means of fan fiction. But there is also another side to their Otherness that makes it very appealing to fans. Spike and Logan both have characters traits and other assets that definitely mark them as different from the average guy. Spike is not only a vampire – a very exotic and intriguing feature in itself – but on top of that he is also British. His accent automatically makes him intriguingly different. The show consciously plays with his accent as a marker of difference. In a very humorous scene during “Tabula Rasa”,

where Spike, who - like the rest of the gang - has lost his memory as a result of one of Willow's failed spells, to his horror has to learn that he is British:

GILES: We'll all get our memory back, and it'll all be right as rain.  
 SPIKE: Oh, listen to Mary Poppins. He's got his crust all stiff and upper with that nancy-boy accent. (everyone looking at him) You Englishmen are always so... (pauses) Bloody hell! (ticks off on his fingers) Sodding, blimey, shagging, knickers, bollocks, oh God! I'm English!  
 GILES: (puts glasses on) Welcome to the nancy tribe.  
 (Transcript, Episode 108 "Tabula Rasa")

His white blond hair and his punk appearance add further to the exoticism of this character and indicate that he is totally different from any other guy. But Spike is not only different from humans, but also from other vampires. His poetic heart and his unprecedented ability to love make him the Other in the demon community as well.

Unlike Spike's, Logan's Otherness is not signalled by his outward appearance. On the contrary, his clothing and the fact that he chooses to drive around in a rather beat up jeep, lets him look rather like a surfer than the enormously rich son of a movie star. In contrast to the other characters, it is his status as a member of the dominant group that marks Logan as the Other. He is not only rich, but the stardom of his parents has also made him famous. The fact that Logan is a public figure, and his struggle with this role, is repeatedly emphasised in the series. Like the heroines, he desperately wishes to be "normal", but his status denies him this wish. Thus, Logan has to deal with nosy paparazzi, has to do publicity charity work, and has to endure media reports about his tragic family life. His fame and fortune is definitely out of the ordinary, and, therefore, it is his popularity that makes him the Other.

#### 2.4.2. The Other Sexuality

A factor that adds to the appeal of these male characters, and reaffirms their Otherness, is their sexuality. It is important to note that both shows are primarily concerned with the depiction of heterosexual sexuality. Both Spike and Logan are canonically depicted as being sexually attractive for, and attracted to, women. Moreover, their sexual prowess is continually emphasised. Both characters are repeatedly shown to engage in sexual activities with female characters other than the heroines. Their skills as lovers are even confirmed by the heroines themselves. The

sexual attraction between the protagonists is depicted as so strong that it is virtually impossible for the heroines to stay away for good.

Obviously, their sexuality is a very important part of these characters. It does not only make them attractive, but also sets them apart from other male characters, as they are portrayed to be more desirable and more experienced than anyone else. However, even if their sexual prowess exceeds that of all other male characters, the nature of their sexuality can by no means be considered as being purely heterosexual. Quite the opposite, it is actually very ambiguous. Dee Amy-Chinn develops the concept of Spike's sexuality as being queer, in the sense that as a lover, he can act out the masculine, as well as the feminine part, and his repertoire ranges from romantic sex, to more unorthodox sexual practices.<sup>66</sup> According to her, neither his gender, nor his sexuality is secure: "His gender switches from male to female, and his sexuality from `vanilla` to more varied and non-traditional forms of eroticism, giving him access to a broader repertoire of behaviours than anyone else in the `Buffyverse`." (Amy-Chinn, 316) But his ability to switch from extreme masculinity to extreme femininity is never presented as having any impact on his status as a real "manly" man. Rather, he is shown to be confident enough in his masculinity to be able to also embrace his feminine side. It does also have nothing to do with his choice of the gender of his sexual partners. *BtVS* has Spike choosing solely women as his partners.<sup>67</sup> Nevertheless, it is hinted that Spike also has experience with men. In his relationship with the slayer, Spike unquestionably plays the female part. It is her who initiates their first sexual encounter, as well as most of the following ones; and it is also her, who acts out the dominant part during these encounters. Moreover, while Spike, who is in love with Buffy, hopes that their relationship might develop into something more than mere sex, Buffy uses him solely to reach sexual gratification. Thus, Buffy as the aggressor takes over the active role ascribed to men, while Spike acts out the passive role typically attributed to women.

Logan's situation in *Veronica Mars*, once again, is very similar. Like Spike, he is able to act out his femininity without feeling threatened in his masculinity. And like the vampire, he is forced to act the feminine part when interacting with the heroine on an emotional level. It is Veronica who turns their relationship into something

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<sup>66</sup> Cf. Amy-Chinn, 316.

<sup>67</sup> Cf. Amy-Chinn, 316.

sexual when she initiates their first kiss. After that, it is also she who calls the shots. She alternately lets him close or keeps him at a distance. While he wants to talk, she cannot seem to bring herself to trust him enough to do so. While he wants commitment, she rather embraces her freedom. Again, the heroine behaves in a way that is usually considered typically male. As a result, the hero is forced to take over the feminine part.

It seems that the action heroine's innate toughness necessarily forces the hero to act out a more passive role. The Otherness of these characters does not simply cause behaviour that is considered different from the dominant patriarchal norm, but it makes such behaviour necessary. If they want a relationship to work, the male protagonists have to accommodate the heroines' behaviour by changing their own ways. Thus, their Otherness causes a total reversal of the typical gender subject positions. However, the canon makes clear that this cannot be a permanent solution. Neither the relationship of Buffy and Spike, nor that of Veronica and Logan works out. It seems that their Otherness make a happy ending ultimately impossible.

#### 2.4.3. Fan Fiction and Otherness

It is the main concern of most of the *LoVe* and *Spuffy* fan fictions to remedy this situation. The couples are to be brought together in a happy relationship, despite the canonical circumstances that get in the way. As the characters' Otherness proves to be one of the main obstacles on the way to a happy ending, fan fiction authors have to find strategies to deal with it.

There can be distinguished two ways in which authors deal with this Otherness: they either stress it, thus, make it even more prominent; or they tone it down until any problems that may arise as a consequence of Otherness do no longer exist. Generally, it can be said that positive effects of Otherness are stressed, while negative effects are toned down. Hence, Spike's accent – obviously a positive aspect of his Otherness that increases his erotic appeal – is stressed, while his vampiric predilection for torture and murder is toned down. So, in fan fiction pet names, which are obviously equalled with British accent by a very large number of fan fiction authors, are used extremely often to stress Spike's accent. In many cases, it seems that the vampire cannot utter a sentence without including words like “kitten”, “pet”, “love”,

“sweetling”, “ducks” or “poodle”. Furthermore, swear words that are considered typically British, like “bloody” or “bugger”, are a very important part of his vocabulary.

“What do you want? I mean, um, what are you doing? Here? Uh... I mean...” She trailed off blushing furiously and trying hard not to stare at the ground. [...] “Well pet, to be honest I just wanted to see what happened before? We were talking and then you just run off? I mean, you don’t strike me as a crazy chit but you never know.” His smirk grew into a full blown smile as she stared at him in confusion.

“Chit?”

“Yeah, you know, chit. Bint?”

“Huh?”

“Bloody hell. It means, like a woman,” he said in exasperation.

Oh. Ok. Well next time try speaking English for a change if you actually want people to understand you.”

“I am English for Godsake! You ‘Mericans are the ones that mangle the bloody mother tongue in the first place.”

“Uh huh. But that doesn’t explain why you wanted to talk to me?”

(squawks, Chapter 2)

This is a very good example for the way fan writers utilise, and very often exaggerate, Spike’s British accent. Conversely, the fact that Spike is a cruel killer who has slaughtered thousands of people for fun is put into perspective. Fan fiction frequently tries to shift Spike’s image away from that of the ruthless killer by arguing that he does not kill out of some perverse need to see other people suffer, but because of “the warrior in him, who would fight if he could”. (dreamweaver, Chapter 1: Something New) In some way, this assumption is even canonically sanctioned: when a governmental group of demon hunters implants Spike with a microchip that makes it impossible for him to hurt humans, his biggest problem seems to be that he is no longer able to fight. Therefore, when he finds out that he can hurt demons, he does not hesitate to do so. This canonical occurrence is frequently used by fan writers to argue that Spike does not simply kill for fun, but – true to his warrior nature – simply loves a good fight.

The character of Logan is manipulated in a similar fashion. His wealth – definitely a positive part of his Otherness – is stressed, while his nasty tendency to hurt and insult Veronica is toned down. In fan fiction Logan is not only rich, but mega-rich. Although, he is very often described to despise his money, because it was accumulated by his hated father that does not stop him from spending it liberally:

Eventually when neither could decide on another film he switch [sic!] the television onto the cable shopping network and they spent the good part of an hour mocking various items for sale as Logan tried to buy every second thing they saw. She pulled herself up in the large armchair she was slowly sinking into, taking a sip of her soda before she berated him. “You don’t need a multi-speed whisk, Logan, you don’t cook.” He just shrugged at her, punching in some numbers before throwing her the remote. “Yeah, but I might want to one day.” [...] He smiled back beautifully as she continued, “you probably have one already,” she considered, “anyway that’s flawed, like buying a house somewhere just on the off chance you might ever wanted to live in that country.” He just stared at her and she could see him mentally counting up the various homesteads that the Echolls family owned around the globe. [...] “Whatever, we all need a hobby PI Polly.” She sucked her bottom lip in between her teeth, trying not to respond as she turned away from him falling back into the chair in a mild sulk as he laughed at her little display. “At least my hobby doesn’t involve throwing money away,” her comeback was about five minutes too late. He quirked his mouth. “You know that commercial that’s on every five minutes – about his last film?” “Yeah,” she replied quietly. “Every time that gets shown my limit might as well get upped,” he admitted, “what better way to spend money from trash than on trash?” (sexycereal, King Of The Castle)

So, his bank account seemingly even puts that of Dagobert Duck to shame. Of course, this money is frequently also used to indulge the heroine. Thus, Veronica commonly gets to stay at the biggest mansions and the most luxurious hotel suites, and is also offered boat trips on extravagant yachts and excursions to exotic locations. As Logan’s darker side and his past wrongdoings cannot be entirely ignored, attempts have to be made to explain his behaviour. His tragic history as the son of an abusive father, and his subsequent inability to deal with his problems without using violence, are recurrently used to account for his cruel behaviour towards Veronica.

“Come to kick the wounded?” [...] “I’m not going to fight with you, Logan.” “Why not?!” he screamed, throwing the box that held the poker chips, the box that Veronica had bought him for his sixteenth birthday. She had to jump out of the way to avoid head trauma, and she stared at Logan in shock that he would be so out of control. “Fight with me! This is your chance! Just do it!” Moving cautiously, she repeated, “I’m not going to fight with you.” “C’mon, I’ll get you started!” Throwing his voice, he intoned, “Nice dad you got there, Echolls! I wish my dad was a fucking asshole that cheats on my mom with whores at parties, that humiliates my mom in front of the whole goddamn town, that...that *beats* his kids with...with belts...like they’re *animals*...!” Veronica wrapped her arms around his shoulders as Logan slid to his knees, sobs wracking his body. Brushing her fingers through his hair, she shushed him,

rocking back and forth as he had done to her after one of her mother's first drinking binges, wishing that she could spare him this pain. Jackass or not, no one deserved this. (lit\_chick08, Part 2)

His actions are presented as the only way he knows how to protect his fragile heart. He concentrates all his hatred towards Veronica, because she is actually the only person that means something to him. As he cannot show her how he truly feels, he reverts to violence. Only when Veronica signals him that she feels something for him apart from hatred and disgust, can he slowly open up and show his hidden loving and caring nature. Again, the canon seems to support this approach, as the show also uses his tragic childhood to account for this character's behaviour.

Another aspect of Otherness that is definitely stressed in fan fiction is the male protagonists' sexual prowess. Where it was important in the canonical source text, it becomes one of the major assets of these characters in fan fiction. Consequently, Logan and Spike are not simply attractive and capable in sexual matters, but they are portrayed as the ultimate lovers. Because of that, they are the only suitable match for the heroines. As no other man can compete with them, there is also no other man who could possibly fulfil the heroines' needs the way they can.

Feeling his hands on her body again was making her light headed. As always, he knew just what touches drove her crazy and he didn't stint on giving them to her. Her eyes widened as they stared into his, and her lips parted as she tried to speak. "Tell me," he urged, squeezing gently. "It's just...I missed this so much. The way you touch me. The things you do. I was...I was afraid I'd have to live the rest of my life and never...never feel this way again." Spike grinned, a little arrogantly. "Well, you can put THAT fear right out of your mind. I'm back now, baby...and I'm planning to make up for all that lost time." His tone amused her. This was one of the things she loved about him, his "I'm the only man for you, Slayer, and you never had it as good as me" attitude. Once upon a time, it had pissed her off mightily...es-pecially [sic!] when she'd begun to realize that it was true. (pattyanne, "Back Where We Belong")

Logan was barely eighteen, but he did not make love like a fumbling teenager. He had sharpened his skills against hardhearted playmates. There were regrets in there somewhere, if he allowed himself to feel them. But at the moment he was grateful. He was a concert pianist playing Carnegie Hall. He might never be here again and it was important to make this the show of his life. [...] Veronica gasped beneath him, overcome with the sensations this boy, this man, managed to evoke. No wonder he had grown women falling at his feet. She felt the intensity of his worship for her body and it made her feel like a goddess. (gertinator, "Strange")

Both descriptions of the male protagonists correspond to Janice Radway's concept of the ideal hero in ideal romance. Spike and Logan are not simply fabulous lovers, but – in the fashion of the true romantic hero – they are the only ones who can awaken and satisfy their lovers' sexual needs. This corresponds to Radway's claim that only the ideal hero can uncover the heroine's natural sensual nature.<sup>68</sup> Thus, it can be concluded that in fan fiction and in the ideal romance alike, the heroes' sexuality destines these male characters to be the ideal partners for the heroines. They are the only ones who can make these girls happy, not only because they understand them and accept who they are, but also because they can guarantee their sexual satisfaction.

The way in which fan fiction emphasises all aspects of the heroes' Otherness that are beneficial for a happy relationship, while alleviating those that are not, also applies to the treatment of the heroines' Otherness. Closer inspection shows that the main negative feature that has to be toned down appears to be the heroines' blatant toughness. It has already been established that the extreme strength and independence that come with their action heroine status make a happy relationship practically impossible.

The brutality and cruelty inextricably linked to the work of a slayer have caused Buffy to harden. The fact that she lives in a world where she has to use violence to protect herself and others, makes it hard for her to trust anybody enough to show them her vulnerable side: “[...] violence isn't going to work. Not on this one. [...] Oh God, why does she have to be such an iron fist. Why can't she be the velvet glove? Where did all her kindness go?” (Throstle, “Try a Little Tenderness”) In order to make a relationship between Buffy and Spike possible, the heroine has to become more like the “velvet glove” than the “iron fist”. The same applies to Veronica Mars. Previous traumatic experiences have caused her to toughen, and make it hard for her to trust in other people. Thus, the heroines' toughness seemingly deactivates their softer caring side, and makes them appear overly masculine, forcing the men in their life to take on the feminine role. Therefore, the reduction of their toughness turns out to be the main objective of *Spuffy* and *LoVe* fan fiction. The strengthening of positive

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<sup>68</sup> Cf. Radway, 126.



aspects is inextricably linked to this movement, as the weakening of their negative toughness, inevitably causes the reinforcement of their positive softer side.

“No matter what bullshit we put each other through, you’re still the best friend I have, Veronica. I just want to keep you safe.”

“You don’t have to—“

Pressing a finger against her lips, stilling her words, he asked, “Why won’t you let me?”

“I’m afraid,” she admitted.

Startled, Logan pressed, “Of me?”

Veronica minutely shook her head. “Of *me*.”

“Why?”

“Because what if you can’t? What if I’m too... ruined—“ He silenced her with a kiss, long, sweet, and surprisingly chaste. Logan had always had a way of devouring her mouth, but tonight his kiss was as tentative as could be, his hands not embarking on a quest for her curves, his tongue staying inside his mouth. This was a kiss of comfort, a reassurance wrapped in a promise and Veronica could’ve wept at the sincerity behind it. Cupping her face in his hands, he ordered against her lips, “Don’t ever say that. You’re perfect just like this.”

(lit\_chick08, Part 3)

Veronica has to accept that – despite his previous behaviour towards her – Logan would never intentionally hurt her, because his extreme love for her would never allow it. As soon as she recognises this as a fact, she can stop protecting herself from him, and allow him to come close enough to experience her ability to love and take care of him. Similarly, Buffy has to learn that Spike is not just a soulless thing, but a man who genuinely loves her. As soon as she realises that she can rely on Spike, she starts letting her guards down, showing him her caring, passionate nature, and allowing herself to love him in return. Thus, the heroines have to learn to trust their designated partners, consequently realising that they can let themselves go in their presence and show them a more vulnerable, weaker side. Only then can a relationship between these characters work out.

This treatment of the characters’ Otherness proves to be necessary to achieve the desired happy ending. Only when all obstacles caused by the protagonists’ extreme character traits are eliminated, is the establishment of a happy relationship possible.

## 2.5. The Concept of Romance in Fan Fiction

### 2.5.1. The Ideal Romance

As this study deals with fan fiction that is concerned with the romantic relationship of two particular characters and, thus, is very closely linked to the genre of romance fiction, it is necessary to take a closer look at this genre, and to determine how it influences works of fan fiction, and the way its characters are developed. Here, the main focus lies on Janice Radway's concept of the ideal romance as a form of romantic fiction, which develops its plot and its description of the characters in a way that is considered very enjoyable by the majority of readers. This chapter will look at this concept and how it is employed in fan fiction.

In her work *Reading the Romance*, Janice A. Radway establishes criteria that determine whether a piece of romance fiction is considered enjoyable by the majority of readers or not. Works that are considered enjoyable are those that enable the predominantly female readership to escape their real life for some time, providing them with the emotional nurturance they lack.<sup>69</sup> According to Radway, it is especially this “intensely felt but insufficiently met need for emotional nurturance” that “drives these women to repeated encounters with romance fiction”. (Radway, 119) Radway calls works that fulfil this need, ideal romances. It is important to note that stylistic features of a story seem to be only marginally important for readers' evaluation. Narratives that do not meet the expectations of the ideal romance are not considered bad because of stylistic shortcomings, but because of the intense negative emotional responses they elicit from the readers. While the ideal romance provides harmless entertainment that makes light of the readers' real anxieties and problems, the failed romance presents topics that are far too close to the audience's real problems and, therefore, actually reminds them of their real life, rather than to help them escape it.<sup>70</sup> It becomes clear that, in order to be deemed pleasurable and worthwhile by the readers, it is vital for a piece of romance fiction to adhere to certain conventions that are considered essential for a “good” romance.

A very important factor that settles whether a romance is considered ideal or failed, is the way its characters are developed and presented. Here the main focus necessarily lies on the depiction of the two protagonists. Readers of romance fiction seem to share common ideas about how the ideal hero and heroine have to look and

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<sup>69</sup> Cf. Radway, 119.

<sup>70</sup> Cf. Radway, 158.

act. The way the two main characters are portrayed is vital, because – more than the actual plot – it determines whether readers will feel drawn to a text or not. The women need to be able to identify with the heroine and to feel attracted to the hero. Only then will they be susceptible to the plot and feel inclined to keep on reading.

Radway tries to discover the basic features a character has to possess in order to be considered an ideal hero or heroine. According to her, the ideal heroine, apart from being extraordinarily beautiful, possesses special attributes that set her apart from other female characters: “To begin with, the ideal heroine is differentiated from her more ordinary counterparts in other romance novels by unusual intelligence or by an extraordinary fiery disposition. Occasionally, she even exhibits special abilities in an unusual occupation.” (Radway, 123) Commonly the ideal heroine is not aware that she is considered extremely beautiful and appealing by her male counterparts. On the contrary, she is prone to exhibit tomboyish behaviour, refusing to adhere to the rules patriarchal society issues for women. She does not wish to appeal to men but wants to be treated as their equal.<sup>71</sup> However, by this depiction of the heroine’s behaviour, romances do by no means attempt to challenge the stereotypical masculine/feminine gender division. They actually tend to support the traditional role models for men and women.<sup>72</sup> This first portrayal of the heroine as rebellious and headstrong, actually serves to emphasise the development she undergoes in the course of the novel. In order to take part in a happy relationship that is based on mutual love and understanding, the heroine has to overcome her insolent, unfeminine behaviour, and display a more compassionate and caring side that is depicted as coming naturally to women.<sup>73</sup> It is also very important that the ideal heroine acknowledges her womanhood and discovers her sensual side, so that she may satisfy her partner’s sexual needs. Typically, she is very innocent, completely unaware of her own sexuality, and lacking any experience with the other sex. Only the encounter with the hero awakens her carnal needs and, eventually, leads her to explore her innately sexual nature.<sup>74</sup> Only when the heroine is able to combine her compassionately caring side, and her womanly sensuality, will she be able to achieve the satisfying relationship she longs for; because it is this combination that causes the emotionally

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<sup>71</sup> Cf. Radway, 124-126.

<sup>72</sup> Cf. Radway, 123.

<sup>73</sup> Compare Radway’s concept of the development of the ideal heroine, 123-127.

<sup>74</sup> Cf. Radway, 126.

unavailable hero to give up his independence, and to overcome his inability to show his caring side.<sup>75</sup> Thus, it becomes apparent that the heroine's beauty – although important in the sense that it makes her sexually attractive – is not the most important quality of the character. The actual emphasis lies on her inherently nurturing and sensual nature that turns out to be the basic requirement for a happy heterosexual relationship that conforms to patriarchal structures.

In contrast to that, physical appearance plays a very important role for the portrayal of the ideal hero. Descriptions of the protagonist's looks are generally very detailed. The feature that all descriptions have in common is the hero's exceptional masculinity:

The hero of the romantic fantasy is always characterized by spectacular masculinity. Indeed, it is insufficient for the author to remark in passing that the romantic hero has a muscular physique. The reader must be told, instead, that every aspect of his being, whether his body, his face, or his general demeanour, is informed by the purity of his maleness. Almost everything about him is hard, angular, and dark. (Radway, 128)

It is important to note, however, that not everything about the hero is hard and masculine. It is an essential aspect of his character that he possesses one quality that deviates from his otherwise flawless appearance. This slight aberration, then, signals that behind his seemingly impenetrable hardness he hides a genuinely affectionate and gentle side that is only waiting to be released by the heroine.<sup>76</sup> Like his partner, he has to undergo a change in order to become the caring and understanding lover she deserves. However, in both cases, the characters do not really change *per se*. Rather, they learn to embrace sides to their personality that they previously did not know, or were unwilling to reveal.<sup>77</sup> Thus, the ideal romance does not suggest that the ideal relationship is achieved by a complete change of character. It actually shows how the two protagonists help each other to uncover what is already there.

According to Janice Radway, romance readers have clear ideas about how, and under which circumstances, the protagonists' transformation should play out. It is a crucial feature of the ideal romance that the focus lies exclusively on the development of the

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<sup>75</sup> Cf. Radway, 127.

<sup>76</sup> Cf. Radway, 128.

<sup>77</sup> Cf. Radway, 148-149.

relationship between hero and heroine. Along these lines, the description of relationships between the protagonists and other characters are usually not appreciated. The ideal romance introduces antagonistic characters, but they are never real rivals for the hero or heroine, as they do not put a threat to the development of their relationship. So, rival figures never really call into question where the affections of the protagonists lie. What follows, is a significant lack of triangular relationships. As most readers prefer romances that concentrate only on the portrayal of one relationship, this lack of triangular relationships is a very important feature of romances that are considered pleasurable by the majority of readers. Thus, they do not want to read about how the couple struggles to come together. They prefer to read romances that show how two people, who already know that they belong together, strive to make their relationship work.<sup>78</sup>

In short, in the ideal romance the ideal hero and heroine have to work hard, not to be together, but to be happy together.

### 2.5.2. Canon vs. Romance

O.T.P. (One True Pairing) refers to the relationship of one particular character pairing.<sup>79</sup> Hence, *Spuffy* and *LoVe* fan fictions both belong to the category O.T.P. In a way, these fictions are very similar to the ideal romance, as their focus also lies on the relationship between two specific characters. However, it is important to note that fan fiction operates under very special conditions that make it impossible to simply equate narrations of this genre with those of romance. Therefore, it is important to take a closer look at these conditions and how they influence the way the concept of romance is realised in fan fiction.

When examining how the concept of the ideal romantic hero and heroine plays into the portrayal of the *BtVS* and *VM* characters, it is necessary to be aware of the special circumstances linked to the depiction of characters in fan fiction in general. Most characters that are featured in fan fiction stories are not original products of the author's imagination, but are based on an already existing concept. Of course, also fan fiction allows for the creation of entirely new characters (original character

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<sup>78</sup> Cf. Radway, 122-123.

<sup>79</sup> Cf. Hellekson, Busse, 11.

(OC)).<sup>80</sup> However, the construction of these original characters is a tricky business. The conditions under which readers of fan fiction are willing to accept characters invented by the author are very narrow. Usually, fans are prepared to accept new characters as long as they fit well into the fanfic universe, and do not interfere with, or overshadow, the canonically established characters. However, many fans – especially hardcore character junkies, who are devoted to one or more characters of a fannish universe and disapprove of any other characters that distract attention from their favourites – categorically reject the invention of original characters.<sup>81</sup> Moreover, there is always the risk of such a new character being – or being considered – a Mary Sue.<sup>82</sup> This is a derogatory term that refers to characters that are considered to be idealised versions of the author. Typically, such characters are not only perfectly beautiful, but also immensely intelligent. They flounce into the fan fiction universe, charm the leading characters with their extraordinary wit and good looks, and manage to solve everybody's problems with ease. It is the greatest shame for every fan fiction author to be accused of creating such a character.<sup>83</sup> Thus, the invention of new characters may be officially possible, but the conditions under which such original characters are really accepted remain very strict.

However, the portrayal of canonically established characters is not less difficult. As most fans – but especially the character junkies – are very involved with their favourite characters, they are also very anxious that they be depicted faithfully. To be faithful to the canon is of essence in the depiction of characters in fan fiction.<sup>84</sup> Thus, when writing a story about Veronica and Logan, it does not suffice to simply invent two characters that bear these names. When writing fan fiction, one has to be prepared to work with characters that are already complex creations with a personality, a history, and a well known appearance. Furthermore, one has to deal with a torrent of fan interpretations that reflect and influence how these characters are perceived.<sup>85</sup> Thus, when writing about Veronica and Logan, one does not simply write a story about two already existing characters. As soon as the story is published on the internet, it contributes to the fannish universe of *Veronica Mars*. The rewriting

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<sup>80</sup> Cf. Hellekson, Busse, 11.

<sup>81</sup> Cf. Pugh, 82.

<sup>82</sup> Cf. Hellekson, Busse, 11.

<sup>83</sup> Cf. Pugh, 85.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Pugh, 70-71.

<sup>85</sup> Cf. Kaplan, 135.

of these characters becomes an interpretive act that is not just based on the author's individual perception of these characters and their universe, but is also influenced by the perception of a larger fan community. The author's work is influenced by, and at the same time, influences the fannish universe in which it is written.<sup>86</sup> Therefore, it can be said that a fan fiction story, and the characters and situations created in it, are never only the product of an individual, but, in some sense, are always based on the fan community's understanding of their fannish universe.

This makes clear that an investigation concerned with the representation of romance's ideal hero and heroine in fan fiction can never be straightforward. There is not one author that invents characters after their own liking. There are preconditions and regulations by the source text, as well as the fan community, that govern the work of a fan fiction author, and that have to be taken into consideration.

As the characters of *VM* and *BtVS* fan fiction are already shaped by the source text, it is necessary to look at these canonical manifestations first. Only then can be determined how fans work with these canonical requirements, and whether they shape them in a way that brings them closer to the concept of the ideal hero and heroine of romance. At first glance, the heroines of *Buffy* and *Veronica Mars* come very close to the description of the heroine in romantic narratives. Both are beautiful young women, who possess certain attributes that mark them as different from other female characters. These special talents cause them to break out of the role society prescribes to young women. Instead, they rebel against typical patriarchal structures and demand to be treated equally to their male counterparts. However, contrary to romance, where the heroine overcomes this rebelliousness to embrace her feminine nature, these heroines never stop their "unfeminine" behaviour. The way they act is not just a phase, but the result of their unique situation. Unlike in romantic fiction, the qualities that make them special are not just means to attract the opposite sex, but they are a vital part of their personality and determine who they are. Furthermore, these heroines do not just wish to be able to act and be treated like men. Their strength and wit allows them to do things that are normally considered utterly masculine. Moreover, in many cases they are described to be even superior to men. It becomes clear that Veronica's and Buffy's behaviour is not just a stage in their

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<sup>86</sup> Cf. Kaplan, 136.

steady development into the ideal woman. Because they are strong action heroines, their personality and behaviour does not depend on a man and on how to please him. Of course, men do play a role in the lives of these heroines, but they do not determine who they are and how they act. Their calling makes it impossible for these characters to orientate their lives after a man. Thus, possible lovers have to adjust to the heroine's needs, often being forced to take on the more feminine role in the process.

The characters Spike and Logan reflect this necessity by displaying an already mentioned queerness to their character. Both male protagonists cannot really be described as models of the ideal hero. Their whole appearance does not correspond to the ideal of the tall, dark, hard, and angular hero. Both are not very tall and rather lean. Although, Spike's physique is quite trained and even described as "strong and mysterious and sort of compact but well muscled" (Transcript, episode 96 "Intervention"), his cocky talkative nature, and his peroxide blond punk appearance, effectively destroy any traces of the ideal hero he might possess. (Fig.3) Similarly, Logan's tendency to wear his heart on his sleeve, and his surfer looks, would probably make him a dorky minor character in romance, but definitively not the hero. (Fig.4)

Thus, it is safe to say that the canonical depiction of both male and female characters does not have much in common with the picture of the ideal romantic hero/heroine. Moreover, the relationships between said characters in the series, which have been outlined before, agree even less with the standards of the ideal romance. Therefore, fan fiction authors who are concerned with the portrayal of a romantic relationship between these characters, have to shape them into a form that – different than in the source text – enables them to really have a happy relationship that fulfils the requirements of the ideal romance.

### 2.5.3. Romance in Fan Fiction

The special circumstances surrounding fan fiction and character development have already been outlined. Now it will be examined, how fans play with the canonical directions, in order to shape their favourite characters more in the fashion of the ideal romantic hero/heroine, to make a happy relationship between them possible.



It is a very difficult task to change characters, and at the same time stay faithful to the canon. Changes have to be subtle and comprehensible, so that they won't destroy the character's credibility. Working with figures whose looks and character traits are so well established, leaves seemingly little space for creative interpretation. It is a very important skill of any fan fiction writer to be mimetic and, thus, be able to imitate the ways of the onscreen character. Only if the voice of a character is right, will fan fiction readers accept a story. To get this acceptance often proves ridiculously hard, because many fans – but especially the “character junkies” – are so involved that they believe to know their favourite characters better than anyone else; very often even better than the series creators themselves.<sup>87</sup> Getting these fans to approve of changes inflicted on “their” characters is not an easy task to accomplish. However, the space for interpretation is not as narrow as it first seems. It is all about artfully reinterpreting what people think they already know.<sup>88</sup> This, again, is closely linked to Driscoll's concept of realism and fantasy in fan fiction: all is acceptable as long as it is realistic. This means that as long as the voice is right, it does not matter whether Spike is a peroxide blonde vampire, a shy and insecure poet, or a serious lawyer. All that matters is that he keeps the essential character traits and physical indicators that mark him as Spike. Hence, it is possible to shape the characters in a way that brings them closer to the ideal of romance without endangering their credibility.

The moulding of the characters following the guidelines of romance is closely linked to the way fan fiction authors work with their Otherness. It has already been established in previous chapters that positive aspects of Otherness are commonly emphasised, while negative aspects are weakened. As Otherness prevents a happy relationship, it is necessary to change it. The tactics used by fans to work with the characters' Otherness turn out to be significant tools in the creation of romance in fan fiction. Accordingly, the weakening of Veronica's and Buffy's action heroine toughness, and the related strengthening of their womanly compassionate and caring nature, is not simply a necessary change of their Otherness. This change actually turns them into the ideal heroines of romance. Similarly, the extreme sexual prowess ascribed to Spike and Logan, and the fact that they are depicted to be the only ones

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<sup>87</sup> Cf. Pugh, 70, 71.

<sup>88</sup> Cf. Pugh, 69.

who are able to sate the heroines' needs, match the romantic conventions of the ideal hero, and his ability to bring out the heroine's sensual side. Thus, the authors' meddling with the characters' Otherness that proved to be necessary to make a happy relationship possible, conforms to the principles of the ideal romance.

A similar meddling can also be detected when it comes to the description of the male heroes' outward appearance that, as already mentioned, does not really correspond to that of the ideal romantic hero.

Before looking at examples of how writers tend to describe the physical appearance of Logan and Spike, it is necessary to point out a very prominent aspect of the fan fictional writing style. Fan fiction authors generally rely on their readers to share their knowledge of the canonical source text. This shared knowledge, then, allows them to write in a very compact style, leaving out long descriptions, as their readers' knowledge of the source text enables them to comprehend what the writer is referring to.<sup>89</sup> This tactic may be beneficial for the writers, who are not forced to spell everything out, as well as for knowledgeable readers, who are not forced to put up with descriptions of things they already know, but at the same time, it excludes readers, who do not possess the background knowledge necessary. This aspect of fan fiction writing is also reflected in the portrayal of the characters:

She had noticed him as soon as she walked through the doors with her tray but had tried to ignore his presence until she reached his side. Buffy was already fully aware of what he looked like; platinum blonde hair that should have appeared bizarre but somehow came off as striking, amazingly deep blue eyes and unbelievable cheekbones. She was also conscious that his expensive, tailored suit seemingly contained a lithe and toned body that could not be completely concealed. (squawks, Chapter 1)

Logan was standing in her kitchen, perusing the contents of the refrigerator with an intensity that rivaled her father's. [...] He really was a beautiful boy. Long, lean muscles; a tall, trim frame. Warm brown eyes...oh, and his smile. His smile made her melt, even when he was acting like a complete ass. (Madame Librarian, Part 1 )

Depictions like these are very common in *BtVS* and *VM* fan fiction. Writers rely on their audience to know what Jason Dohring as Logan and James Marsters as Spike look like and, therefore, refrain from long descriptions of their stature. Instead, they

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<sup>89</sup> See Pugh's description of the special relationship between fan fiction producers and consumers, 33-34.

use the most prominent features of these characters` to describe them. Thus, the mention of “platinum hair”, “unbelievable cheekbones” and “deep blue eyes” is incentive enough for the experienced reader to conjure the picture of James Marsters in the role of the cocky vampire. Similarly, “warm brown eyes” and the description of his patented smile will automatically conjure a picture of Jason Dohring’s portrayal of Logan Echolls in the minds of knowledgeable *Veronica Mars* fans. The additional description of their very well-trained bodies, then, serves to enhance the mental picture fans have of these character. Originally, the onscreen appearance of these figures does not really conform to the picture of the hero who sports a muscular body that is hard as steel. However, the writers’ depiction of their body turns them into ideal heroes with a strong masculine physique.

Possible shortcomings in their physical appearance are further reduced by styling them as being preferable to those of other male characters, especially those, who serve as love interests for the heroine in the show. Accordingly, compared to Duncan’s big choking presence, Logan’s more slender frame offers Veronica security without smothering her. Similarly, Buffy finds that she prefers Spike’s wiry build to the huge and bulky stature of her former lovers Angel and Riley. While they continually dwarfed her with their overbearing bodily presence, Spike’s lean but strong body fits comfortably, and makes her feel safe at the same time. Thus, in contrast to romance fiction, the lean and less threatening frame of these characters is presented as more desirable than the hard and perfect form of the ideal hero, represented by the former lovers.

This comparison to other lovers brings up another notion that differentiates fan fiction from romance fiction. The depiction of triangular relationships that is mostly avoided in romance is a very common feature in fan fiction. The canon frequently introduces other lovers for the heroines. In order to stay as faithful to canon as possible, and to only introduce changes that won’t threaten the characters` credibility, it becomes necessary to deal with their relationships with other characters on some level. Naturally, these relationships come to an end, and are depicted as being inferior to the relationship of the O.T.P.; still, they are dealt with.

As expected, the concept of the ideal romance plays an important role in fan fiction that is concerned with the romantic relationship of two particular characters. However, the special conditions that characterise this genre also cause considerable divergence.

### **3. Fan Fiction: Issues and Practices**

#### **3.1. The Copyright Debate**

I do not allow fan fiction. The characters are copyrighted. It upsets me terribly to even think about fan fiction with my characters. I advise my readers to write your own original stories with your own characters. It is absolutely essential that you respect my wishes. (Rice, "Post: Important message from Anne on fan fiction")

This statement was made by the popular writer Anne Rice and released at her official homepage. It points to a very prominent and hotly debated question that concerns all fan fiction: the question of copyright and its infringement. Thus, one of the biggest issues of fan fiction is the question to whom the characters belong once they are presented to a broad audience, and who has the right to further "play" with them. Many authors are as "terribly upset" as Anne Rice when thinking about the possibility that just about anybody could tamper with the characters they invented and, thus, consider to be rightfully and exclusively theirs. In the United States of America this claim is legally supported by the copyright law; more precisely by its definition of "derivative work":

A "derivative work" is a work based upon one or more preexisting works, such as a translation, musical arrangement, dramatization, fictionalization, motion picture version, sound recording, art reproduction, abridgment, condensation, or any other form in which a work may be recast, transformed, or adapted. A work consisting of editorial revisions, annotations, elaborations, or other modifications, which, as a whole, represent an original work of authorship, is a "derivative work". (Copyright Law Chapter 1: Subject Matter and Scope of Copyright)

Fan fiction is considered a derivative work and, therefore, becomes illegal. In addition, fan fiction stories based on characters of popular American TV shows are confronted with yet another law. The trademark law applies, because these characters are trademarks of the producing companies to which the shows belong. By writing

fiction based on TV characters, fans breach the copyright of these companies. Therefore, authors have to ensure that their characters cannot be confused with the original ones.<sup>90</sup> This is usually achieved through disclaimers in which the authors explicitly state that they do not own any of the characters, and that their stories are not to be confused with the original source text. The form of a disclaimer is not fixed, but depends on the author. Its length ranges from a few words to a few lines, and its content ranges from straightforward to humorous.

Disclaimer: Not mine. Duh. (Sarah, “Lucky Charms”)

Disclaimer: The characters from Buffy the Vampire Slayer are owned by Joss Whedon, Mutant Enemy, and Fox studios. This story is not meant to infringe upon anyone's rights, only to entertain. (Pet, “Meeting William”)

Disclaimer: Rob Thomas lets me take them out of the box and play with them, but they go home with him at the end of the day. (Tiana, “Rain Check”)

Disclaimer: I wished on a lucky penny, a rainbow, *and* a cross-eyed, one-footed rabbit, but I still don't own *Veronica Mars*. (StarCrossedSparrow, “One Thousand and EightyEight Miles”)

Disclaimers such as these can be frequently found in fan fiction stories based on TV series. However, this does not mean that every story is accompanied by a disclaimer. As this safety precaution cannot legally prevent copyright holders to press charges, many authors choose to forgo it.

Fan fiction authors have to find other strategies to ensure that they are not being sued. Many try to justify this particular fannish activity by referring to the “fair use” section of the copyright law, which proclaims certain limitations to an author's exclusive rights. Accordingly, the copyright claims of the creator of a work may not apply when the derivational work is of non-profit nature and does not influence the value and the potential market of the copyrighted work.<sup>91</sup> Furthermore, the use of copyrighted works “for purposes such as criticism, comment, news reporting, teaching (including multiple copies for classroom use), scholarship, or research, is not an infringement of copyright.” (Copyright Law Chapter 1: Subject Matter and Scope of Copyright) Fan fiction proponents use this section of the copyright law to their advantage. They argue that they neither gain any profit by writing fan fiction,

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<sup>90</sup> See *Wikipedia* sv. “Legal issues with fan fiction”.

<sup>91</sup> See Copyright Law Chapter 1, section 107.

nor cause the author of the original work any damage - financial or otherwise. Authors who aim to forbid this fannish practice do not accept this argument. Accordingly, fantasy writer Robin Hobb harshly criticises the practice of writing and reading fan fiction in her heatedly debated “Rant Against Fan Fiction”. In this short essay, which was published at her personal website in the year 2005, she not only presents fan fiction as being intellectually and artistically deprived, but, furthermore, declares it to be a criminal intrusion into an author’s intellectual property.<sup>92</sup> She fervently rejects the notion that authors are solely against fan fiction for commercial reasons and states:

Fan fiction doesn't attempt to make money off the stories, so it doesn't really violate anyone's copyright. I beg your pardon? Where did you get the idea that copyright is all about money? Copyright is about the right of the author to control his own creation. That includes making money off it. But it also includes refusing to sell movie rights, or deciding that you're not really proud of your first novel and you don't wish to see it republished. It's about choosing how your work is presented. (Hobb, quoted in “In Defense of Fanfiction: Guestblogger Justin Goes Robin Hobbnobbing”)

Hobb repeatedly stresses that she does not only dislike fan fiction because of the possible financial damage it could inflict, but because she does not want to accept that strangers simply alter the way she wants her stories to be presented.<sup>93</sup>

Naturally, this essay caused strong reactions among fan communities. Fan fiction supporters disapproved of the views Hobb propagated in her essay. They felt offended by the fact that she blatantly denied fan fiction to have any artistic value, and criticised the “incredibly cliché [i]dea she has about fanfiction”. (Puretide, “Comment on “In Defense of Fanfiction: Guestblogger Justin Goes Robin Hobbnobbing””) However, not all reactions were negative. On the contrary, a considerable amount of people understood the author’s argument.

I can understand how Hobb might resent people changing the characters and events of her stories. I'm not going to deny that I'd be a little miffed at first if someone manipulated the world and characters that I had so carefully thought up. But then, what of all the fanfics that are written with an amazing depth and

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<sup>92</sup> Hobb’s essay can no longer be accessed on her personal website. In order to view the whole “Rant”, as well as a detailed reply, and positive and negative fan reactions, look at Justin’s “In Defense of Fanfiction”.

<sup>93</sup> Cf. Justin, “In Defense of Fanfiction”.

understanding of the characters and world? They cannot be condemned as worthless or perverse merely because of their being fanfiction. So, it comes down to this. As an author, do you feel comfortable with your readers exploring your characters? Following threads left untied? Robin Hobb feels uncomfortable with it, and so as readers, I think we should respect her wishes. (atropos, “Comment on “In Defense of Fanfiction: Guestblogger Justin Goes Robin Hobbnobbing””)

Hobb’s article and the reactions it caused among fan fiction opponents and proponents, serves to show the anxiety and the controversy that surrounds this genre.

As shown above, the claim that the production of fan fiction is legal because it does not pose a threat to the financial profit of the original author, is generally not accepted among its critics. Thus, efforts were made to prove the legitimacy of this fan practice by arguing from a different angle. Correspondingly, Henry Jenkins reasons that the act of writing fan fiction is not merely a way for fans to satisfy their unfulfilled needs and desires by changing an original work (thereby disrespecting the intentions of the creator); in contrast, he presents it as a fannish tool of criticism. In a post on his personal website he concentrates on the part of the fair use section that excludes works of criticism from copyright infringement and argues:

[A] key point here is that I regard all or at least most fan fiction to involve some form of criticism of the original texts upon which it is based -- criticism as in interpretation and commentary if not necessary criticism as in negative statements made about them. (Jenkins, “Post: Fan Fiction as Critical Commentary”)

His line of reasoning points towards the concept of the fan critic.<sup>94</sup> Jenkins claims that within their fannish realm fans are the highly informed elite. Their close relationship to the source text, and their superior knowledge about it, surpasses that of academic critics and makes them the actual authorities. However, as their status is not officially recognised, this elite of fan critics lacks the social power of the academic critics.<sup>95</sup>

Fan fiction proponents support Jenkins efforts to legitimise fan fiction. Among the most active supporters are the members of the Organization of Transformative Works (OTW). Picking up Jenkins` line of argument, this organisation defines fan

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<sup>94</sup> For more detailed information on Jenkins` concept of the fan critic see Jenkins, Chapter 3, 86-119.

<sup>95</sup> Cf. Jenkins, *Poachers*, 86-87.

fictions not as derivative but as transformative works which provide critical comment on the source text, and claims that, as such, they are in fact legal. It is the goal of the members of the OTW – among them lawyers, college professors, and authors – to get fan fiction to be officially recognised as transformative work by the U.S. copyright law.<sup>96</sup>

Despite many attempts of supporters and opponents of this genre, to legalise or to prohibit it, respectively, fan fiction currently seems to exist in a grey area. Right now, the most important factor that determines its right to exist is whether the creators of the original texts tolerate it or not. Many, like Joanne K. Rowling, Terry Pratchett, and Joss Whedon, welcome this fan practice.<sup>97</sup> Others, like Robin Hobb and Anne Rice, do not. Both authors claim that because their characters are their creations, they belong to them alone, which gives them the solitary right to decide their fates. This belief is shared by numerous authors. For them, fan fiction is a violation of what they consider to be their rightful property.

However, whether characters can truly be considered the sole intellectual property of their creators is questionable. Sheenagh Pugh argues that characters do not come to life through the author's depiction, but through the reader's imagination. The characters are not what the author wants them to be, but what the reader imagines them to be. This assumption leads Pugh to claim that characters do not belong to those who created them, but to each and everyone who brings them to life through their imagination.<sup>98</sup> This would mean then that the author's control over their creations ends, as soon as they present them to other people, who then – in their function as textual poachers – appropriate them to fit their own needs. The matter of ownership becomes even more questionable when it comes to characters of movies and TV shows. There are so many people involved in the creation of such characters that it is hard to determine who could rightfully claim to own them.<sup>99</sup>

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<sup>96</sup> More detailed information on the organization and its goals can be found at the official website: *Organization for Transformative Works*.

<sup>97</sup> For an overview on authors and producers who support fan fiction access "Fanfiction Supporters" at *Lost in a Story – Airawyn's fanfiction site*.

<sup>98</sup> Cf. Pugh, 22-23.

<sup>99</sup> Cf. Pugh, 22.



This again raises the initial question: to whom do the characters belong, and who has the right to “play” with them? This issue is fundamental for the whole genre, yet – as shown above – it is far from being resolved. The aforementioned struggles show that fictional characters are powerful forces, which can inspire awe and dedication, as well as serious conflicts. But what proponents and opponents of fan fiction ultimately seem to have in common, is the belief that the characters are worth the struggle.

## **3.2. How Fans “Play” with Their Favourite Characters**

### 3.2.1. Genres

It has already been mentioned that the stereotypical view of the fan as someone whose actions serve solely to satisfy inconsequential and immature fantasies and desires, is energetically challenged by fans and academics. The concept of the fan critic establishes fans as members of interpretive communities who actively and critically interpret a chosen source text. According to that, the production of fan fiction can be seen as a valuable tool of criticism.<sup>100</sup> It reflects the individual interpretation of the author, as well as the collective interpretations of the fan community in which it is written. Character formation in fan fiction then represents one possible interpretation of the primary text that unites and reflects the author’s, as well as the community’s, understanding of the canon.<sup>101</sup>

The character formation strategies used by fans to represent the canonical characters in their works are copious, and vary depending on the focus and the length of a story. Necessarily, strategies used for a short story are different from those used for a lengthier fanfic. Much in the same way, a romantic fan fiction imposes different requirements for character formation, than a story that is concerned with the development of one single character. Thus, length and focus are two important factors to be considered when dealing with character formation in fan fiction.<sup>102</sup> This study is concerned with fan fiction stories of varying length that deal with the romantic relationship between two characters. Fictions of this category are commonly referred to as het (meaning fictions that are concerned with the romantic – and very often erotic – relationship of a heterosexual pairing). They are distinguished

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<sup>100</sup> Cf. Jenkins, *Poachers*, 88-89.

<sup>101</sup> Cf. Kaplan, 136.

<sup>102</sup> Cf. Kaplan, 138.

from gen fics (stories with non-romantic content), and slash fics (stories that deal with the romantic and/or erotic relationship of characters of the same sex).<sup>103</sup>

Generally, it can be said that fan fiction favours the depiction of relationships between characters, whether they are romantic or not. Television based fan fiction initially started mainly because fans felt that their favourite series were entirely too action-based, and did not spend enough time depicting the relationships of their characters. Although, this is no longer true, fan fiction still distinctly favours relationship-based plots.<sup>104</sup> This preference is reflected in the development of special genres, which support the emotional interaction between characters. PWP stories particularly concentrate on the interaction of the characters. The meaning of the acronym PWP (Plot? What Plot?) already establishes that stories of this genre disregard action in favour of interaction.<sup>105</sup> PWP stories are frequently linked to fluff stories, meaning stories that depict characters and relationships in a light and romantic way, in order to make an emotional impact.<sup>106</sup> Another genre that aids character interaction is hurt/comfort. Stories of hurt/comfort (h/c) content typically depict one character's emotional and/or physical breakdown and their subsequent rescue by another character. H/C stories again are closely linked to another genre, namely angst. Angst stories do not deal with what happens, but with the way characters struggle to deal with what happens to them.<sup>107</sup> The focus of these genres differs, but they are all used to bring characters together, and to promote relationships between them.

### 3.2.2. Narrative Situation

Character formation strategies may change according to the length and the focus of a work, but there is one device that always remains the same: focalisation. This method is a veritable tool in fan fiction, and is frequently used to present the events from a character's viewpoint in order to encourage the reader's identification with them.<sup>108</sup> Focalisation has to be distinguished from narration. While the former indicates the viewpoint from which a story is told, the latter refers to the agent who tells the story.

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<sup>103</sup> Compare Deborah Kaplan's description of the subcategories of fan fiction in Kaplan, 138.

<sup>104</sup> Cf. Pugh, 75-76.

<sup>105</sup> Cf. Pugh, 76.

<sup>106</sup> Cf. Hellekson, Busse, 11.

<sup>107</sup> Cf. Pugh, 76-77.

<sup>108</sup> Cf. Kaplan, 138.

Thus, focalisation and narration can be viewed in terms of “who sees” and “who speaks” respectively. It is important to note that focalisation and narration can be, but are not necessarily attributed to the same agent.<sup>109</sup>

Before looking more closely at the narrative situation in fan fiction, it has to be acknowledged that it is different for book-based and TV-based fiction. TV shows naturally operate with dialogue. Characters can actually be seen on screen and their voices can be heard. This makes it easier for the writers to adapt them. Writers and readers of television-based fan fiction already share a general notion of how the voice of a particular character sounds.<sup>110</sup> Thus, the viewpoint from which a story is told is secondary as long as the overall voice – meaning “a characteristic vocal or tonal quality projected through a text” (Jahn, N3.1. Narration (voice)) – is accurate and reflects the canonical character.<sup>111</sup> In contrast to that, the viewpoint is of vital importance in book-based fan fiction. It makes a difference, whether a book is told from the point of view of a character, or by an authorial voice. Authors of book-based fan fictions frequently are forced to adopt the narrative situation of the original, as changes often fail to capture the voice of the source text in a way that is deemed satisfactory by their readers.<sup>112</sup>

As already mentioned, the main criterion for a television-based fanfic is that the voice is right. “However striking the ideas, however gripping the plot, if the voice is wrong nothing else will compensate for it.” (Pugh, p 71) It is particularly hard for writers to capture the right voice, thus to depict the characters in a way that is considered realistic – which means as close as possible to the source text –, because most readers of fan fictions are so involved with the primary text that they believe to know all about it.<sup>113</sup> Fan fiction authors face the challenging task to create a version of these already existing characters that is close enough to the original to enable the fan community to not only recognise it, but to accept it. At the same time, their creation has to be innovative enough to attract the audience’s interest, so that their own text can exist apart from the source text. A narrative situation that makes it particularly hard for writers to master a faithful mimetic reproduction is the first-

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<sup>109</sup> Cf. Rimmon-Kenan, 72.

<sup>110</sup> Cf. Pugh, 72.

<sup>111</sup> Cf. Pugh, 70-71.

<sup>112</sup> Cf. Pugh, 72.

<sup>113</sup> Cf. Pugh, 70.

person point of view of a character, as it demands total control of the voice. Because of that, for a long time most fan fiction was written in third person. Only recent developments suggest that first-person narration becomes increasingly popular in this genre.<sup>114</sup>

Conversely, a feature that is particularly common to fan fictions concerned with romantic relationships is the shifting of the viewpoint.<sup>115</sup> This means that both parties of a romantic pairing serve as focalisers. Because of the shifting point of view, the reader is able to experience the emotions of both partners. This method is very common in gen- as well as slash-writing.<sup>116</sup> Furthermore, it is closely linked to another method that is very common to romance fiction: the dual perspective.<sup>117</sup> This narrative technique enables the reader to experience the actions presented to them from the heroine's point of view, as well as from the point of view of an omniscient narrator. This means that the reader can adopt the heroine's narrow viewpoint when interpreting the hero's actions and behaviour – and, thus, feel her indignation, rage and fear –, but at the same time, the additional information provided by the omniscient narration reassures them that the hero's motives are in fact honourable. The dual perspective allows the romance reader to feel both sides and, therefore, heightens the pleasurable experience.<sup>118</sup>

Generally, focalisation that is close to the characters allows authors to establish facets to these characters that are not presented in the source text. It can show a character's underlying emotions and motivations and, thus, present them in a new light.<sup>119</sup> Under ideal circumstances focalisation changes the readers' preconceived notions of a canonical character and gets them to open up to new possibilities.

### 3.2.3. Reinterpretation

On the whole it can be said that, although, there is a considerable amount of restrictions and regulations for fan fiction authors to consider, this genre also opens up infinite possibilities for its writers and readers. As Sheenagh Pugh puts it:“ There

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<sup>114</sup> Cf. Pugh, 71.

<sup>115</sup> Cf. Jenkins, 199.

<sup>116</sup> Cf. Jenkins, 199.

<sup>117</sup> See Radway 140-141.

<sup>118</sup> Cf. Radway, 140-141.

<sup>119</sup> Cf. Kaplan, 139.

are things you cannot do, and far more that you can. [...] You can re-interpret what your readers think they know.” (Pugh, 69) This notion of reinterpretation ties in with the idea that fans write fiction based on their favourite shows because they want “more from” the source text.<sup>120</sup> They feel the need to adapt the source text to meet their requirements. Henry Jenkins claims that because of that, fan writing exceeds its critical function:

These fan stories build upon the assumptions of the fan meta-text, respond to oft-voiced desires of the fan community, yet move beyond the status of criticism and interpretation; they are satisfying narratives, eagerly received by a fan readership already primed to accept and appreciate their particular versions of the program. (Jenkins, *Poachers*, 155)

Thus, fan fiction does not only serve as a means of criticism and interpretation, but it satisfies the fan community’s needs. In order to fulfil these needs, the source text has to be reinterpreted. Jenkins claims that:” fan writers do not so much reproduce the primary text as they rework and rewrite it, repairing or dismissing unsatisfying aspects, developing interests not sufficiently explored.” (Jenkins, *Poachers*, 162)

Correspondingly, Jenkins suggests ten strategies which fans employ to rewrite their favourite programs so that they may meet their requirements:

**1)        Recontextualization**

Fictions present scenes that are felt to be missing in the show. These scenes are used to fill gaps, to show the characters` underlying feelings, or to provide explanations for their onscreen behaviour.

**2)        Expanding the Series Timeline**

Canonical hints about the characters` past or future are taken up and used as the basis for stories about events that precede or follow the series` timeline.

**3)        Refocalization**

The canonical events are presented from a different point of view, frequently that of a minor character.

**4)        Moral Realignment**

Stories question the moral code of the source text, shifting the canonical focus by making the villains the protagonists. These stories aim to explore the series` universe

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<sup>120</sup> Cf. Pugh, 19.

from the point of view of the villains and, thus, blur the canonical boundaries between good and evil, and right and wrong.

**5) Genre Shifting**

Stories present the source text in a different generic tradition by changing the focus. Genre shifting takes place for instance when the description of the romantic relationship between two characters is favoured over the description of the action, thus, turning the story into a romance.

**6) Cross Overs**

“Cross-over” stories combine characters and situations of different source texts, thus, blurring the boundaries between these source texts and the fandoms surrounding them.

**7) Character Dislocation**

Characters are taken away from their original environment and put into an alternate universe. Frequently they are even given different names and identities. The canonical characters serve as the basis for vastly different fan creations.

**8) Personalization**

Fan fiction authors try to combine the fictional universe of their favourite television show with their real life by introducing characters that are fictional versions of themselves (“Mary Sue”).

**9) Emotional Intensification**

Fans emphasise moments of emotional crisis. Traumatic experiences often serve to bring characters closer together and to reveal their hidden emotions for each other. This method is particularly common in the hurt/comfort genre.

**10) Eroticization**

The erotic aspects of the relationships between characters are explored, frequently by depicting the romantic and/or sexual relationship of a non-canonical pairing.<sup>121</sup>

Many fan fictions conform to one category, but in many cases the boundaries of the rewriting methods are blurred within a single story.<sup>122</sup> Overall, this categorisation provides a useful tool for the analysis of fan fiction in general.

As this study is particularly concerned with fan fiction of romantic content, another concept has to be mentioned here, namely Janice A. Radway’s notion of the ideal

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<sup>121</sup> Cf. Jenkins` `Ten Ways To Rewrite A Television Show` in Jenkins, *Poachers*, 162-177.

<sup>122</sup> Cf. Jenkins, *Poachers*, 176.

romance. Radway does not only identify the characteristics of the ideal romantic hero and heroine, but she also accounts for the transformation of both protagonists that is necessary to make a romantic relationship between them possible. Therefore, Radway's model is very useful for the interpretation of the character- and plot development in *Spuffy* and *LoVe* fan fiction.

Combined, both Jenkins' and Radway's categorisation schemes can serve as valuable tools for the analysis of romantic fan fiction in general. However, when it comes to fan fiction characters in particular, these approaches are only partially helpful. As already mentioned, character formation in fan fiction is a very important and very complex process. Therefore, I believe it is necessary to develop a classification system that accounts for the special means and techniques that are characteristic for character formation in TV-based fan fiction.

#### **4. Close Reading: Classifying Character Formation Processes**

##### **4.1. Character Formation Processes in *Spuffy* and *LoVe* Fan Fiction**

###### **4.1.1. Categorising Character Formation Processes**

As the following model was particularly devised to account for character formation processes and their outcomes in fan fiction of romantic content, it will to some extent bear resemblance to both Jenkins' and Radway's typology. Generally speaking, all fan fiction stories analysed in this study belong to Jenkins' category *Genre Shifting*,<sup>123</sup> because they change the focus of the source text by concentrating entirely on the development of the romantic plot. Thus, they also fall into the category *Eroticization*,<sup>124</sup> in the sense that they are concerned with the romantic – and frequently also the erotic – relationship of one character pairing. Because of that, they essentially do also conform to Radway's concept of the ideal romance. Therefore, all these models are bound to overlap.

This study is based on the assumption that authors create their versions of the canonical characters intending to stay as faithful to the originals as possible. Only

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<sup>123</sup> Cf. Jenkins, *Poachers*, 169-170.

<sup>124</sup> Cf. Jenkins, *Poachers*, 175-177.

then, will the fan community accept their creations. Thus, the actual degree of faithfulness of fan fiction characters will not be examined. It is the aim of this classification scheme to illustrate the fannish strategies used to alter the canonical characters in a way that makes it possible for them to engage in a relationship that conforms to the requirements of the ideal romance. Concretely, it will be examined how characters are changed; how said changes are brought about; and, eventually, what the newly created versions of the canonical characters look like, and how they relate to the source text.

Generally, it can be distinguished between two types of character formation strategies: those, which modify characters from the inside, and those, which modify them from the outside. This means that the inside strategies cause an alteration that is triggered from within the character(s). In contrast to that, the outside strategies cause an alteration that is brought about by outside forces.

### *Inside Strategies*

It has already been established that the inside strategies of character formation work from within the characters themselves.

#### *Weakening*

This strategy is inextricably linked to the hurt/comfort genre. Therefore, it can also be related to Jenkins' category of *Emotional Intensification*.<sup>125</sup> Meeting the requirements of this genre, one character that is part of the O.T.P., takes care of the other party of the pairing, who is emotionally and/or physically injured. In the course of this interaction, the couple gets to know each other better. Character traits and motivations of each character that have been previously hidden or misinterpreted are uncovered and put into perspective. The growing closeness and intimacy between the characters does not only enable them to overcome their problems and fears together, but also causes them to develop romantic feelings for each other; or to acknowledge and embrace romantic feelings that have already been there, but were previously suppressed. Thus, the weakening of one character ultimately lays the groundwork for a happy relationship. Sheenagh Pugh claims that "female characters are relatively immune from being used in this type of story, partly because it makes the readers

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<sup>125</sup> Cf. Jenkins, 174-175.



feel uncomfortable”. (Pugh, 81) This does not apply to *BtVS* and *VM* fan fiction. *Spuffy* and *LoVe* stories frequently feature Buffy and Veronica as the injured party. This is probably due to their status as action heroines. Their innate toughness obviously deactivates any reservations authors might have concerning the injuring of women. Moreover, as this toughness presents one of the major obstacles for the success of the romantic relationship, the weakening of the female character serves as a useful tool for fan fiction writers to overcome this problem. By diminishing the extreme strength that makes her an action heroine, the offending Otherness that stands in the way of romance is reduced.

### *Knowledge Enhancement*

Frequently, fans expand the knowledge of one or both members of the pairing, so that they know more than their canonical versions. This grants them a better understanding of their current situation, and allows them to deal with – and to overcome – their problems more effectively; or to avoid them altogether. It also gives them a better understanding of each other. In the fantastic universe of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, the additional information is introduced through prophetic dreams or apparitions. Another strategy that is limited to *BtVS* fictions are timetravel stories.<sup>126</sup> In the case of knowledge enhancement, these stories feature one or both main characters as coming from the future. They then have a profound knowledge of the future, and act in a way that allows them to avoid mistakes that hinder a happy relationship. Another way to enhance the characters` knowledge is to set fan fiction stories in the future. Such futurefic stories commonly feature wiser and more mature versions of the characters, whose enhanced knowledge enables them to interact differently. This method is particularly common in *Veronica Mars* fan fiction. Both timetravel fics and futurefics belong to the greater category of AU (alternative universe) fictions. AU stories put the characters in a new setting (that may or may not be based on canon).<sup>127</sup> The information related above shows that knowledge enhancement partly corresponds to Jenkins` categories *Expanding the Series Timeline*, and *Character Dislocation*.<sup>128</sup>

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<sup>126</sup> For more detailed information on the different categories in *Spuffy* fan fiction look at the *Spuffy* archives *Elysian Fields* and *The Spuffy Realm*.

<sup>127</sup> Cf. Hellekson, Busse, 11.

<sup>128</sup> Cf. Jenkins, *Poachers*, 163-165, 171.

### *Knowledge Restriction*

In contrast to the previous method, this strategy limits the characters' knowledge and causes them to know less than the canonical characters. Instead of enabling the characters to deal with, or to avoid possible problems, this strategy usually negates canonical problems altogether. In the *BtVS* universe spells are often used to restrict the characters' knowledge. Moreover, timetravel stories that feature one or both members of the *Spuffy* pairing coming from the past, introduce versions of the characters that have no knowledge of the obstacles that normally obstruct a romantic relationship. Furthermore, pre-series fics, which are set before the canonical events, present another variant of knowledge restriction. They are set at a time, when said obstacles do not exist or can be easily avoided. Their limited knowledge then allows the characters to permit, and to accept their mutual attraction more easily. Pre-series fics are particularly common in the fairly realistic universe of *Veronica Mars*. Again, this strategy is closely linked to Jenkins' categories *Expanding the Series Timeline*, and *Character Dislocation*.<sup>129</sup> Together with the previously introduced knowledge enhancement strategy, this character formation device presents another way fan writers deal with the offending Otherness of the protagonists. The enhancement of the characters' knowledge provides them with information that enables them to understand and to deal with problems caused by their Otherness. The restriction of their knowledge, on the other hand, keeps them ignorant of such problems.

### *Outside Strategies*

Character formation strategies that modify the characters from the outside typically feature external forces that cause an alteration of the characters.

### *Eradication of Differences*

This method instigates the elimination of the emotional and physical differences that stand between the members of the O.T.P. In this case, emotional and physical differences are frequently seen as being inextricably linked. Therefore, the author's alteration of the physical appearance of one or both characters often causes – or stands synonymously for – the eradication of the emotional barrier that stands between the main characters. By changing the personal background of the characters and the circumstances they find themselves in, the basic conditions for their

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<sup>129</sup> Cf. Jenkins, *Poachers*, 163-165, 171.

relationship are changed. This enables them to act and interact in a way that favours a romantic entanglement. Again, this method is inextricably linked to the genre of AU fiction. AU stories that favour this strategy are pre-series fics and futurefics. Additionally, *BtVS* fan fiction knows the sub-genres of allhuman fics and vampire-verse fics.<sup>130</sup> The first puts Buffy and Spike in an environment where everybody is human. Thus, resolving the couple's vampire – slayer antagonism problem. The latter puts them in an environment where both are vampires and resolves the aforementioned problem as well. Yet again, these strategies are closely linked to Henry Jenkins' *Expanding the Series Timeline*, and *Character Dislocation* concepts.<sup>131</sup>

### *Matchmakers*

This strategy relies on outside forces that help the couple to overcome their differences and influence them in a way that makes them realise their hidden feelings for each other. The meddling of these external forces prompts the main characters to change. Matchmakers do not only signify secondary characters who try to bring the protagonists together, but this term also applies to supernatural forces that intervene in favour of the couple. It is important to note that supernatural matchmakers are not restricted to the fantastic universe of *Spuffy* fan fiction. Various *LoVe* fics feature paranormal matchmakers, almost exclusively in the form of Veronica's murdered best friend Lilly Kane. Another strategy that is very popular with fan writers involves the introduction of an extraordinary situation in which the intended lovers are trapped, and which ultimately forces them to acknowledge their feelings for each other. In a broader sense of the term, this tactic can also be counted as a matchmaking device. This character formation device is not restricted to specific fan fiction genres, as it can be employed seemingly in any story.

### *Breadcrumbs*

Frequently, fans take canonical occurrences that suggest the possibility of a happy romantic relationship between the members of their favourite ship, and expand them into a universe where this possibility is realised. Thus, they latch on to breadcrumbs provided by the source text. Very popular canonical breadcrumbs for *Spuffy* and *LoVe* fan fiction are provided by the *BtVS* season four episode "Something Blue" –

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<sup>130</sup> Compare "Categories" in *Elysian Fields* and *The Spuffy Realm*.

<sup>131</sup> Cf. Jenkins, *Poachers*, 163-165, 171.

in which one of Willow's spells has Spike and Buffy madly in love and planning their wedding –,<sup>132</sup> and the *VM* season two episode "Not Pictured" – which features a dream of Veronica that shows an alternate reality, where Lilly has not died and Veronica is in a happy relationship with Logan.<sup>133</sup> Fan authors who make use of this strategy, either work with the original concept as introduced by the source text, or merely use the basic idea of the happily coupled O.T.P. stories that are based on breadcrumbs necessarily belong to the category of AU, as they present versions of the characters that – even though they were insinuated by the primary text – are fundamentally different from the canonical characters. Like with the eradication of differences, the backgrounds and the situations the characters find themselves in are radically changed, which allows them to interact more easily. Thus, also this strategy relates to Jenkins' concepts *Expanding the Series Timeline* and *Character Dislocation*.<sup>134</sup>

It has to be acknowledged that these strategies are not strictly separate categories. There are, of course, stories that make use of only one strategy. However, it is very common for the aforementioned character formation strategies to occur simultaneously within a single work of fan fiction. This will also become apparent in the close analysis of fan fiction stories in the following chapters.

#### 4.1.2. The Outcomes of Character Formation: Character Change vs. Character Switch

It is the ultimate goal of all these character formation strategies to alter the characters in a way that allows for a happy relationship of the *Spuffy* and the *LoVe* pairing. Although, the desired end result is most definitely a suitably revised character; the actual outcomes vary considerably. I would like to propose four distinguishable ways in which a character can be altered by the abovementioned character formation strategies.

Generally, it can be distinguished between two different basic results: character change and character switch. These can, then, be further categorised.

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<sup>132</sup> For more detailed information see episode 4.9 "Something Blue".

<sup>133</sup> For more detailed information see episode 2.22 "Not Pictured".

<sup>134</sup> Cf. Jenkins, 163-165, 171.

### ***Character Change***

Character change denotes the comprehensible modification of one or both member(s) of the romantic pairing. It can be further classified into gradual- and abrupt character change.

#### *Gradual Character Change*

This involves the gradual and observable change of one or both character(s). This change is either triggered by a crucial event (this can, but need not be a canonical event), or it presents a natural development that results from the canonical or fanfictional storyline. The behaviour, the attitude, and the motivations of the resulting character(s) differ slightly from those of the canonical versions, but the basic character traits remain intact. The heroine, who is weakened by illness and forced to turn to the hero for help, and who - through this interaction - slowly accepts that she can depend on him, and that she can allow herself to love him, would be an example for a gradual change.

#### *Abrupt Character Change*

Here, the change takes place abruptly. It is not observable, yet comprehensible. Most often only one character is affected by the change, that is always triggered by a crucial event (canonical or fanfictional). The abrupt change of one member of the O.T.P. then triggers the gradual change of the other member. As with the gradual change, the basic character traits remain untouched. Fantastic events like prophetic dreams or apparitions, or more realistic events like illness or accidents, frequently serve to induce an abrupt character change.

### ***Character Switch***

Character switch indicates the substitution of one or more canonical character(s) by an entirely new version of said character(s). Again, this category can be differentiated further, namely into comprehensible - and radical character switch.

#### *Comprehensible Character Switch*

This involves the fanfictionish invention of an entirely different character. However, this new character is still based on canonical occurrences. This means that the new version of the character is based on suggestions made by the source text.

Manifestations of the comprehensible switch include depictions of human Victorian William, Victorian girl Buffy, and pre-murder/innocent Logan and Veronica. The switch predominantly affects both characters. Although they are radically altered, the way they speak and behave still corresponds to that of the canonical characters. Because of that, they can still be recognised and accepted as versions of the canonical characters.

### *Radical Character Switch*

This category only applies to *Spuffy* fan fiction. Again, an entirely different character is invented, but said new character is not based on canonical occurrences. Very often, this switch of character is also accompanied by a switch of setting. Thus, stories that feature human Buffy and Spike (very often then referred to as Elizabeth and William) take place in a setting where vampires and slayers do not exist at all. Other versions of the radical switch involve the portrayal of Buffy as a witch, or Spike as a slayer. This switch always affects both characters. Although, they are not based on canonical incidents, their speech patterns and actions still correspond to those of the canonical characters to ensure the fannish acceptance of the new versions.

The following analysis of various *Spuffy* and *LoVe* fan fictions will try to illustrate how the aforementioned character formation strategies are applied, and what their outcomes presented above actually look like.

## **4.2. Diminishing Offending Otherness: Weakening**

As already mentioned, this character formation strategy is inextricably linked with the genre hurt/comfort. The general structure of hurt/comfort stories always stays the same: one character experiences physical and/or emotional pain and needs the help of another character to overcome it. However, the actual ways in which such stories can play out are innumerable.

### 4.2.1. Weakening through Illness

Among the more innocuous realisations of this genre are stories that describe one of the members of the One True Pairing as being sick. Commonly, this involves one character suffering from an illness that is not actually life threatening – preferably a cold, or the flu –, and the other character taking care of them. Unlike the heroines of

other fandoms, who are hardly ever put into the position of the suffering party because it makes readers feel uncomfortable,<sup>135</sup> the female protagonists of *BtVS* and *VM* fan fiction are not immune to suffering. Thus, it is not surprising that many authors should choose to present Veronica and Buffy in the weak position of the sick patient.

In fact, the heroine's illness presents an easy way to induce a change of the character. Illness weakens the heroine, thus, temporarily eliminates the offending Otherness produced by her extreme toughness. At the same time, it gives the hero the opportunity to show his nurturing and caring side, without being punished for it by the heroine. The weakness of the heroine, and her resulting need of protection and attention, enables the hero to act out the typical male role of the protector. Therefore, the stereotypical male-female gender roles are temporarily restored. Even though this situation is not permanent (the heroine's toughness returns as soon as she recovers), it still lasts long enough for the female protagonist to see her male counterpart in a new light. She has to acknowledge that he is worthy of her trust and affection. In turn, the hero can prove to her – and himself – that he is able to take care of her, and to keep her safe when she is too weak to look after herself. His behaviour towards the heroine shows her, as well as the reader, that he is truly in love with her. Commonly, it is suggested that all his negative features are by far outweighed by the genuine affection he has exhibited towards her.

The *LoVe* story “The Benefits of Being Lost”, and the *Spuffy* story “Fevered” both deal with the illness of the heroine and, thus, help to illustrate the abovementioned features of this variety of weakening.

When analysing television based fan fiction it is important to look at the canonical time frame in which a story is set. While AU stories that place the characters in an entirely different environment naturally exist independently from canonical events, the canonical background is of major importance for fan fictions that are based on the actual events of the show. For stories that deal with a special ship – in this case *LoVe* and *Spuffy* – the canonical timeframe is particularly important, as it determines the relationship of the two main characters. In many cases, authors include an

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<sup>135</sup> Cf. Pugh, 81.

explicit statement as to the timeframe in which their story is set, in the preface. This is a short synopsis that provides the basic features of the story. It usually includes information about author, genre, ship, word count, important publishing dates, and rating of a story, as well as a short summary of the content and a disclaimer. (Fig.5, Fig.6)<sup>136</sup>

“The Benefits of Being Lost” by Madame Librarian contains 13623 words and was posted in February 2006 at *LiveJournal*. It does not provide an explicit mention of the timeframe in which it is set. However, clues from the text indicate that it takes place in the middle of season two of *Veronica Mars*. Accordingly, Veronica and Logan entertain a shaky friendship after Veronica has broken up with him. Furthermore, Logan, who is being accused of murder, has returned to behaving like the “psychotic jackass” of season one, which includes having affairs with various women. In this situation “The Benefits of Being Lost” is set.

The summary provided in the preface already hints at the basic content of the story: “*Long ago, Logan swore he would never again come to the rescue of one Veronica Mars. He was wrong.*” (Madam Librarian, Summary) This suggests that Veronica is in trouble and needs Logan’s help. However, the nature of Veronica’s dilemma is not at all clear. Schooled members of *Veronica Mars* fandom will possibly infer from the typical storylines of the series that the heroine’s troubles are related to one of her cases, and that she needs Logan to rescue her from a dangerous situation. This train of thought is further encouraged in the first paragraphs of the story. Logan, who has noticed Veronica’s prolonged absence from school, fears that she has gotten herself into trouble while investigating one of her cases:

Concern for Veronica had grown from curiosity to near-panic as he began to imagine all of the precarious situations she could have managed to get herself ensnared in. No one was pesky like Veronica Mars, and most of the criminal element around town knew it, too. What if her dad was out of town and didn't realize she was in trouble? [...] She hadn't returned the two phone calls he had already made to her between his first and second period classes, and the worry that had crept into his quiet heart was starting to gnaw. (Madame Librarian, “The Benefits of Being Lost”)

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<sup>136</sup> Figures 5 and 6 illustrate examples of such prefaces in two of the main *BtVS* and *VM* archives: *The Spuffy Realm* and *LiveJournal*.



The first impression of Veronica being in imminent danger is strengthened by the fact that the first part of the story is told exclusively from Logan's point of view. Veronica is completely absent. As Logan serves as the focaliser, the reader is only provided with his restricted knowledge. Because of that, the audience is enquired to share Logan's belief that Veronica may be in serious trouble. The mystery of Veronica's whereabouts is solved, when Logan comes to her apartment and realises that his assessment of the situation was only partially correct. Veronica is certainly in need of help, but not because she is in trouble with the criminal elements of Neptune, but because she is seriously ill:

Veronica coughed raggedly, and Logan was by her side in two long strides. [...] "Logan?" she murmured, her eyes fluttering open. The normally-azure orbs were a dark indigo, her features twisted in pain. "Veronica, what's wrong?" Logan leaned over her, wrapping his right arm around her hip, his left hand came up to stroke her cheek, her brow. Her face was burning hot, she was feverish. Her hand grasped his at her waist, her skin was clammy. "You're sick," he declared needlessly. Veronica nodded miserably, and coughed. Logan moved his arm as if to brace her, to help her into a sitting position, but she stopped him with a hand on his chest. "Don't. It hurts to move. It hurts so bad," she whimpered, her eyes filling with tears. "Why didn't you call me?" Logan whispered, brushing sweat-dampened locks of hair from her eyes. It was then he noticed that she was beginning to smell, like stale perspiration and saliva. He pressed his lips to her forehead, determined that she was well above a healthy temperature. He needed to get her to a doctor. She licked dry, cracked lips, her voice thready. "Can't.... My dad's out of town.... Can't..." "You could have called *me*," Logan repeated, still touching her face gently, unable to break the tenuous truce, the fleeting contact. "Can't do anything about it," Veronica huffed, wincing in pain. "I'm going to call for our family doctor," Logan promised, reaching into his pocket for his cell phone. Veronica clutched his wrist futilely. "We...can't afford it," she whispered, the heat of shame coloring her cheeks. Logan smiled, bent his forehead to hers, pressing down on hers lightly, sweetly. "This one is on me," he murmured.  
(Madame Librarian, "The Benefits of Being Lost")

Thus, the basic outline of the story is established. Veronica is too ill to take care of herself, but is too proud to ask for help. Logan, who – despite their issues – obviously still feels deeply for his former girlfriend, is determined to look after her. However, he is well aware that she only lets him take care of her because she is too weak to stop him, and that she most probably will not appreciate his efforts once she feels better:

This was much worse than he had initially thought. Not only was she hacking up blood, but poor, proud Veronica Mars was willing to let him *pay* for

something. Though she'd probably accuse him later of being overly dramatic, Logan decided to forgo the physician and take her straight to the hospital. (Madame Librarian, "The Benefits of Being Lost")

The fact that the hero acts totally unselfishly and does not entertain a hidden agenda is vital for the further development of the story and its characters. Only when his actions are totally selfless, can they fulfil one of the main criteria of the ideal romance: the heroine – as well as the reader – has to be convinced that he does not only want her for sex, but respects her as a person.<sup>137</sup> Thus, it is not enough for the male protagonist to prove that he possesses an innately tender and loving side and is, therefore, capable of caring for the heroine. It is as important for him to demonstrate that he does not only use his nurturing skills to lure her into his bed.

The same basic scenario of the heroine, who is too sick to take care of herself, but does only allow the hero's selfless attentions because she is too weak to reject his help, can also be found in the *Spuffy* fan fiction "Fevered". The story by kantayra was posted in November 2006 at the *Spuffy* archive *Elysian Fields*. It contains 18709 words. The preface explicitly states that the story is set "in a somewhat happier early S6". (kantayra, Summary) Members of the fandom can immediately deduce that this story takes place at a time, when the newly resurrected Buffy, who struggles to deal with the loss of the perfect happiness she has experienced in heaven, turns more and more to Spike. At that time, Spike is already deeply in love with her and tries to comfort her. Although, this story presents a more comedic approach to the topic of illness than "The Benefits of Being Lost", the main features are remarkably similar to those of the other story.

The whole story is almost entirely told from Spike's viewpoint. Only short sections provide the reader with the point of view of other characters. For the largest part, however, the reader has to rely on the hero's biased perception. Similar to the *LoVe* fan fiction, this story starts with a wrong assumption concerning the reasons for the heroine's absence. Buffy has not shown up to patrol the cemeteries of Sunnydale, although she has asked Spike to accompany her the day before. The vampire, who has secretly hoped that this was meant as a date and not as a mere working arrangement, feels hurt because he believes that he has been stood up:

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<sup>137</sup> Cf. Radway, 133.

[W]as it so crazy for a bloke to think that maybe he had a chance after all? That maybe tonight had been a date in more than just his own mind? And the answer, of course, was yes. He should've learned his lesson by now, known that nothing she said or did with him would ever mean anything more than that she begrudgingly tolerated his presence. It was the most he had any right to hope for, really. But still... Did she *have* to stand him up? (kantayra, Chapter1)

Spike's interpretation is actually quite comprehensible considering the canonical preconditions. Therefore, readers who are familiar with the nature of the canonically established relationship between Buffy and Spike will easily accept his assessment of the situation. Relying on the first paragraphs, it is quite feasible to assume that – based on the canonical situation – this story presents a take on Spike's unrequited love for Buffy, and his attempts to make her see him as more than just a friend. However, the plot takes a sudden turn when Spike enters Buffy's home and finds the entire household anxious and distressed. The hero suddenly finds himself in an utterly chaotic situation he cannot really make sense of. Moreover, Buffy remains absent. The reason for all the agitation is finally revealed to him by Buffy's sister Dawn:

“Bit,” he repeated with a falsely sweet smile, “what on earth is—?” Not for the first time that evening, he was cut off. But this time he finally got his answer: “Disaster.” She gulped, looking terrified. “Buffy,” her voice dropped to a low whimper, so that she practically squeaked out the words, “has the flu...” [...] Now, Spike hadn't realized the gravity of Dawn's statement when she said it. Yeah, he had dim recollections from his human days about being ill. Mostly what he remembered was his mother's coughing and the like. Now, *that* had been serious, nothing like a little bout of flu. And, the way Dawn talked about being sick most of the time, his more recent impressions had been that the modern flu consisted of staying home from school and enjoying yourself in front of the telly. (kantayra, Chapter1)

Spike is immediately recruited to take care of the patient and the “gravity of Dawn's statement” becomes clear to him as soon as he enters the heroine's bedroom:

“Spike?” The voice was quiet, subdued, and uncharacteristically meek. “Slayer?” Head cocked to one side, he approached the bed. “Christ, you look awful...” She coughed. “Should've known you'd have no bedside manner,” she grumbled sleepily, propping herself up on the pillows. “Is that soup?” “Uh, yeah.” He handed over the tray. “And orange juice, and... You all right?” He knew his initial reaction had been a bit too blunt, but he hadn't been able to hide his surprise. After all, he'd seen this girl through the best and worst of everything. [...] But never had he seen her like this, with that spark that was so

uniquely *Buffy* gone from her eyes. A few germs were all it took to bring down the best warrior he'd ever seen. Hard to wrap his mind around that concept.  
(kantayra, Chapter1)

Like Logan in “The Benefits of Being Lost”, Spike immediately feels compelled to take care of the sick heroine, although he knows that she only lets him help because she is too weak to stop him: “This was probably the only chance he'd get while she was all soft and needy”. (kantayra, Chapter 3) However, readers familiar with *Spuffy* fandom are aware that Spike's assessment of the situation is again wrong. Although they are only presented with Spike's narrow perspective, the knowledge of *Spuffy* fans is much broader than that of the character who acts as the main focaliser. Based on their knowledge of the basic conventions of *Spuffy* fiction, readers can look at the whole situation from a different perspective. Thus, despite Spike's subjective interpretation, fans can infer that Buffy is not ignorant of what Spike is doing for her, and is actually quite touched by his tender and caring behaviour. The knowledge of the common conventions of *Spuffy* fandom tells well-informed readers that Spike's situation is far from hopeless, and that his selfless and caring actions will eventually lead the heroine to reveal her growing feelings for him. This occurrence relates to Janice Radway's concept of the double perspective. As already established, it allows the reader to experience both perspectives: “She can identify with the heroine's point of view and therefore with her anger and fear. [...] On the other hand, she can rely on the greater knowledge accorded to her by the narration[.]” (Radway, 140/141) In this case readers identify with the viewpoint of the hero, but the basic concept remains the same.

Thus, experienced readers of *Spuffy* and/or *LoVe* fiction know that the hero's actions will eventually have the desired effect of uniting the two members of the O.T.P. in a love relationship, despite the protagonist's assumptions to the contrary. Nevertheless, they also know that the hero has to further prove himself, in order to make the heroine realise that she harbours feelings for him and, more importantly, to make her trust him enough to reveal these feelings to him. Thus, it is not enough that the hero takes care of the heroine when she needs him. It is necessary to convince her that he deserves her trust and affection.

This becomes apparent in “The Benefits of Being Lost” when a change of focaliser provides the reader with Veronica’s point of view. While Logan’s viewpoint led the readers through the first part of the story, they are now granted a look at the sick heroine’s thoughts. It immediately becomes clear that his selfless actions alone are not enough to sway her negative attitude towards him:

*Logan had stayed. He had come, he had taken her to the hospital, and he had brought her home again. And now he'd stayed. Suddenly exhausted, she lay back on her pillow, unable to muster the energy even to kick him out of her apartment. He was quiet. He wasn't bothering her. Backup wasn't ready to tear out his throat. He could stay. (Madame Librarian, “The Benefits of Being Lost”)*

The first reaction of the heroine seems to confirm the hero’s assumption that she does not really appreciate his efforts. However, it soon becomes clear that his actions do indeed manage to penetrate her weakened defences:

*A calm peace stole over her heart at that moment, like moonlight on a meadow. She couldn't believe Logan would *stay*, would play Florence Nightingale to her, pander to her. She knew she should hate him, she should *want* him to leave... but she just didn't have the energy to reject him. (Madame Librarian, “The Benefits of Being Lost”)*

His astonishing behaviour combined with her weak disposition slowly initiate a change in the heroine’s attitude towards the male protagonist. She is not only thankful for his help, but slowly begins to realise that, even if she was strong enough to reject him, she really does not *want* him to leave. Thus, she enjoys his company and slowly begins to understand that he does not have ulterior motives, but is there for her because he genuinely cares for her. Still, it takes one more major sacrifice on the hero’s part to finally win the heroine’s complete trust: he has to withstand sexual temptation when he is confronted with it. Only when the male protagonist does not give in to his sexual desires for the heroine – even in a situation where he is presented with a perfect chance to act them out – can the heroine be sure that he is not just in lust, but actually in love with her. “The Benefits of Being Lost” provides Logan with this chance to prove his sincerity, when Veronica is too weak to get out of the tub alone:

*His arm reached around the jamb blindly, feeling for the plush terrycloth. He pulled the robe off it's hook, and pushed the bathroom door open. “Alright, I'm going to hold it in front of me like so.” He held up the cloth like a banner, completely obscuring her from view. [...] “Okay,” I'm just going to ...close my*

eyes, and reach down and put my hands underneath your arms. Logan tucked the robe under one arm as he squeezed his eyes closed tightly. He reached out fumbling hands, and Veronica enveloped them into her own. She brought them down underneath her arms, his fingers just barely brushing her left breast, accidentally, as she did so. “Sorry!” Logan bleated, nervously, and Veronica couldn't help but grin. If anything, he was more worried about this *encounter* than she was. (Madame Librarian, “The Benefits of Being Lost”)

The way he tries to ensure that she does not feel embarrassed in this awkward situation and the fact that “he is more worried about this encounter than she was”, proves to Veronica that his motives for helping her are not sexually motivated. However, it is not acceptable for the hero to be too withdrawn, as that might lead the heroine to think that he simply does not find her sexually attractive. Accordingly, Veronica has to learn that it takes great efforts for Logan to keep up his gentlemanly behaviour and to fight the immense attraction he feels for her: “Veronica looked up to his face, and found his eyes were now open, and locked on her. The fire in his eyes burned straight through to her belly, a low flame rocking slowly in the depths of her abdomen. *He still wanted her...*”. (Madame Librarian, “The Benefits of Being Lost”) The heroine does no longer have to fear that she might only be seen as a sexual object. On the contrary, the hero's actions have shown her that she is not only desired but also loved. Janice Radway suggests that it is essential for the ideal romance that the heroine's fears are “banished effectively by the hero because he is finally portrayed as excited by the heroine's sexuality *and* respectful of her identity as an individual.” (Radway, 133)

As soon as the heroine's doubts and fears are eliminated, she can finally give in to her feelings for him and act upon them. She can not only allow possible advances of the male protagonist, but can also initiate them herself. Correspondingly, once Veronica feels secure enough with Logan to acknowledge the strong feelings she harbours for him, she does not hesitate to act accordingly:

She set up and urged him up onto the couch next to her, pushing him back into the cushions as he sat down next to her.  
 “Veronica,” Logan sounded broken, and a little lost. “I don't want to hurt you.”  
 “You're not,” she insisted. “I'm fine. Practically perfect.”  
 Logan appraised her with ravenous eyes. “That you are,” he agreed, husky.  
 Veronica blushed. She has merely meant she *felt* practically perfect, but what did it matter now that Logan was staring at her like *that*, licking his bottom lip nervously, his breathing a little more choppy?

She leaned forward and slanted her mouth over his as she bobbed upwards in her seat on his lap, brushing against his erection as she came down again. “I love you,” she whispered into his ear, holding him as close as she could without crushing him, holding him desperately. “You could never hurt me... [“] (Madame Librarian, “The Benefits of Being Lost”)

Thus, it is the heroine who eventually initiates the sexual encounter. This marks not only the climax of the story, but ultimately also the beginning of the romantic relationship between the protagonists.

Again, the situation is similar in the *Spuffy* story “Fevered”. Like Logan, Spike has to prove that he is not only sexually interested in Buffy, but also respects her as a person. He does so, when Buffy accidentally finds out that he is aroused while slumbering against him on the couch. His guilt drives him to risk his life by leaving the house in broad daylight, so that she is not longer subjected to what he considers to be an inappropriate reaction towards her. The fact that he is more concerned about her feelings than about his own needs, lets Buffy realise that he is worthy of her trust and her love. Like Veronica, she then makes the first step and declares her feelings for him:

He frowned. She’d somehow moved closer to him in the course of their little conversation, that and her body language seemed to indicate that she was flirting with him. He was usually spot on about noticing these things. With Buffy, though, he seemed doomed to be endlessly second-guessing himself. “Are you...*flirting* with me?” he finally came straight out and asked it. After all, he’d never been good with subtlety. Her face turned bright red. “Sort of...” “Sort of?” “OK, yes!” she exclaimed, eyes flashing angrily from having to make that admission. “Is there anything so wrong with that? You’re cute and funny and sweet when you want to be, and I know you like me so... Why not?” He cocked his head to one side and looked her up and down hungrily. “Why not, indeed...” (kantayra, Chapter 4)

In both cases the heroine calls the shots. The hero has to win *her* trust and approval to make a romantic relationship possible, and it is *she* who ultimately initiates said relationship. Although the beginning of each story shows the male hero to be mad at the heroine, in both cases their attitude changes abruptly, triggered by the knowledge that she is weak and in need of help. Without preamble they abandon their tough behaviour to reveal their innately caring nature. In contrast to that, the change of both heroines is gradual. Their weakened defences, together with the heroes` efforts, let them slowly change their attitude towards the male protagonists, which ultimately

leads to a change of the characters themselves. Their toughness, while still there, is somewhat toned down by their newly discovered knowledge that they don't have to be strong all the time, because they now have a partner to rely on. Only when this gradual change is completed, can a romantic relationship commence. Consequently, the heroine's change is vital for the success of the romantic relationship. This suggests that it is her Otherness as a tough action heroine in particular that is getting in the way of a romantic relationship between the O.T.P.

It is important to note that the toughness of the female characters is only reduced to a degree where it does no longer stand in the way of a romantic liaison. Consequently, the basic situation between the male and the female protagonist remains the same: the heroine plays the active role of the aggressor who decides the pace of the interaction, while the hero remains the passive party who caters to his partner's needs.

#### 4.2.2. Injuring Toughness

The negative effects of her offending Otherness caused by her status as a tough action heroine are specifically emphasised by another type of *Spuffy* and *LoVe* h/c fiction. The plot of the stories that are part of this special category follows the conventions of the hurt/comfort genre, showing the hero to be severely physically injured and in need of the heroine's help. What makes this particular brand of h/c fan fictions special is the fact that the male protagonist's injuries are shown to be inflicted by the heroine. This fact stresses the unsuitability of her extreme toughness by suggesting that it does not just stand in the way of a happy ending, but is actually dangerous for herself, and those around her. The *BtVS* story "Crippled", and the *VM* story "A Feather's Weight", together with the sequel "Technicolor", all belong to this special brand of hurt/comfort fiction.

The story "Crippled" by Enchantress contains 25293 words, and was published between April and May 2005 at *The Spuffy Realm*. It is "[s]et during Season 6 sometime after Dead Things". (Enchantress, Summary), which means it is set at a time, when Buffy tries to overcome her desperation over having to leave heaven by maintaining a violent sexual relationship with Spike. The first chapter provides a detailed description of the fight that leaves Spike crippled. Buffy serves as the main



focaliser. Only occasionally are the readers granted glimpses of the viewpoint of Spike or other characters. Accordingly, the events that cause Spike's injuries are also narrated from the heroine's perspective.

The story starts with Buffy, who can no longer contain her anger over the fact that she has been ripped out of heaven and resurrected by her friends. In a cemetery she meets Spike and takes her frustrations out on him in a brutal one-sided fight. His love for the slayer prevents Spike from fighting back; a fact that Buffy in her blinding rage does not realise: "He screams but she doesn't care. He cries but she doesn't hear. All that matters is what she's feeling." (Enchantress, Chapter1) Although, the author describes the heroine's brutal and merciless attack on Spike vividly and quite thoroughly, she emphasises that Buffy is not actually aware of what she is doing. From the very beginning, the reader is encouraged to understand that she does not pick a fight with him because she wants to harm him. In fact, she does not want to harm him at all. It is made very clear that she only attacks him because she does not know how to deal with her situation otherwise. Thus, her actions are partially excused by the author by presenting them as a desperate attempt of the heroine to cope with her situation. The assumption that the female protagonist does not want to hurt the hero intentionally, and is not even actively aware that she is doing so, is essential for the whole story. To some extent, it enables the author to alleviate the heroine's blame by arguing that she cannot be held entirely responsible for her actions as she was not sane at the time. Indeed, Buffy only realises the state Spike is in when it is already too late:

[H]er anger turns to passion, and this isn't a battle anymore, it's a dance. He's brought her to life. [...]And it's then she realizes.. he isn't dancing. He's buried beneath a pile of burning rubble, soft moans coming from him. She races forward and tears it all away frantically, crying his name in a panic. "Spike? Spike?" She stares down at him. He's bruised, battered, bloodied. Tears and blood and sweat run down his face in floods of pain and he lifts one hand weakly, reaching out to her in desperation. "Buffy.." He croaks in agony, his body sagging with the weight of the pain she's caused him. "God, Buffy.." "Yeah." She suddenly notices his legs. They're crushed, burnt, and deformed. They're barely even legs. She stares at them in horror and feels absolutely ill. And then he says something that will change everything. "I can't feel them.. I can't feel my legs.." He sobs, glaring at her loathingly, wailing, "You've crippled me. You've fucking crippled me." (Enchantress, Chapter1)

The fight has managed to alleviate her anger and frustration. Only after she is relieved of this burden, and manages to think clearly again, does she comprehend what she has done. Her reaction to this revelation serves to further reinforce the assumption that she never intentionally wanted to hurt Spike. She is horrified with herself and her actions and immediately sets out to help him. The rest of the story deals with her attempts to help him - and herself - to cope with the repercussions of her actions. The damage done is not only physical, but also emotional. Thus, it is not enough for her to nurse him back to health. She also has to prove to him that she is still worthy of his love. Furthermore, she has to deal with her own guilt over the whole situation. Therefore, it becomes apparent that in order to repair the damages done, the heroine does not only have to convince him to forgive her, but also herself.

Although, the hero's injuries are not actively inflicted by the heroine herself, the basic situation in the *LoVe* stories "A Feather's Weight" and "Technicolor" is very similar to that of "Crippled". Utsusemia's story "A Feather's Weight" was published in June 2006 at *LiveJournal*, the sequel "Technicolor" was published in September of the same year at the same archive. The first story contains roughly 8500 words. The sequel is slightly shorter and contains approximately 6900 words. The plot is set in the middle of season two. Accordingly, the contact between Logan and Veronica is very strained, resembling the barely civil relationship they entertained in early season one. Both have to face serious problems with the criminal and highly dangerous Fitzpatrick clan, whose members are not only prime suspects in one of Veronica's cases, but also play a key role in Logan's murder case.

An indiscretion on Veronica's part marks the beginning of "A Feather's Weight". The story, which features Veronica and Logan as the main focalisers, starts out from the heroine's point of view. Veronica relates Logan's whereabouts to a member of the Fitzpatrick clan, even though she knows that she puts him in serious danger. However, she decides that "beating the shit out of him" is "[a]lmost always a fine idea in her book—these days". (Utsusemia, "A Feather's Weight") A change in focaliser grants the reader a first glimpse at the consequences of Veronica's decision. Logan, who is at a cemetery visiting his mother's grave, gets attacked and overwhelmed by aggressors unknown to him: "He doesn't hear them come up behind him. Not, he thinks as his nose crunches and the familiar taste of blood fills his

mouth, as though it would have made any difference.” (Utsusemia, “A Feather’s Weight”) The parallels to the *BtVS* story are striking. Both protagonists are attacked at a cemetery and do not have much of a chance to fight back: Spike, because his love for Buffy forbids him to; Logan, because the surprise attack makes it impossible for him to really defend himself. In both cases, the heroine is responsible for the hero’s situation. It has already been mentioned before that Veronica’s hero status – unlike Buffy’s – is not defined by physical toughness, but by her extraordinary wit and talent for logical deduction, typical for the hard-boiled detective. Correspondingly, she does not physically hurt Logan herself, but causes his injuries by purposefully disclosing important information about him to people who want to harm him. Thus, she can be held as accountable for Logan’s situation, as Buffy for Spike’s. However, the same tactics as in “Crippled” are also employed here to relieve the heroine from part of the blame:

Somewhere on the walk between Chemistry and English, Veronica realizes what she’s done. It’s a little weird, actually, as though she’s spent the last three hours in a vengeful haze that only now has rationality managed to conquer. It’s his locker that does it. She looks there almost automatically, expecting to see him leaning against it, smiling that tight, almost hopeful, smile. Tilting his head and bantering with her in that absurdly sexy sotto voice that always makes her knees shake. And she realizes why he’s not there. Because the Fitzpatricks are going to kill him. Not fake death. Not imagined, “Logan, how the fuck could you!” death, but actual cessation of vital functions. The irreversible eradication of that smile and that head tilt from the face of the goddamn planet. [...] What was she thinking? That they were just going to rough him up a bit and turn Logan on his merry way? They are fucking killers. She *knew* that. (Utsusemia, “A Feather’s Weight”)

Again, it is suggested that the heroine cannot be held fully accountable for her actions. Although, Veronica on some level knew about the consequences, the “vengeful haze” she was in prevented her from grasping the graveness of the situation. How serious the situation really is, becomes clear when the narration once again picks up the male protagonist’s perspective. Logan finds himself in the back of a truck. The hazardousness of the situation is stressed by the drastic description of the state he is in:

From the way his side feels right now, he imagines they’ve probably broken at least eight. His face, judging from the amount of blood he’s still trickling onto the rusty truck bed, is a mess. His right arm...well, he doesn’t really want to think about it. He’s sort of scared that anything can hurt that much and still

leave him conscious. He remembers the crunch when Liam's steel toed boot connected with his elbow. That was bad. When he kicked him again, in the *exact same place*? That was much, much worse. (Utsusemia, "A Feather's Weight")

Logan's attackers intend to kill him. Veronica, who has regained her senses, knows that, and sets out to help him before it is too late. Barely able to stop the Fitzpatricks in time, she finds Logan dumped in the woods and brings him to a hospital. Like the *BtVS* fiction, the rest of the plot describes the consequences of Veronica's mistake, and how the two protagonists deal with them. However, the focus of "A Feather's Weight" is slightly different from that of "Crippled". The author of the latter story concentrates on the depiction of Buffy's attempts to take care of Spike, and to get him – and herself – to forgive her. In contrast to that, Logan, unlike Spike, does not know that the heroine is responsible for his injuries. He only learns of Veronica's involvement at the end of "A Feather's Weight". Because of that, the main focus of the first story lies on how Veronica deals with the repercussions of her behaviour. Much more than "Crippled", "A Feather's Weight" stresses the heroine's guilt and self loathing, and her inability to deal with these feelings. Her betrayal sends her into a serious identity crisis: "How do you dissect a betrayal? A casual word, a moment of anger and every good thing she's ever believed about herself is proven as facile as a politician's lies. There is no excuse for her, no justification." (Utsusemia, "A Feather's Weight") The fact that she cannot seem to get over what she has done also plays a prominent role in the sequel "Technicolor".

In contrast to that, the heroine's situation in "Crippled" is noticeably different. Although, Buffy is also shown to feel guilty over what she has done to Spike, the main focus lies on the way she tries to make it up to him. Veronica is too overcome with shame to actively try to regain Logan's trust and devotion. Buffy, on the other hand, deals with her guilt by doing exactly that. Thus, the situation in "Crippled" forces the two protagonists closer together, whereas the same situation causes the members of the O.T.P. in "A Feather's Weight" and "Technicolor" to drift further apart. To grasp the reason behind these contradictory developments, one has to take a closer look at the nature of the damage done to the heroes. It becomes apparent that the *LoVe* fictions put the stress on the emotional injuries inflicted by the heroine's behaviour. Although, Logan's injuries are so severe that he has to suffer the

consequences even weeks after the initial attack, it is the knowledge of Veronica's betrayal that truly bothers him:

He's thought a lot--too much--about how she felt, what she did, those three hours before she decided to save him. Did she think of him at all? Did her guilt build slowly or drown her like a tidal wave? When did she realize she had left him to die? Even if he had the chance to ask her (even if she would answer), he isn't sure he wants to know. He's afraid the truth is worse than anything he could imagine. It's hard enough loving someone who tried to kill you. It might be worse knowing how long it took her to decide it was a bad idea. (Utsusemia, "Technicolor")

The outcomes of her betrayal become secondary to the question how she could possibly commit the betrayal in the first place. The fact that he still loves her, even though she has nearly killed him, makes it even harder for him to deal with the whole situation. Thus, the emotional damage by far outweighs the physical damage inflicted on the hero.

This stands in stark contrast to the hero's situation in "Crippled". Contrary to Logan, who is injured but not helpless in a way that would make it necessary for him to rely on another's help, Spike's injuries have rendered him literally crippled. Buffy's attack has left him immobilised, unable to use his feet. As no one else is willing to help the vulnerable vampire, he is forced to depend on the person who inflicted his injuries: Buffy. And the vampire slayer does everything in her might to make it as comfortable for him as possible and to nurse him back to health. However, her sudden change in behaviour, and the overly affectionate way she suddenly treats him, does not have the desired effect. Instead of encouraging his forgiveness, her behaviour causes resentment.

"Buffy, stop it!" Spike snapped finally, glaring at her. "I fucking hate this. You pitying me. Just stop it. I don't need your help, okay? So just leave me the hell alone." "You do need my help." Buffy insisted in a tiny voice, shrinking away from him as he retored [sic!] bitterly, "Yeah, well whose fault is that?" Spike glowered up at her. "Just leave me alone." Stung, she moved towards the stairs and slunk up them shamefully, peeking back at him with tears in her eyes. "I'll come see you later." "What, and break my arms to render me completely fucked up?" Spike snarled, glaring at her, the fury in his eyes matching that of which she'd seen in Dawn's earlier. (Enchantress, Chapter3)

However, it becomes clear very soon that he is not angry at her because she is responsible for his injuries, but because he believes that her newfound feelings for him are caused by pity and guilt, rather than genuine affection: “[E]verything she supposedly feels for me is utter bollocks.” He replied bluntly. “Come on, it didn’t start until she did this to me. It’s pity is all..and it all seems completely fake.” (Enchantress, Chapter 6) Thus, it is not enough for Buffy to change her behaviour towards him. Because the way she previously treated him was marked solely by anger and violence, the hero believes the sudden change of her behaviour to be insincere and fickle. Therefore, it is not enough for Buffy to allow herself to reveal her hidden affection, but she has to prove to him that this affection is genuine.

Hence, the positions are reversed. Now the heroine has to prove to the vulnerable hero that she is capable of truly loving him. But while the male protagonists had to prove that their emotions were not just based on sexual interest by taking care of the heroine without following ulterior motives, this does not work the other way around. Both female protagonists try to win back the heroes’ love by making use of their sexuality. Accordingly, Buffy tries to gain Spike’s forgiveness by seducing him:

"Lemme make it up to you then." Buffy said in a hushed voice as she moved on top of him and kissed him passionately, her arm snaking around him to pull him closer. Her other hand wriggled underneath her top and stroked his abs, her nails scraping over the hard surface. She heard Spike groan and familiar rushes of lust hit her hard and Buffy deepened the kiss, her hand slipping down to his thigh. "Wait." Spike interrupted, a small frown on his face. "I think we should take this slow." "I don't wanna." Buffy whispered and slipped her fingers under the waistband of his jeans. Spike took her hand away and pressed soft kisses to her fingertips. "I don't just think we should take this slow.. I need that right now." "Okay, baby." She murmured and went to kiss him again but he stopped her. (Enchantress, Chapter 5)

Buffy uses sex to soften Spike’s resentment towards her, not knowing that her behaviour intensifies his anger even further. Because his rage is only partially caused by the fact that she has crippled him, and mostly by the fact that he believes that her feelings are insincere, her sexual advances make their situation even worse.

Also Veronica uses sex to her advantage. However, in contrast to Buffy, she does not use it to make Logan feel better and to get him to forgive her, but to alleviate her own feelings of guilt.

And then she's kissing him, twining her hand in the back of his head and sliding her tongue along his like she might die without him, or drown because of him. He's surprised, she can tell, but he doesn't stop it. Maybe he's just as helpless. Frantically, she tosses the cane to the back seat and then crawls over the median to straddle him. He groans--her weight must be hurting him--but he stares at her with such matching desire all thoughts of stopping flee her head. [...] "What are you doing?" His voice is slurry with pain and desire, and she doesn't want to know how much of each. "I thought it was obvious." "Veronica...we can't. Not now." "What, you're afraid of people seeing us?" "You know that's not it." [...] "Am I hurting you?" "Yes." "Is that why you want me to stop?" He grimaces. "No. Veronica, I don't know why you're doing this, but it's nothing good. (Utsusemia, *A Feather's Weight*)"

Veronica wants to have sex, even though she knows it is physically and emotionally hurting him. Thus, it becomes clear that this is not about him in any way, but about what she wants and needs. Her sexual desire turns into another transgression, and similar to the situation in the *BtVS* fiction, it causes more resentment and pain. In relation to Radway's concept of the ideal romance, the aggressive sexuality of the female protagonists unquestionably violates the characteristics of the ideal heroine. She is pure and innocent, unaware of her own sexuality. The role of the sexual aggressor is solely reserved for the ideal hero, whose sexual advances awaken the heroine's sensual nature.<sup>138</sup> Thus, the aggressive behaviour of Buffy and Veronica presents a definite breach of the ideal romance's etiquette. In this respect, the negative outcomes of their advances are not at all surprising.

It is important to note that, although, both heroes resent the way the heroines supposedly toy with their feelings, the depth of their own feelings remains unquestioned and unchanged. For both Logan and Spike it is indisputably clear that they love the female protagonist despite all her wrongdoings. Their problem is not to love, but to forgive. This difference between love and forgiveness is very important in all three stories.

"Do you still love me?" She flinched as he frowned down at her and pulled away. "It's okay if you don't. After what I did to you, feelings of love aren't exactly gonna be happening easily, I know. It's just.. I want you to know, if you don't.. that's alright." "I still love you." He said softly, pulling her back into his arms. "I still love you more than anything else in the world." "But look at you." Buffy said sadly. "Look at what I've done to you. And you said to Dawn you

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<sup>138</sup> Cf. Radway, 126.

haven't forgiven me yet." "I haven't, pet. Not for this." He looked away and whispered distantly, "I don't know how to yet." (Enchantress, Chapter 5)

What stands in the way of a happy ending for the One True Pairing is not love, but forgiveness. Buffy and Veronica need the forgiveness of Spike and Logan respectively, but they also need to forgive themselves. It has already been pointed out that in these stories forgiveness is inextricably linked with the sincerity of emotions. However, it is not enough for the female protagonists to convince their male counterparts that they do really love them. It is as crucial that they admit this to themselves. In both cases the heroines come to this realisation when it is almost too late.

Buffy sobbed harder, falling to a ball on the floor, weak, aching, and utterly filled with self-loathing.  
 For hurting him like she did.  
 For ruining things like she did.  
 For letting him fall out of love with her like she did.  
 For letting it all happen within the space of weeks when she suddenly realized the love she bore for him could have lasted a lifetime.  
 (Enchantress, Chapter 6)

Similarly, Veronica has to accept that she has “loved him all along, despite fucking everything”. (Utsusemia, A Feather’s Weight) It becomes clear that it was not hatred or antipathy that motivated their cruel behaviour towards the heroes, but love. Their inability to admit their hidden affection, and the resulting feelings of anger, jealousy, and frustration, caused them to lash out at the heroes. This crucial realisation leads the heroines to break down. Whereas Buffy suffers a serious depression, Veronica’s despair even leads her to try to commit suicide. Once again, the roles are reversed. It is once more on the heroes to rescue and take care of the heroines. They do so by finally granting them their forgiveness and assuring them of their love. The heroines’ obvious despair convinces the heroes that their emotions are not false, and helps them to truly forgive the betrayal committed.

Although he is the injured party, the male protagonist ends up taking care of his female counterpart. Thus, it seems that no matter who is injured and in need of help, it is the main aim of *Spuffy* and *LoVe* h/c fiction to weaken the overly tough heroine to an extent that allows her to admit her feelings for the hero. Once again, the



heroine's Otherness seems to be the main factor that hinders possible romantic developments. Even though she tries to take care of him, her motives for doing so are mostly selfish. It has already been shown that, as soon as the male protagonist realises that the heroine is in need of his help, he immediately reveals his compassionate nature and selflessly takes care of her. He has no problems to acknowledge that he acts out of love. The heroine, on the other hand, takes much longer to admit and reveal her true affectionate feelings. Thus, although she too takes immediate care of the injured hero, her change is still gradual. In contrast to that, the hero's devotion to her remains unchanged. Therefore, it can be said that the main goal of *Spuffy* and *LoVe* hurt/comfort fiction is always the same: to make the heroine weak enough to fit into a happy heterosexual relationship.

Obviously, there are countless different ways in which *Spuffy* and *LoVe* h/c fiction can play out. However, the examples given above serve to illustrate the main features of this genre in relation to *BtVS* and *VM* fan fiction rather adequately.

#### **4.3. Overcoming Otherness I: Knowledge Enhancement**

The title already suggests that this fannish character formation strategy aims to enlarge the knowledge of one or both members of the O.T.P. By doing so, the fan writer allows their characters a better understanding of their current situation and, thus, enables them to overcome their problems more easily, or to avoid them altogether. It has been suggested elsewhere that the more fantastic strategies of knowledge enhancement, like prophetic dreams, apparitions, and travelling through time, are for the most part restricted to the *BtVS* universe. As the fairly realistic setting of *Veronica Mars* does not really allow for such strategies, writers in this fandom have to find other ways to broaden their characters' horizon. Commonly, they do so by writing futurefics, meaning they expand the series timeline into the future, where the increased maturity of the protagonists makes a happy relationship of the One True Pairing possible.

As the enhancement of the characters' knowledge obviously takes different forms in *BtVS* and *VM* fan fiction, it becomes apparent that this character formation strategy can be divided into two distinct subcategories: artificial enhancement and natural enhancement. Artificial enhancement includes the fantastic methods applied in

*Spuffy* fiction that enhance the protagonists' knowledge by making use of supernatural means. Natural enhancement, on the other hand, refers to the strategies applied in *LoVe* fan fiction where the improved wisdom of the characters is the result of a natural development. The following subchapters will take a closer look at both varieties of knowledge enhancement.

#### 4.3.1. Artificial Enhancement

Generally speaking, this strategy allows the writer to change their protagonists very quickly. By granting them information that offers them a new perspective on their situation, and allows them to deal with their problems more efficiently, or to avoid them altogether, writers can change their characters' attitude and behaviour at once. Thus, instead of putting the characters through an extensive process of slow realisation like in hurt/comfort fiction, the same end result is achieved much quicker by applying artificial enhancement. The supernatural setting of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* affords writers who work in this fandom with a sheer endless number of ways to artificially enhance their characters' knowledge. As the enormous number of possible strategies makes it impossible to take them all into account, this study will take a closer look at one particular method of artificial enhancement, namely the prophetic dream.

The story "Careless Memories" by Peta, which contains 32326 words, and was posted between April 2005 and January 2006 on *The Spuffy Realm*, is told from both Spike's and Buffy's point of view. This story will be used to illustrate this strategy. "Careless Memories" lets Buffy experience a very powerful slayer dream<sup>139</sup> that puts her into a comatose sleep for three days and shows her the events taking place throughout the rest of the series, as well as all the events of the *BtVS* spin off *Angel*. As this story is set at the beginning of season four, this means that Buffy acquires detailed knowledge of everything that happens from season four to seven of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, as well as from season one to five of *Angel*. Thus, all the canonically established trials the characters have to go through could be avoided. However, her ability to prevent these major tragedies from happening becomes

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<sup>139</sup> The slayer dream is a canonical invention. These prophetic dreams do not only provide the slayer with glimpses of future occurrences, but also enables her to get into contact with the source of her powers in the mythical form of the first slayer.

virtually unimportant, as her dream has also let her experience the love she feels for Spike at the end of season seven. The heroine, who has previously felt nothing but hatred and revulsion for the vampire, suddenly finds herself in love with her archenemy.

It was real. For some reason the Powers or someone had given her an intense peek at her life so she could alter, fix her mistakes and change her reactions and/or behaviours. She could save lives, save relationships, save herself and God, she could consume herself with enormous potential love.

(Peta, Chapter 3)

Buffy immediately embraces her newfound feelings and decides to use her knowledge to win Spike over. The fact that the heroine is the one who is in love and tries to charm the hero to convince him of her feelings, differentiates this story from those examined previously. "Careless Memories" is set at a time when Spike desperately hates Buffy and continually tries to kill her. His superpowers are not yet restrained by the chip, and he is not at all willing yet to admit his secret attraction to the slayer. Thus, Buffy faces an extremely difficult situation. The entire story is concerned with her attempts to force Spike to develop feelings he is actually meant to experience much later in the series.

In order to achieve her goal, Buffy makes use of her enhanced knowledge. Instead of preventing tragic events, she anticipates them, and uses them to her advantage. Correspondingly, she does nothing to stop the government soldiers from capturing and experimenting on Spike. She only comes to his rescue when she can be sure that they have already chipped him and, thus, made it impossible for him to use his vampiric powers against humans. Buffy knows that the chip will cause Spike pain and desperation, but she accepts that fact, because she is sure that the only way to make Spike fall in love with her is to weaken him enough to make him need her: "She was destined to be with Spike, and she knew he came to her. True, it took some major metalwork in his head, but things would be A-OK in the long run. And it would be best if she began laying the groundwork right now. [...] She had a vampire to tame." (Peta, Chapter 3) In order to be together, Spike needs to be tamed. This assumption has already been confirmed by the source text, where his extreme toughness and independence were shown to prevent him from considering the heroine as anything else but an equal adversary that has to be fought and conquered.

Only when he is weak and in need of her help, does he take a closer look. His weakened state affords him with a different perspective and lets him see the girl, and not just the slayer. Thus, his toughness stands in the way of a romantic relationship and has to be weakened. This corresponds to the notion that the heroine's toughness has to be weakened for a happy relationship to work that has been discussed in previous chapters.

However, Buffy's endeavour to make Spike vulnerable does not have the desired effect. Instead of bringing them closer together it drives them even further apart, when Spike realises that Buffy purposely let him get implanted with the chip.

He couldn't believe it. He knew the Slayer resented the fact that he was strong and had so nearly killed her on numerous occasions. But was she so jealous she had to render him completely unable to defend himself? After the fifth attempt to sink his fangs into a succulent and promising neck, he'd about keeled over in blinding pain. He was in the process of looking for something sharp so he could cut his own head off, anything to stop this mindless torture. And then came the knowledge that he needed help, and it galled him [to] no end that he'd have to almost crawl back to the evil troupe that called themselves White Hats. They were more evil than he was for what they'd allowed. She could have just staked him, given him a challenge and a death worthy of the master that he was. Was. Hardly a master now when he couldn't even hunt and feed himself. Instead, she'd bloody neutered him like some troublesome dog. As Satan and Angelus was his witness, he'd find some way to snap that pretty golden neck before he was done, or have his head explode while trying. (Peta, Chapter 8)

The hero is disgusted with what he believes to be an unfair attempt on her side to defeat him. Instead of seeking her out for help, his weakness heightens his hatred for her, because he knows that she is the one who caused it.

Thus, so far, Buffy's enhanced knowledge has not improved the situation of the O.T.P. On the contrary, it has strained the relationship of the intended romantic couple even further. Her inability to give him the time he needs to realise his feelings for her by himself, causes him to turn further away from her. He is puzzled by his archenemy's peculiar behaviour. His inability to understand the motives for her actions causes him to despise her even more. However, the hero's negative reaction to her advances does not deter Buffy. Her scheming ways peak out, when she uses her superior knowledge to trick Spike into marrying her under the influence of a spell. Believing that a marriage would irreversibly bind Spike to her, Buffy is

crushed when he rejects her still. She starts to question her own behaviour and eventually acknowledges that she has gone too far:

She couldn't blame him for being angry. She had to have the control over everything, and no amount of thinking that he would eventually love her could make her get back to believing what she'd done wasn't pretty much what he said. Manipulative. Just call her Buffy the Vampire Manipulator. For the first time since sleeping three days away, Buffy could feel the cold hand of doom squeezing the breath from her lungs. She'd been so arrogant, so assuming in her unrepentant chase to have Spike be the vampire that he was going to be in two years time. How could she be so dense? How could she be so cruel?  
(Peta, Chapter 14)

Buffy eventually realises that no matter how much she knows about the future, she cannot force someone to love her. She decides to give him the time he needs to come clean with his feelings on his own: “On a broken sob she tore the ring off her finger, at last accepting that this was something she'd had no right to push. It was beyond hard to let go. To back off and wait for those years of development and realisation before Spike could truly accept her. But at least she would be ready when he finally was.” (Peta, Chapter 14) At this point, it seems that the enhancement of the heroine's knowledge does not have the desired effect, as it does not unite the members of the O.T.P. Nevertheless, this strategy serves a purpose, namely to prepare the heroine to accept the love of the hero, and to make her realise in time that she loves him in return. Thus, the groundwork for a happy relationship of the intended couple is laid.

As already mentioned, Buffy knows that she has made a mistake by trying to force Spike to love her and fears that she may have destroyed everything they were bound to have, because she tried to rush things. However, when the narration switches to Spike's point of view, it becomes apparent that her attempts were successful after all. Although, he is furious, Spike starts to rethink Buffy's actions and realises that she really just wanted to make him love her. Moreover, he has to acknowledge that – despite all the trouble she has put him through - he has fallen in love with her as well. Still, he is not at all happy about it: “Bloody NO. I wasn't ready! Couldn't you perverse bastards have given me the time to get to know it on my own? Now I've got that over my head and a Slayer that thinks she can push me into any situation that will benefit her[.]” (Peta, Chapter 14) Still, he accepts that he is “[l]ove's bitch again” (Peta, Chapter 14) and eventually gives into his feelings for Buffy. Thus, the

final chapters of the story reveal that the applied character formation strategy does not just lay the groundwork for a future relationship, but manages to bring the romantic protagonists together after all.

Thus, the heroine has, in fact, managed to tame the hero by turning him from a bloodthirsty monster into a man who loves and cherishes her. This development stands in stark contrast to Janice Radway's concept of the romantic relationship between the protagonists in the ideal romance. She proclaims that the romantic heroine can never truly change the hero. Even though his development from a seemingly fierce and cruel man to a caring devoted lover suggests otherwise, the romantic hero does not really change, but simply reveals "traits and propensities that are part of the hero's most basic nature". (Radway, p 129) Therefore, the hero does not change his nature, but simply reveals a new side to his personality.<sup>140</sup> Although, the author of "Careless Memories" suggests that Spike is destined to love Buffy, she also makes very clear that he is not in love with her at the time Buffy receives the slayer dream. Thus, Buffy does not simply reveal a softer side to him by uncovering his hidden feelings for her, but she actually physically and mentally changes him. She restricts his physical power by letting him get implanted with the chip and, thus, weakens the offending Otherness caused by his status as an evil, bloodthirsty vampire that stands in the way of a romantic relationship between them. The fact that he falls in love with her in spite of her actions, also changes his attitude towards her.

In short, the artificial enhancement of the heroine's knowledge leads to an abrupt change of this character. This change then triggers the gradual change of the male protagonist.

#### 4.3.2. Natural Enhancement

As mentioned above, this type of knowledge enhancement is predominantly used in the *Veronica Mars* fandom due to the realistic content of the series. Usually, it involves a prolonged separation of the main protagonists, which allows them to gain some space to view their situation from a different angle. During this lengthy separation period both characters typically go through a lot of changes and make an effort to abandon their destructive habits, in order to regain the control over their life.

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<sup>140</sup> Cf. Radway, 129.

Thus, when the two characters meet again, the conditions are changed. Both are grown up and have learned from their past mistakes. This maturity helps them to finally acknowledge, and act upon, their mutual attraction, but it also helps them to avoid past mistakes. Thus, it can be said that Veronica and Logan meet under circumstances that altogether favour a successful romantic relationship, because - for the most part - previous obstacles do no longer exist.

The story “Not the Traditional Way of Things” by blue\_icy\_rose follows this general outline of natural enhancement. The comparatively short story contains 5555 words, was published in January 2006 at *LiveJournal*, and is told entirely from Logan’s point of view. The summary already hints at the content of this story: “Logan couldn’t remember the last time a woman had stirred him up as much as Veronica Mars did. In the thirteen years since he’d seen her, not one had even come close.” (blue\_icy\_rose, Summary) Thus, the general outline of the story is established: Veronica and Logan meet again after thirteen years of separation. Logan, who never truly managed to get over his teenage girlfriend, has to acknowledge that time has done nothing to weaken his feelings for her, even though the Veronica he encounters now has changed considerably. Instead of the streetwise teenage detective, this Veronica is a newly divorced single mother of two, who tries to make a living as a private investigator. Yet, she is not the only one who has changed. Also Logan is not the same anymore: “He’d built a life for himself, one where people rarely, if ever, thought of him as “that Echolls boy” or “Aaron Echolls` kid””. (blue\_icy\_rose, “Not the Traditional Way of Things”) To get away from his old life and his bad reputation, Logan has taken on a respectable job as a realtor, has bought himself a modest house, and gotten himself a dog to go along with it. He has exchanged his image as a rich bad boy for that of an average white working man. Thus, both have given up their more extravagant lifestyles as girl detective and rich son of a movie star, in favour of a fairly normal middle-class existence. Consequently, the Otherness of both characters that previously made a happy relationship virtually impossible, does no longer exist. However, while Logan seems to be perfectly content with his current situation, Veronica is not:

Her eyes stayed on the dock for a moment and he knew she wanted to ask what had made him come here, just on the outskirts of Neptune, where he had grass in a backyard that led to the ocean and was only a mile or so from the beach.

[...] He could tell her that he'd wanted to do something with his life rather than just throw his money away, that he had wanted to look at the house, the boat, the car and know that he'd earned them. He could volunteer all that information, tell her how he'd built the dock himself, but he didn't. Instead he just waited until she looked at him again and when her eyes found his, there was a sadness there behind the Veronica Mars he remembered that punched him in the gut. (blue\_icy\_rose, "Not the Traditional Way of Things")

The newfound normality that has invigorated Logan has drained Veronica. Her marriage to a successful lawyer, and the ensuing divorce, has damaged her self-esteem. After constantly being belittled, patronised, and eventually even physically abused by her husband, Veronica cannot help but question herself and her capabilities:

"Do you know the worst part? I don't know why I let it happen. I know it sounds stupid to say that I let it all happen, but let's face it Logan. There was a time where I didn't take crap from anyone, where I would have fought tooth and nail against someone taking away all my means of getting anywhere. And instead, I just sat back. I didn't fight. I wanted so desperately to be normal, to be who I thought everyone expected me to be that I let myself be buried and didn't do anything about it until he hit me.["] (blue\_icy\_rose, "Not the Traditional Way of Things")

Once again, the issue of the heroine's desperate quest for normality, that has already been discussed, becomes significant. Veronica wishes to live the normal life of a white middle-class devoted wife and loving mother, but finds that she cannot unite this life with her role as a tough private investigator. Thus, the heroine cannot combine her dreams of normality with her reality of the strong action heroine. Her attempts to lead a normal life have left her weak and insecure. In this respect, this story is different from those discussed before. Whereas, it was the main goal of the previous stories to weaken the heroine, so that her overabundant toughness does not stand in the way of a romantic relationship; in this story it is the heroine's weakness that constrains this goal. Veronica has not only lost her belief in herself, but she has also lost her faith in love. She has given up the hope to find happiness and security in a relationship. Instead, she concentrates all her efforts to guarantee the happiness and security of her children. This lack of trust in love on her part, of course, makes it virtually impossible for the pairing to successfully resume their relationship. Before any attempt at a happy relationship can be made, Veronica has to believe that such a thing is even possible for her. Thus, in order to convince the heroine that they have a



real chance to be happy together, Logan has to help her to regain her old self-confidence:

“Do you think that makes you weak?” Veronica shrugged. “I honestly don’t know.” Her voice was quiet and it set Logan off. “That’s just bullshit.” He shoved his chair back and stood, beginning to pace. “You don’t know if it makes you weak? I’ll tell you then. No. What you did wasn’t weak. It may have been frustrating to those who saw what was going on, but you’re not weak. You didn’t take the easy way out, you didn’t decide to stay with him and let it continue. You left. You got yourself and your kids out and you fought for them. Maybe some people think you should have fought for yourself, but who the hell cares? You fought for the two people who matter most and I’ll be damned if I sit here and just listen to you make yourself sound like a moron who can’t do anything.[“] [...] She hesitated a moment before speaking and when she did, let go of the hurt that she’d been holding onto. (blue\_icy\_rose, “Not the Traditional Way of Things”)

With Logan’s help Veronica begins to rediscover her old self-assured and energetic self. She slowly realises that the past bad experiences have not really made her weaker, but stronger. She has gone through a lot and come out matured and wiser. Moreover, in Logan she has found a man who does not want to shape her into something she cannot be. Thus, with Logan’s help, Veronica has not only found back to her old toughness, but she has also found love: “You’ve already given me more than I thought I’d have. You’re giving me a father for my children and a man who loves me because...just because.” (blue\_icy\_rose, “Not the Traditional Way of Things”)

The two protagonists are described to fit perfectly together because they have finally learned to accept themselves and each other as they are. Logan finds that her inquisitive nature turns him on: “[D]id I ever tell you it makes me want you more when you’re annoying people?” (blue\_icy\_rose, “Not the Traditional Way of Things”) Similarly, Veronica realises that she loves his cocky arrogance. The fact that the heroine does no longer have to try to conform to some imagined ideal enables her to lead the normal life she desires: she finally has a husband, kids, a dog, and a modest home. What is more, she does no longer have to hide her hardboiled detective persona and is able to continue her work as a private investigator. Thus, the characters` enhanced knowledge does not only make a romantic relationship possible, but it also allows them to live the normal life they both desire.

The change of both characters is abrupt. By weakening their Otherness enough to facilitate a romantic relationship, the change conforms to the already established pattern. However, the heroine's change proves to be too extreme as to favour any romantic development. Thus, it becomes apparent that, while the heroine's toughness has to be reduced, the author has to be very careful not to make her too weak. She has to be softened enough to accept the help and love of the male protagonist, but not to an extent where she is entirely broken. Accordingly, "Not the Traditional Way of Things" has Veronica partly change back into her tougher self; but only enough to be still able to accept Logan as her partner.

#### **4.4. Overcoming Otherness II: Knowledge Restriction**

It has already been established that this character formation strategy aims to limit the knowledge of the characters so that they know less than their canonical versions. Generally, this has the effect that possible problems and obstacles caused by the protagonists Otherness that stand in the way of a romantic relationship, do not exist at all.

Yet again, the distinctive features of the supernatural *BtVS* universe and the more realistic *VM* universe cause the knowledge restriction strategies employed in the respective fandoms to vary considerably. The distinction between artificial and natural strategies, which has already been established for knowledge enhancement, can also be applied to knowledge restriction. Artificial restriction strategies include spells, as well as timetravel stories, that typically unite one member of the O.T.P. with the other member coming from the past. These methods are restricted to the *BtVS* fandom. Natural restriction, on the other hand, mainly makes use of pre-series fics, which are set before the canonical events; at a time when the problems of the intended romantic couple do not exist, or can be easily avoided. This restriction variant is predominantly used in *VM* fan fiction, but does occasionally also appear in the *BtVS* fandom. This study will now take a closer look at an example of artificial restriction induced by a spell, as well as an example of natural restriction in a pre-series story.

##### 4.4.1. Artificial Restriction

The story “More Than Candy” by Kari Mouke presents an example for knowledge restriction provoked by a spell. The medium length story contains approximately 19180 words, and is told from the multiple perspectives of the two protagonists as well as several minor characters. Unfortunately, the exact release date of this story is not accessible anymore, as the author is no longer an active member of the *Spuffy* fan fiction community.

The story takes place at Halloween in early season two, at a time when Spike has just arrived in Sunnydale with his psychic and slightly crazy vampire girlfriend Drusilla, intending to kill his third slayer. Both Buffy and Spike buy costumes at the shop of the evil sorcerer Ethan Rayne, not knowing that he has put a spell on his costumes to turn his customers into what they masquerade as. Unwittingly, they buy matching outfits. Buffy, who is “tired of always being the slayer” and “for one night” just wants “to be a girl” (Kari Mouke, Chapter 1: The Dress), purchases a Victorian wedding dress; while Drusilla forces Spike to buy the matching groom’s suit. The aim of Ethan’s sinister plan is to make the slayer vulnerable by turning her into a helpless Victorian lady. The fact that a vampire wears the suit belonging to the dress endangers Buffy even more. It puts her at the mercy of her archenemy with no means to defend herself.

However, things do not go according to plan. The way in which the author describes the heroine’s preparations to wear the dress, already insinuates that this spell will do more than forcibly bind two enemies together:

She took her time getting ready. She soaked in vanilla scented bathwater, adding a hint of cinnamon to spice things up. After toweling [sic!] herself off she rubbed lotion all over skin, making it silky soft. She carefully pinned her hair up and applied her makeup. She walked out of the bathroom and into her bedroom. Time for lingerie. She had her hand on a sexy black lace bra and panty set, but suddenly decided to go with white. [...] Joyce walked up the stairs and her breath caught in her throat. Her little girl looked so beautiful. So grown up. She felt tears come to her eyes. “I need help doing this up,” Buffy explained. She turned around to give her mother access, completely unaware of the emotion on her mother’s face. Joyce did up the ties with shaky fingers. For some reason this felt momentous. (Kari Mouke, Chapter1: The Dress)

Buffy does not simply put on some dress to get ready for a Halloween party with her friends. The way she prepares herself, more resembles the actual grooming routines

of a bride on her wedding day. Also the way her mother reacts to seeing her daughter in the dress suggests that something “momentous” is about to happen. Thus, this description lets well educated readers of *Spuffy* fiction know immediately that what Buffy faces is not imminent death, but a real wedding.

Indeed, once both wear the costumes, the spell is activated. Both the slayer and the vampire are not only made entirely human, but they are turned into humans with a Victorian frame of mind. They neither remember anything of their former lives and occupations, nor do they know anything about the world beyond the 19<sup>th</sup> century. The only thing they know for certain is that they have to find each other. Thus, the knowledge restriction that is triggered by the spell causes an immediate switch of both characters. The author turns Spike into his human version, the Victorian gentleman William, who appeared in the show in several flashback sequences. (Fig.7) Buffy, on the other hand, is turned into the frail Victorian girl Elizabeth, similar to the one she turned into during the season two episode “Halloween”.<sup>141</sup> (Fig.8) As both manifestations are supported by the canonical source text, the switch of both characters is comprehensible. It is important to note, however, that in any other case, depictions of entirely human Spike and Buffy would count as a radical switch of these characters, because such manifestations are not based on canonical occurrences. Only in this special case, where human versions of the characters are presented that are actually based on the source text, is the character switch comprehensible.

The restriction of their knowledge lets them forget the mutual animosity and the rivalry that stand between them. With these obstacles no longer getting in the way, the protagonists can freely acknowledge their true feelings for each other, and also act on them:

He looked into her eyes. “Elizabeth, my wife, my hope, my future, how I love you.” Elizabeth had tears running down her face. This was her William. Her everything. She reached up with her hands and ran them down his back. “I love you too, my sweet,” she whispered to him. (Kari Mouke, Chapter 4: The Consummation)

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<sup>141</sup> For more detailed information see episode 2.6 “Halloween”.

The story suggests that the total loss of memory caused by the knowledge restriction strips them of the doubts and prejudices that make a relationship between these two characters impossible, and uncovers their suppressed needs and desires. Thus, only their ignorance enables them to be together; a fact that does not at all meet with the requirements of ideal romance. Janice Radway stresses that mutual love and appreciation of the individual personality of the partner are paramount for the happy ending of an ideal romance.<sup>142</sup> Accordingly, a relationship that is based on the ignorance of the partner's true personality cannot be seen as a satisfying conclusion of the romantic plot. Thus, for a truly happy ending, it is not enough to unite William and Elizabeth, but the author has to find a way to unite Spike and Buffy as well. For that reason, the knowledge restriction has to be revoked. Accordingly, Kari Mouke has Buffy's friends find a way to break the spell. As soon as it is no longer working, the two main protagonists regain their memory and have to learn that the person they declared to be in love with is actually their worst enemy: "Buffy sobbed, a terrible heart wrenching sound that echoed in Spike's ears. He wished he could do the same. This was a nightmare. To be given everything, and then to have it torn away. He was sure he'd just fallen from heaven. "(Kari Mouke, Chapter 5: The Realization). With the cancellation of the knowledge restriction, naturally also the comprehensible switch is revoked. However, the feelings they have for each other are not: "Her mind recognized that William didn't exist. It had come to accept that it was all just a spell, but her heart and her body refused to listen. They remembered. They remembered and they called out during the quiet times for their mate." (Kari Mouke, Chapter 9: The Stick) Although, she finds it hard to reconcile the memory of her husband William with the fierce vampire Spike, the feelings she harbours for the man who stands behind both personas remain unchanged. Spike experiences the same dilemma, as he is having "thoughts he [is not] supposed to be having over the soddin` Slayer". (Kari Mouke, Chapter 8: The Living; Spike) It becomes apparent that the vampire and the slayer cannot simply go back to being enemies, as the restriction of their knowledge has caused them to change permanently. Thus, the remnants of the knowledge restriction cause an abrupt change of the two protagonists. The love they feel for each other, then, helps them to overcome the aforementioned obstacles caused by their status as the Other, that become valid again

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<sup>142</sup> Cf. Radway, 170.

as soon as the knowledge restriction is no longer effective. The author is very careful to stress that their emotions are not generated by the spell, but are in fact genuine:

[“]You silly bint, I love you!” “You do? But I thought it was just the spell. That you’d feel disgusted for making love to me.” She said shakily. “No, no, kitten. Doesn’t work like that, does it?” He looked at her knowingly. “Spell just made me a groom and you a bride. Didn’t make us love one another. I’d bet money the original wearers of those outfits didn’t give a fig about each other. Marriages were usually arranged by the parents back then. Love had nothin’ to do with it.” He leaned down to kiss her swollen lips. “We did the love part all on our own, baby.” (Kari Mouke, Chapter 12: The Attack)

This makes clear that the love they feel for each other is real and not spell-induced. Now, all the requirements for a truly satisfying conclusion of the romantic plot according to the requirements of the ideal romance are fulfilled. The hero and heroine do not love each other blindly, but know and accept their partner. They even compromise and try to find a way to live together that is acceptable for both the vampire and the slayer. Accordingly, Spike decides to “give up snackin` on the innocent”, as long as Buffy gets out “of this Chosen One crap”. (Kari Mouke, Chapter 12: The Attack)

Therefore, the knowledge restriction not only causes them to acknowledge their suppressed feelings for each other, but also to act on them. Although, it is not permanent, it has permanent effects.

#### 4.4.2. Natural Restriction

In contrast to the *BtVS* fiction “More Than Candy”, where the knowledge restriction is only temporary, the author of the next story restricts the knowledge of the characters permanently. The *VM* story “The Sweet Life” by gertinator contains 32768 words, and was published between October and November 2006 at *LiveJournal*. Also this story is told from the multiple perspectives of various major and minor characters; however, the point of view of the two main protagonists is most important. The story is an alternative universe version of season one and parts of season two. It starts out with the rewrite of a flashback sequence in the series that shows the last time Veronica saw Lilly alive, and develops from there. As it is set before the actual events of the canonical source text, this story belongs to the category pre-series. The story presents versions of the characters that were hinted at

in the source text and, therefore, utilises a comprehensible switch to shape these characters. The knowledge of all characters is naturally restricted by depicting them at a time when they are still innocent and carefree, not yet traumatised by the murder of Lilly Kane. What is even more important is the fact that this fiction keeps their knowledge restricted by omitting this crucial event, sparing them to experience the repercussions. This story depicts an alternative universe were Lilly Kane is alive. As a result, the characters lack the experiences that shape the canonical versions. Accordingly, Veronica has no incentive to turn into the tough girl detective. Similarly, there is no reason for Logan to turn into the bitter “psychotic jackass”. Thus, the offending Otherness of the more jaded versions of these two characters never comes into being. Furthermore, various minor characters, like Lilly’s brother Duncan and Veronica’s father Keith, are spared the crucial consequences of Lilly Kane’s murder.

Thus, the omission of this central event has extensive effects. Not only does it allow the author to restrict the characters’ knowledge permanently, but it actually changes the conditions for the further development of the plot, as the major part of season one was based on Lilly’s murder and its consequences. It not only motivates Veronica to become a detective but, furthermore, causes her to become an outcast and instigates the hatred between her and Logan. However, with the major motivating factor for the canonical events of season one missing, the author gets the chance to develop a new season one that is – to some extent – based on the source text, but necessarily develops differently.

Right from the beginning, it becomes apparent how the author incorporates canonical events into her story, using them in a way that supports her own plot. “The Sweet Life” adopts the basic canonical conditions. Thus, it starts at the time Lilly and Logan, as well as Duncan and Veronica, have recently broken up. According to canon, Lilly dies shortly after. However, in this story she does not. The reasons why Lilly escapes death remain unknown. The story does not further expand on Lilly’s love life. Therefore, the affair with Logan’s father Aaron that eventually leads to her murder is only vaguely implied. Even though Veronica suspects something, she does not further investigate into it: “Veronica thought Lilly might have even had an affair with the father of one of their friends, though she very much did not want to know

for sure. And she absolutely positively did not want to know who.” (gertinator, Part 3) Contrary to the tough and witty Veronica that is featured in the source text, this sweet and slightly naïve version of Veronica prefers to remain ignorant of Lilly’s affairs. As a large part of this story is told from Veronica’s point of view, it is essentially due to her innocence and her resulting lack of criminological intuition that the cause for Lilly Kane’s survival is not revealed to the reader.

Hence, readers of the story simply have to accept that the conditions for the development of the story, and all the characters in it, have changed. The restricted knowledge of the two main protagonists, combined with said changed conditions, seems to guarantee the speedy and uncomplicated development of a romantic relationship between them. Veronica and Logan are both single, and their relationship is friendly. Thus, there are no antagonistic feelings hindering a budding romance. However, it is important to note that, unlike in “More Than Candy”, where the knowledge restriction immediately unites the intended lovers, the effect in this story is not as instantaneous. Even though, this character formation device keeps the two members of the O.T.P. comparatively innocent and, therefore, removes the main obstacles in the way of a romantic liaison, it does only provide the basis for a *LoVe* relationship. Accordingly, Veronica and Logan start out as friends. It soon turns out that the changed conditions for the development of the plot cause new obstacles for a romance between the two main characters:

She needed to think of Logan's string of bimbos, gorgeous girls with hot bodies that liked to put out. There was no way he would be interested in her; she was more like a little sister to him. Best to keep that firmly in her mind. Also best not to look at him anymore. (gertinator, Part 2)

Logan Echolls was a horny teenaged boy and Veronica Mars was a hot teenaged girl. That was what he told himself whenever he got those funny stirrings from being with her. How could it be anything else? She would never go for a fuck-up like him, and anyway, Lilly would castrate him for even thinking it. And Duncan, Duncan would never forgive him. (gertinator, Part 2)

This makes clear that, although, they are attracted to each other, the insecurity of these naïve versions of the characters prevents them from openly declaring their feelings for each other. Furthermore, the prospect of hurting the Kane siblings’ feelings discourages both from giving in to the mutual attraction.



Thus, in this case the knowledge restriction is not enough to unite the intended lovers. To achieve this desired effect, it has to be combined with other character formation strategies (eradication of differences, breadcrumbs), which will be discussed in the upcoming chapters. In this case, the natural restriction of the characters' knowledge serves to remove the main obstacles that stand in the way of a love relationship of the O.T.P. Furthermore, it facilitates a friendship between the intended lovers that paves the way for romantic developments. However, the restriction of their knowledge alone is not enough to unite the two lovers. In "The Sweet Life", this character formation strategy provides the basis, but not the main incentive, for a romantic liaison of the One True Pairing.

#### **4.5. Eliminating Obstacles Getting in the Way of Romance:**

##### **Eradication of Differences**

This method not only aims to abolish the emotional differences between the characters, but more importantly any physical differences that stand between the two main protagonists, as well as possible differences in their social situation.

This approach aims not only at a mental, but also at a physical change of the characters, as well as a change of their social situation. Thus, this strategy actually affects their outward appearance and their environment. Therefore, it can be counted among the outside strategies, meaning those approaches that rely on forces outside the characters themselves to change them. Nevertheless, it is closely linked to both knowledge enhancement and knowledge restriction that both belong to the inside strategies and, therefore, aim at a change that is generated within the characters. The eradication of differences changes the characters so that offending differences between them do no longer exist. Thus, when either their maturity (knowledge enhancement) or their innocence (knowledge restriction) enables them to meet under circumstances that favour a romantic entanglement of the protagonists, the differences between them are automatically eradicated. However, knowledge enhancement/restriction removes mental differences, while the eradication of differences is more concerned with the elimination of physical and social differences.

Yet again, the conditions for this character formation strategy are not the same in the two fandoms. In the universe of *Veronica Mars*, in which the characters have to be

changed by somewhat realistic means, the eradication of differences is particularly closely linked to the enhancement or restriction of the characters' knowledge. The emphasis lies on the elimination of the emotional differences. As the realistic *VM* universe does not allow for drastic changes in the physical appearance of the characters, they become secondary to the alteration of the characters' emotional state. Although, the innocence or maturity of the protagonists is usually reflected by the way they dress (innocent Veronica mostly wears girly sundresses, whereas mature Logan often wears suits), the change in their outward appearance is never too drastic. However, their mental state does also influence their social situation. This means that innocent Veronica does still belong to the higher middle class and is part of the popular 09er clique, as the event that deprived her of this status – Lilly's murder – does not take place. Likewise, many fan fictions show mature Logan to prefer a rather simple lifestyle, because he wants to distance himself from his past and his extravagant existence as the son of two movie stars. Thus, whereas the physical appearance of the characters is only marginally affected by the eradication of differences in *VM* fan fiction, the effects on their social situation are quite significant. The elimination of differences between the lifestyles of the two protagonists enables them to meet on common ground and, thus, promotes potential romantic developments.

The situation is slightly different in the *BtVS* fandom, where the supernatural environment allows for more radical measures as far as the eradication of differences is concerned. Here, the physical alteration of the characters is much more important. It does not only signify the emotional change of the characters, but in some cases even triggers it (i.e. when Buffy is turned into a vampire, the physical change triggers the emotional change). Accordingly, the fan fiction "More Than Candy" eliminates the differences between the intended lovers by making them entirely human. Other fictions attempt to reach the same goal by turning Spike into a slayer, Buffy into a vampire, or by making them both human and putting them into an environment where vampires and slayers do not exist at all. These methods are also linked to the enhancement and restriction of knowledge, however, the change in the physical appearance of the characters is much more important than in *Veronica Mars* fan fiction. That the utilisation of the aforementioned inside strategies does not always lead to an immediate eradication of the characters' differences and to the change of

their outward appearance, is shown by the story “Careless Memories”. The enhancement of Buffy’s knowledge does neither cause her to change her physical appearance, nor does it eradicate the differences between her and Spike. Thus, in *BtVS* fan fiction the degree to which the enhancement and restriction of knowledge and the eradication of differences are linked varies.

#### 4.5.1. Radical Eradication

To show how the eradication of differences is employed in *BtVS* fan fiction, the close analysis will again concentrate on the already established fiction “More Than Candy” by Kari Mouke.

The differences between Buffy and Spike are temporarily eradicated when they both turn into humans. Consequently, the slayer-vampire barrier between them does no longer exist. Thus, by making them entirely human, the author manages to abolish the offending Otherness that is caused by their status as supernatural warriors, and stands in the way of a romantic relationship between the protagonists. The heroine’s extreme toughness is due to her being the slayer, as the hero’s evil nature is due to him being a vampire. The author simply extinguishes their Otherness and its negative effects. Moreover, by turning them into a Victorian couple she very firmly establishes the stereotypical male-female gender roles and, thus, favours the romantic development of the plot even more:

Elizabeth ran into William’s open arms with a sob. “I couldn’t find you. I was so scared. These strange people tried to hold me hostage. One of them was a vampire. I think the others were witches. Oh William, I’m so afraid. What we’ll we do?” [...] “Shh, Elizabeth. It’s okay my love. I’ve got you. Your William’s got you. We’ll seek shelter in one of the houses until morning. Then we can head out and find a church of some kind. We’ll be fine. Nothing can hurt us if we’re together.” She nodded into his chest. She knew he was right. Her William could do anything. [...] He scooped her up in his arms. “William, put me down! You can’t possibly carry me all the way to shelter!” Elizabeth was protesting but secretly overjoyed to be so safely ensconced. “The hell I can’t!” He said saucily as he continued to carry her. “William! You swore,” Elizabeth said with a giggle. He could be such a beast at times. “I did, didn’t I?” William found that Elizabeth brought out the primitive in him.  
(Kari Mouke, Chapter 3: The Spell)

Buffy turns into the human lady Elizabeth and becomes the picture of a damsel in distress. Correspondingly, Spike’s human alter ego William turns out to be noble and

brave and acts as her saviour and protector. The role allocation seems to favour a romantic plot corresponding to the requests of the ideal romance: the strong hero loves and protects the vulnerable heroine. However, as soon as they leave the dangerous public sphere of the streets of Sunnydale, and enter the safe private sphere of their shelter in the form of an old mansion, their roles change.

Elizabeth wandered up the stairs with William following. It was funny how he had taken charge outside and now it was her turn. She walked to the first door in the upper hall and looked in. It had a faintly musty smell that indicated a lack of recent occupancy. It would be perfect. William walked into the room behind Elizabeth. He was terrified. He'd never done this before, hadn't wanted to. He was a born believer in true love and destiny. And here it was standing before him. He closed the door and engaged the lock. He walked towards her on shaky legs. She turned and gave him her back. "Undress me, my love." (Kari Mouke, Chapter 4: Consummation)

In the secure and private realm of their shelter, it is Elizabeth who takes the lead. This mirrors the stereotypical concept of private and public places that views the private realm of the home as a typically female domain, and the public realm of the outside world as a typically male domain.<sup>143</sup> The behaviour of the heroine corresponds to this model, but at the same time it contradicts the notions of ideal romance. Elizabeth does not simply take the control over the household, but she takes sexual control:

Elizabeth knew that if she wanted things to proceed, she was going to have to take them into her own hands; literally. She reached out and began to undress her husband. She removed layer after layer of clothing until he stood before her in nothing but the skin he was born in. She'd never seen a naked man before in her life. (Kari Mouke, Chapter 4: Consummation)

She is the one who initiates the sexual intimacies of their wedding night, and she is also the one who causes said intimacies to proceed. Elizabeth's role as the sexual aggressor and William's virtual passiveness stand in stark contrast to the principles of the ideal romance, where the hero "forces his attentions upon her" and the heroine is "inevitably "awakened" by his "probes," and overcome by her own bodily response which she cannot control". (Radway, 126) Thus, ideal romance features a sexually experienced male character that carefully seduces a virginal and inexperienced female character and, by doing so, slowly uncovers her inherent

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<sup>143</sup> Cf. Heineken, 2.

sensual nature. “More Than Candy” does not stick to this model. Not only is the hero as sexually inexperienced as the heroine, but he takes the place of the timid virgin whose inherent sensual nature is uncovered by the sexual advances of the heroine. However, as soon as said hidden sensual nature is awakened, the roles are reversed once more, and William takes control, while Elizabeth takes a more passive role: “He picked her up and laid her down upon the bed. He gave her one last hungry glance, basking in her naked glory, before he fell upon her.” (Kari Mouke, Chapter 4: Consummation) Hence, when he has recovered from his initial timidity, William takes over the role of the sexual aggressor that in patriarchal society is typically ascribed to men. Accordingly, Elizabeth gets more passive and willingly receives her partner’s sexual attentions. Eventually, they behave in a way that corresponds to the notions of patriarchal culture and, therefore, also to those of the ideal romance.

This traditional allocation of gender roles is also kept up once the eradication of differences is reversed when the spell of the costumes is broken. Buffy finds out that her one night with human William has left her pregnant. Realising that this is her chance to get away from her calling and to live the normal life she desires, she rejects her role as the tough warrior in favour of her new role as a mother and wife. Correspondingly, the encounter with his human alter ego William leads Spike to remember the hopes and dreams he has harboured as a human. Therefore, he happily embraces the idea of being a husband and father and assumes the role as the protector of his family. As such, he finds a way to relieve Buffy entirely of her duties as a slayer. This is necessary, as the story stresses that Buffy cannot be a tough action heroine and a mother at the same time: “Slayers weren’t supposed to have children. It was all about the mission for them. They didn’t have time for things like bottles and little league.” (Kari Mouke, Chapter 10: The Telling) Therefore, Spike, with the help of his sire Drusilla, locates the second slayer Kendra. The series introduces this character in season two. There, Kendra is called as a slayer after Buffy’s short death at the end of season one. By bringing this new slayer to Sunnydale, Spike enables Buffy to give up being the slayer so that she can concentrate on being a mother and wife instead.

Thus, the temporary eradication of their differences has permanent consequences for the characters. The comprehensible switch caused by the spell is turned into an

abrupt change of the two protagonists as soon as said spell is broken. Although, the differences that are caused by their Otherness re-emerge as soon as the spell is no longer in effect, the lovers find a way to overcome the obstacles that stand between them on their own. Thus, although their differences are not eradicated permanently, this character formation strategy leaves the characters changed in a way that makes a happy relationship between them possible.

#### 4.5.2. Realistic Eradication

To examine how this character formation device is typically applied in *Veronica Mars* fan fiction, the examination will return to the story “The Sweet Life” by gertinator.

It has already been mentioned that the author manages to change the conditions for the development of the characters and the plot, by simply omitting Lilly Kane’s murder, the crucial event that influences all main characters and – to a large extent – the development of season one. Thus, the eradication of differences employed in this story is also triggered by said omission. The absence of this traumatic event causes all characters, but most importantly Logan and Veronica, to develop differently than their canonical counterparts. The fic works with the innocent versions shown in flashback sequences in the series. Thus, the characters are comprehensibly switched. The eradication and the subsequent switch of the characters, do also affect their social situation. Lilly’s death does not only cause the rift between Veronica and Logan, but also the loss of her social status. As Lilly does not die at all, the heroine does not have to make any of the consecutive negative experiences. Thus, Veronica and Logan still entertain a friendship; Veronica is still part of the prestigious 09er group; her father is still sheriff of Neptune; and the marriage of her parents is still intact. Thus, the basis on which the events play out is changed entirely. Veronica has no reason to get tough, as well as Logan has no reason to become resentful. Thus, like in the *BtVS* fiction “More Than Candy” before, the offending Otherness of the two protagonists is successfully eliminated. Furthermore, the differences in their social rank that also stand in the way of a happy relationship in the source text, do no longer exist in this fan fiction.

With these major obstacles eradicated, the author can now concentrate entirely on the development of the romantic plot. She does so, following the conventions of the ideal romance. Her versions of the characters conform to the stereotypical male-female role allocation of patriarchal culture that has been mentioned before. Therefore, they also conform to the ideal romance's image of the ideal hero and heroine. This Veronica presents the picture of a soft and sweet woman, while Logan is a strong and manly man. The way in which their romantic relationship develops also conforms to requirements of the ideal romance. Accordingly, the sexually innocent heroine meets the sexually experienced hero and, through him, discovers her sensual nature. Veronica is not only sexually inexperienced, but totally unaware of her own beauty and natural appeal to men:

"You slay me, Ronnie. Absolutely slay me. You treat me like your own personal jungle gym, climbing all over me all of the time. You have no idea what it does to me. I'm not a eunuch, you know. I'm a seventeen year old guy whose hormones are in overdrive." Veronica laughed uneasily, even as she slid off his lap, popcorn forgotten. It was hard to break his gaze; it held her trapped. "Oh, give me a break, Logan. We're just friends. You've always got gorgeous sexy girls hanging on you. Why would you even look twice at someone like me?" [...] "Ronnie, I'm here in your house alone in the dark with you. Do you really think I'm watching the movie?" Logan's voice was low and raw and carried a strange intensity that Veronica had never heard before. (gertinator, Part 6)

This concurs with Janice Radway's description of the ideal heroine who is herself unaware of her attractiveness, but who "is considered by everyone else, including the hero, to be an extraordinary example of full blooming womanhood." (Radway, 126) In compliance with Radway's claim that it is the ideal hero who eventually gets the heroine to realise her own sex appeal<sup>144</sup>, it is Logan who convinces Veronica that she is "a very hot girl". (gertinator, Part 6) The fact that Logan, who has had many sexual partners, finds her attractive fortifies Veronica's self-confidence, and makes her feel "strong and sexy". (gertinator, Part 4) Paradoxically, this excessive sexual activity of the male protagonist is another factor that marks him as a romantic hero according to Janice Radway. She claims that most ideal heroes are described to have been extremely promiscuous before their encounter with the ideal heroine. This behaviour is condoned, because it indicates the hero's extraordinary virility. Moreover, the fact that his previous sexual encounters were only means to gratify his sexual needs does

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<sup>144</sup> Cf. Radway, 126.

not hint at his selfish nature, but at his reluctance to trust women, who – by his experience – are scheming and cruel. Only the romantic heroine can convince the hero that not all women use sex to get what they want.<sup>145</sup> As soon as she convinces him that he can love and trust her, “his promiscuous impulses are curbed”. (Radway, 130) The situation is the same in “The Sweet Life”, where Veronica’s innocent attentions and her unpretentious behaviour towards him, let Logan realise that all his previous encounters were meaningless, and that he desperately wishes to experience genuine affection:

Her nimble fingers felt like an angel's touch, and Logan squeezed his eyes tight to keep the hot salty tears in. His body was out of his control, wanting to touch Veronica, make love to that sweet touch, but also wanting to be held like a child, chastely. He had never really made love, he realized, had never known a gentle loving touch like hers. He had always had rough, wild sex. Meaningless, stupid, teenage sex. He ached with sudden need to be loved.  
(gertinator, Part 5)

Thus, the hero and heroine learn from each other. She introduces him to genuine affection, while he introduces her to the physical aspects of said affection. It is very important to realise that love and sex are shown to be inextricably linked. It is a vital aspect of the ideal romance that the heroine’s “sexual response is something to be exchanged for love and used only in its service”. (Radway, 126) Accordingly, the sexual encounter that stands at the end of the story, and finally seals the love of the One True Pairing, can only take place after the hero has professed his love for the heroine, as well as his sincere intentions to spend the rest of his life loving only her. To show that he is serious, Logan presents Veronica with a promise ring that is meant to assure her of his love for her. Veronica returns the sentiment by offering him her virginity:

"Ronnie, I am so lucky to have you. I can't imaging [sic!] my life without you, but I also know it is too soon to try to tie you to me. So I am giving you this ring, and making this promise. No matter what else happens, you will always be the person who knows what is inside my soul." Logan let out a breath as he finished the speech, ready to take a big gulp of champagne to smooth down his rough edges. But Veronica threw herself at him and was smothering him in kisses. [...] "Do you have any condoms?" she whispered in his ear, her voice husky with desire. Logan froze in shock. Finally he managed to squeeze out, "Um, I didn't plan... but maybe, in the bedroom... I'm not sure." [...] "Ronnie,

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<sup>145</sup> Cf. Radway, 130.



you don't have to do this - " he said nervously, startled by the sudden change from innocent into sex kitten. Veronica laughed. "Silly. You make it sound like some kind of chore." She laughed again. "Like I'm going to lie here and think of England. I *want* to do this, as much as you do." She met his eyes, and her gaze was provocative. "You gave me your promise, and now I'm giving you mine. You are the person I share my soul with, too." (gertinator, Epilogue)

Thus, their mutual love for each other has led the hero to discover genuine emotions, and the heroine to discover her sensual nature. To make this romantic union possible, it is necessary to eliminate the obstacles that stand between the intended lovers. The eradication of the (social) differences that usually stand between the protagonists supports the development of the romantic plot. Therefore, this character formation strategy proves to be a useful device to bring about a happy relationship of the O.T.P.

#### **4.6. Meddling with Romance: Matchmakers**

It has already been established that this character formation device particularly depends on external forces to unite the protagonists in a happy relationship. Said external forces can take the form of secondary characters who try to bring the protagonists together, or of supernatural entities that have the same goal. Surprisingly, the realistic environment of *Veronica Mars* does also allow for supernatural matchmakers. However, it does not permit just any supernatural force to appear, but actually tolerates only one specific paranormal entity to act as a matchmaker: the dead Lilly Kane. This concurs with the canonical source text, where throughout season one various characters experience vision-like dreams of the murdered girl. Thus, although Lilly Kane's ghostly meddling disturbs the realistic *VM* universe; her appearance is somewhat canonically approved.

But the term matchmaker is not restricted to natural or supernatural beings. In a broader sense, it also applies to extraordinary situations that bring the intended lovers together, and force them to deal with their problems, as well as their feelings for each other. The *BtVS* fiction "Fevered" and the *VM* fiction "The Benefits of Being Lost", that have already been discussed elsewhere, provide examples for the matchmaking qualities of extraordinary circumstances. In both cases, illness is the factor that triggers such a special situation. The illness of the heroine and her ensuing helplessness, oblige the protagonists to deal with each other. Moreover, it forces them to spend an extended period of time together in the same place, with no way to

avoid each other. In fact, their situation makes it virtually impossible to escape each other: the hero's fear for the heroine's health prevents him from leaving her, and the heroine's weakness makes it impossible for her to refuse his help and make him leave. The way the two heroines react to their temporary forced dependency on the hero differs slightly. Veronica appears very reluctant to accept Logan's help at first, lamenting the fact that she is "unable to muster the energy to even to kick him out of her apartment". (Madame Librarian, "The Benefits of Being Lost") Buffy, on the other hand, seems much more willing to allow Spike to take care of her. She does not simply tolerate his caring attentions towards her, but encourages them: "'I woke up, and you weren't there.'" Her voice sounded meek, almost scared. "Oh. I was out in the yard. Usual place." "Silly vampire," she sighed. "I need you here..."'". (kantayra, Chapter 2)

The heroines' reaction to their situation notwithstanding, their illness literally forces the intended lovers to spend time with each other. The outcomes of this enforced closeness have already been discussed: the two main characters slowly reach a new understanding of each other, which leads them to acknowledge and, eventually, to give in to their mutual affection. The fact that the illness of the heroines puts the protagonists in a situation that forces them to face each other, and ultimately leads them to engage romantically, shows that extraordinary circumstances can indeed have matchmaking qualities. The following subchapters will look at the way *VM* and *BtVS* fan fiction employs supernatural matchmakers.

#### 4.6.1. Supernatural Matchmakers in *VM* Fiction

To give a general idea of how *Veronica Mars* fan fiction employs the canonical character Lilly Kane as a supernatural matchmaker, this study will take a closer look at the story "Dead Girls Know Best" by InTheVast. This short story contains 4531 words, and was posted in December 2006 on *fanfiction.net*. Veronica and Logan, as well as Lilly serve as focalisers.

This fiction presents an alternative version of season two, where Logan did not forgive Veronica for falsely accusing him of being Lilly's murderer. The story is set on Halloween of season two. Logan is hosting a Halloween party, but the appearance of his dead ex-girlfriend makes it impossible for him to enjoy it:

It was an hour before midnight on October 31st, and nothing spelled *Halloween* to Logan more than his dead ex-girlfriend sitting in the living room of [his] casa, bitching at him. “You’re such a jackass, Logan,” Lilly said, flopping on the couch as she sighed dramatically at the ceiling. “Why don’t you just give Veronica a call already?” “Fuck you.” The vodka burned down in his stomach as he tipped his head back, gulping down the liquid, throat convulsing. “Why are you here, anyway? Shouldn’t your soul be, I don’t know, rotting in hell? Where it belongs?” (InTheVast, “Dead Girls Know Best”)

At first, this meeting between Logan and Lilly does not seem remarkable. The way the author treats the encounter between the hero and this secondary character makes it seem like an average meeting between two people, and does not really reflect the fact that one of them is actually dead. This impression is reinforced by the fact that Logan seems to be neither too surprised, nor disturbed by the fact that a dead girl is sitting in his house. Thus, the first account of this peculiar encounter does not really allow the reader to decide what to make of the sudden appearance of a dead girl in the otherwise quite realistic *VM* environment. However, educated *Veronica Mars* fans might deduce that this Lilly Kane is only an alcohol-induced hallucination, as Veronica Mars and Duncan Kane experienced similar dreamlike encounters with Lilly in the show. (Fig.9) The way in which the plot develops, supports this assumption. Logan, who is obviously high on alcohol and drugs, takes a closer look at the appearance before him and thinks about the peculiar relationship he has with her:

Logan allowed himself to really *look* at Lilly for the first time since her spirit had appeared to him some ten minutes before. The blood-splattered, dead-eyed Pep Squad Lilly of old had been replaced by this glowing apparition sometime during the summer—presumably after Neptune’s own Nancy Drew solved the case. And this Lilly, Ghost 2.0, well, she had a sadistic penchant for showing up for his darker moments to tell him what he was doing wrong. [...] Damn, it really sucked having a dead ex-girlfriend as a conscience. (InTheVast, “Dead Girls Know Best”)

The fact that this is not the first time he has seen her, and that he believes that she is the personification of his conscience, because she always appears to remind him of his faults and to make him feel guilty, strongly suggests that this Lilly is in fact only in Logan’s head. As she tries to get him to forgive Veronica and to make him realise that he needs her as much as she needs him, readers may conclude that she really stands for his subconscious feelings, and his hidden desire to get back together with Veronica. It becomes clear that this assumption is not true, however, when Logan

disregards Lilly's suggestions considering his behaviour towards Veronica. As soon as he turns his back on her and leaves the room, it becomes clear that Lilly exists independently from Logan's imagination: "Had he looked over his shoulder, he would have seen Lilly watching his retreat, emotions flashing on her doll-like features: worry, concern, confusion, and then a devious smile." (InTheVast, "Dead Girls Know Best")

The fact that the Lilly Kane in this story is not just a figment of the hero's imagination becomes even clearer, when she also starts to interact with Veronica:

Veronica woke up feeling a little strange. [...] In her dream, Lilly had been hovering over Veronica's bed and smiling, all golden and beautiful as her pink lips lowered to Veronica's own parting mouth. But then Veronica had woken up. Her body felt warmer than usual as she pushed her covers back and kicked her legs out of bed. It was how she usually woke up, but there was something a little abnormal about this... Her body was moving of its own accord. She flexed her fingers and they wiggled just like they were supposed to. "I'm really going crazy," (InTheVast, "Dead Girls Know Best")

Even though – like in the canonical source text - their encounter only takes place in a dream; the effects of this meeting are very real. It soon turns out that Veronica is "feeling a little strange" because Lilly has partly taken over her body. By doing so, she somehow enhances Veronica's knowledge. She does not only convince her to attend Logan's Halloween party wearing a very sexy outfit, but she also lends her the nerve to actually confront him. With the help of her dead friend, Veronica manages to gather enough courage to talk to Logan, and to plead for his forgiveness for her behaviour towards him. Furthermore, Lilly persuades her to reveal her romantic feelings for him. Thus, this supernatural matchmaker makes the heroine stronger by lending her the courage to face the hero. But at the same time, it also weakens her to an extent that allows her to make her feelings for him known. The plan of this ghostly Lilly succeeds. Logan forgives Veronica and the couple reunites.

In agreement with the standards of the ideal romance, their reunion can only be sealed by a sexual act, when it is ensured that said intercourse is indeed motivated by love and not just by lust. For that reason, Logan resists the sexual advances of Veronica to reassure himself of her feelings for him:

“Wait, wait...” Logan groaned, wanting nothing more than to be out of the tight confining leather of his pants, but afraid they were moving too fast. Veronica disobediently popped the button anyway, and he bit his lip hard when he heard the rasp of his zipper. “God, are you sure?” He pulled her hands away so she could focus on his face. [...] “I need to know.” Logan insisted, gathering every little bit of willpower inside of himself to halt her hand in its maddening quest. “Logan, I want this more than I've ever wanted anything.” He looked into her eyes for confirmation and was blown away by the lucid honesty, the love reflecting back at him. So her words weren't exactly a cure-all, but Logan was a firm (very firm at the moment) believer in working with what he was given. She must love him, she *had* to, or she wouldn't have come to him tonight, like this. She wouldn't have looked at him like that. (InTheVast, “Dead Girls Know Best”)

Contrary to the conventions of the ideal romance, where it is the ideal heroine who only gives into sexual advances when they are motivated by love,<sup>146</sup> here it is the hero who insists that love has to be involved in their sexual relationship. As soon as he has assured himself that the heroine is indeed in love with him, even though she has never openly declared her feelings, he easily gives in to her sexual advances. Thus, it is enough for the heroine to vaguely signal her feelings for the hero to satisfy his needs. The following sexual encounter between the members of the One True Pairing then does not only serve to cement their reconciliation, but marks the beginning of a relationship between them that is based on mutual love.

The end of the story does not only show the lovers to be happily reunited, but it also provides clues concerning Lilly's status as a supernatural being:

Lilly always knew Veronica had potential. All she needed was a little bit of Lilly's own fabulousness to bring it out. Halloween had been the perfect time to slip into Veronica's skin and get her to do all the things she knew her best friend secretly wanted but was afraid to do on her own. Lilly smiled fondly at her beautiful friends, curled up together on the bed as she floated above. After all, what would they do without her? (InTheVast, “Dead Girls Know Best”)

Thus, she is not just a figment of both protagonists' imagination. The way she behaves, rather reminds of a guardian angel who watches over them.

#### 4.6.2. Supernatural Matchmakers in *BtVS* Fiction

Another kind of supernatural matchmaker can be found in the *BtVS* fiction “More Than Candy” by Kari Mouke. While the image of a guardian angel protecting the

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<sup>146</sup> Cf. Radway, 126.

protagonists does not strictly conform to the realistic universe of *Veronica Mars*, fans can still accept the author's creation, because it corresponds to general religious patterns and beliefs of a higher celestial realm. Thus, to some extent, the author's introduction of the supernatural matchmaker still takes the requirements of this fandom into account. The fantastic environment of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, on the other hand, allows for more fanciful creations. In a universe full of supernatural warriors, witches, and monsters, it does not appear implausible that a vampire should meddle to bring the intended lovers together. Therefore, "More Than Candy" introduces Spike's eccentric girlfriend and sire Drusilla as a supernatural matchmaker. Although, at first glance it seems that the evil wizard Ethan Raine inadvertently acts the part, as he weaves the spell that brings the protagonists together; it soon becomes clear that it is actually Drusilla who is the true mastermind:

"We'll take it," she said to the naughty shopkeeper. Dru gave him a sly look. This man thought he was in control. Silly man. Dru knew the truth of it. Ethan was nothing but a puppet. It was time for her Spike to become William again. It was time to meet up with the destiny that he had been created for. It was also time for Dru to get back to her daddy where she belonged. (Kari Mouke, Chapter 2: The Suit)

The Drusilla in this story has not much in common with the crazy and bloodthirsty vampire that is featured in the show. On the contrary, the author shows her to be genuinely concerned for the well-being and happiness of her child Spike. As her visions have shown her that it is his destiny to be together with the slayer, she does everything in her power to make that happen. It has to be mentioned however, that the actions of this secondary character are not entirely selfless. Unlike, Lilly in "Dead Girls Know Best", whose sole motivation is the happiness of her friends, Drusilla has ulterior motives for her actions. She does want to see Spike happy and loved, but she also knows that a union between him and the slayer also benefits her own situation. It is canonically established that Drusilla - although she has been in a love relationship with Spike for well over a hundred years - wants nothing more than to be together with her sire, Buffy's first love, the souled vampire Angel. Consistent with these facts, this story has Drusilla try to achieve this goal by bringing together Buffy and Spike. She hopes that a relationship between these two will relieve Angel and herself of their partners, so that they can get back together.

It soon becomes apparent, however, that it is not enough for her to awaken the two archenemies' feelings for each other. In order for her plan to work, she needs to enable them to actually be together once the initial spell that temporarily unites them wears off. Therefore, Ethan's spell marks only the beginning of her plan to bring Buffy and Spike together. The temporary restriction of their knowledge uncovers the feelings the two protagonists harbour for each other. But said feelings alone are not enough to keep them together once the restriction is removed and the obstacles that stand in the way of a relationship re-emerge. It soon turns out that Drusilla is well aware of the fact that the spell can only serve as a basis for a relationship between Buffy and Spike. This becomes apparent, when she reveals to Spike that she has taken careful measures to enable him to truly be together with the slayer:

“How exactly am I supposed to keep her, Dru? I'm a vampire and she's a slayer.[“] [...] “You are to go for an airplane ride and bring back the Slayer. The true slayer. The one you've got has been playing someone else's turn, and that's wrong. [...] “Do you happen to know how I can find this other slayer, pet?” Spike asked thinking it would be too good to be true. Dru whirled around and ran to her dresser. She pulled several pieces of paper out of the top drawer and handed them to Spike. Spike looked down at the paper in his hands. Airline tickets? She'd bought airline tickets? [...] “You leave tomorrow night. You don't even have to go out of the airport. I had the minions spread the news all over, that William the Bloody was headed to Jamaica. Miss Edith says that the real Slayer will be at the airport, ready to stake you. I bought a ticket for her too.” (Kari Mouke, Chapter 12: The Explanation, Again)

Thus, this supernatural matchmaker does not exclusively rely on magical means to unite the intended lovers. The spell that initially brings them together does only lay the groundwork. A large part of her meddling consists of strategic planning. By helping Spike to find the second slayer, she makes it possible for the couple to retire and concentrate on their role as parents. Moreover, she also reaches her own goal: her reunion with Angel.

Angel saw Dru walk in the doorway and he opened his arms. Drusilla let out a joyful cry and crawled on his lap. [...] Angel was struck with the feeling of coming home. He hadn't realized just how lonely he'd been over the years until this dark little beauty was resting in his arms. This wasn't at all how he pictured things working out, but somehow they made sense. He felt a rightness with Dru that he'd just never felt with Buffy. (Kari Mouke, Chapter 16: The Leaving)

It has been mentioned before, that in this story, the restriction of the characters' knowledge, and the ensuing eradication of their differences, provides the basis for a happy relationship between the members of the O.T.P. However, now it becomes apparent that these two character formation strategies were actually triggered by another such device, namely by a matchmaker. As Drusilla purposefully uses the spell to unite Buffy and Spike, it is the supernatural matchmaker who triggers the two abovementioned character formation devices. Thus, only the combination of all three devices actually produces the desired result: a happy relationship of the One True Pairing.

Of course, by no means all matchmakers in *BtVS* and *VM* fan fiction are supernatural. It has already been mentioned at the beginning of this chapter that extraordinary situations can have matchmaking qualities. But also canonical or original secondary characters can act as matchmakers. Generally, however, the role of all matchmakers is the same: they meddle with the characters' lives, and encourage them to change in a way that enables them to overcome their differences and to acknowledge their mutual attraction.

#### **4.7. Playing with Canon: Breadcrumbs**

This category refers to the custom of fan writers to take up canonical occurrences that hint at the possibility of a happy relationship between the members of the O.T.P., and to shape them in a way that enables them to make said happy relationship happen. However, this is not the only method authors apply when working with canonical breadcrumbs. Another way of working with this device, involves the rewriting of key scenes that are generally considered to be responsible for the failure of the romantic relationship of the One True Pairing. Furthermore, writers frequently take up canonical incidents and interpret them in a way that puts the characters and their behaviour in a more favourable light than in the source text. In general, the underlying aim is always the same: fan fiction authors use breadcrumbs to promote a romantic relationship of the O.T.P.

To show how the abovementioned strategies concerning the use of canonical breadcrumbs are realised in *Spuffy* and *LoVe* fan fiction, the close analysis will return to two stories that have already been examined before, namely the *VM* fiction "The



Sweet Life”, and the *BtVS* fiction “Careless Memories”. Both stories make extensive use of this device. However, the way in which it is actually applied in the two stories is quite distinct.

#### 4.7.1. Covert Use of Breadcrumbs

It has already been mentioned that the story “The Sweet Life” presents an AU version of the first two seasons of *Veronica Mars*. More precisely, this story is based on what fans commonly refer to as Veronica’s “graduation dream” in episode 2.22 “Not Pictured”. The author explicitly states that her story is “[t]he AU of Veronica’s graduation dream” (gertinator, Summary), where Lilly is not killed, Veronica is innocent, and Logan is nice. It can be argued that all stories that feature a plot where Lilly is alive, and, consequently, Veronica and Logan do not turn into their more jaded versions, are actually AU versions of the aforementioned “graduation dream”. Therefore, all stories that belong to this category can automatically be considered as being based on breadcrumbs of the series. Thus, “The Sweet Life” is entirely based on a breadcrumb occurrence. Moreover, as it takes canonical events and lets them play out differently, it actually makes use of numerous canonical breadcrumbs of the entire first, and parts of the second season.

It has been mentioned before that the story begins with the description of a canonical flashback-scene. In the series this flashback-scene shows the last time Veronica sees her best friend alive. As Lilly does not die in this story, however, this scene serves as the starting point for the imminent romantic developments in the relationship of the two protagonists. Logan, who secretly watches the two friends washing cars for a charity performance, acknowledges that his relationship with Lilly Kane is really over. He realises that his former girlfriend never really loved him the way he wants to be loved, and decides that it is time for him to move on. Secretly, he already suspects with whom he could experience the love he longs for:

Logan wasn't about to admit how desperately he wished someone loved him enough that he would *want* to die for them. Lilly killed him on a regular basis, but it wasn't the same thing. But Veronica, Veronica was a girl that would make sacrificing everything...seem like a bargain, if it got you her love in the end. (gertinator, Part 1)

Thus, the author reinterprets this canonical occurrence in order to pave the way for a romantic relationship between the intended lovers. The profound way in which the author works with the source text becomes apparent when one takes a closer look at how she modifies canonical incidents to suit her purpose. Her description of the first scene and the circumstances surrounding it, gives the impression that she provides the reader with a depiction of the events that is faithful to the canon. However, on closer examination it becomes apparent that, although, her description to a large extent conforms to the canonical source text, she has left out one vital event. A major reason for the end of their friendship is the fact that Veronica has told Lilly that Logan kissed another girl, causing the couple to break up. Consequently, Logan feels that Veronica has betrayed their friendship and banishes her from the prestigious 09er clique. However, this incident, which has a fatal impact on the further development of the relationship of the two protagonists, is not mentioned in the story at all. As a result, Logan does have nothing to blame Veronica for and can instead concentrate on the budding romantic feelings he has for her. This shows how the author cleverly uses the canonical breadcrumbs to promote the *LoVe* relationship while keeping as close to the source text as possible.

The author's clever omission of two crucial canonical events, namely Lilly's murder and Veronica's betrayal of Logan's trust, founds the basis for the further development of the story, and the way the characters act. The author is now able to rewrite further canonical scenes in a way that can be considered plausible in consideration of the changed preconditions. She uses this opportunity to modify occurrences of the source text in a way that presents the characters in a more positive light, all the while promoting the impending relationship of the O.T.P. An example for how she accomplishes this feat is the way she works with Veronica's rape. It has already been mentioned that the heroine is drugged and raped at a 09er party in the series. It later turns out that Logan did not only buy the GHB with which she was drugged, but that he also witnessed the state she was in and did not help her, but made fun of her instead. Thus, the male protagonist is indirectly responsible for Veronica's rape in the series. This situation is changed drastically in the story. As Logan has no reason to hate Veronica, it is plausible for him to react differently than in the source text, when he realises that she needs help:

"Ronnie?" Logan asked tentatively. "Veronica?" Veronica tried to look at Logan, but clearly couldn't make her eyes focus. Logan came to a quick decision. He grabbed her and threw her over his shoulder in a fireman's carry. "What the hell?" Dick protested. "Me and Ronnie were having a good time." "Not in your wildest dreams," snorted Logan, already headed for the door. (gertinator, Part 1)

Her treatment of the canonical breadcrumbs does not only enable the author to spare the heroine yet another traumatic experience that eventually causes her to turn into the tough Veronica 2.0., but it also allows her to turn Logan into a hero, in a situation where he is actually a villain according to the source text. Furthermore, this incident serves to bring the two characters even closer together; a development that is supported by the author's treatment of other canonical occurrences. Hence, when – in compliance with the series – it turns out that both characters are betrayed by their partners, they turn to each other for comfort. While, in the series Veronica is the one to find out that Caitlin Ford cheats on Logan, and that her own boyfriend Troy only uses her to get back together with his old girlfriend, this sweet Veronica is totally unprepared for these revelations, and needs Logan to help her cope. In some way this points at the negative side effects Veronica's perfect "graduation dream" is shown to have in the series. It has been pointed out before that Veronica's naivety, and the fact that she has never gotten to know her best friend Wallace because she never left her old circle of friends, are presented to be decidedly negative downsides of the carefree existence Veronica is afforded by Lilly's survival. However, the story does not adopt this negative interpretation. As the characters do have nothing to compare their current situation to, they have no reason to suspect that they are actually missing something. In the series, Veronica knows what she is missing; in the story, she does not and, therefore, does have no reason to be discontented.

Thus, the author's clever use of canonical breadcrumbs allows her to develop her story in a way that is beneficial to the development of a romantic relationship of the O.T.P., without straying too far from the source text. The strategic omission of certain canonical events enables her to keep the characters' knowledge restricted, and to keep the differences that stand between them to a minimum. Thus, her skilful manipulation of the source text makes it easy for the author to alter the characters in a way that aids a romantic relationship, but can be considered plausible at the same time.

#### 4.7.2. Blatant Use of Breadcrumbs

The situation is somewhat different in the *BtVS* story “Careless Memories”, where the author makes very special use of the canonical breadcrumbs. In contrast to “The Sweet Life”, where it is the author who discretely manipulates canonical events to fit the demands of her story, in “Careless Memories” the author lets one of her characters change the canonical source text. As a consequence, the modifications are not subtle like in the *VM* fiction, but they become a major issue that motivates the whole storyline. It has already been established that this fan fiction lets Buffy experience a slayer dream that reveals to her what is going to happen between season four and season seven of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, as well as the entirety of events of *Angel*. The heroine has seen her future like a film. Thus she can work with the information she has been given like the fan author works with the canonical source text. Like the author does with occurrences in the show, Buffy treats future events like canonical breadcrumbs and manipulates them to suit her purposes. Thus, it can be said that in this story this character formation device is employed on a meta-level within the text. The enhanced knowledge of the heroine allows her to play with the events that are going to take place, like a fan writer with canon.

The story is based on the events that take place between episode three (“The Harsh Light of Day”) and episode nine (“Something Blue”) of season four. This means that it covers the period within which Spike first unsuccessfully tries to kill the slayer with the aid of the Gem of Amara - a ring that makes him invincible and enables him to face the sun -, then gets caught by the governmental unit “The Initiative” and is implanted with a microchip that prevents him from hurting humans, and eventually gets engaged to Buffy due to one of Willow’s failed spells.<sup>147</sup> Buffy, who has not only obtained knowledge of the future occurrences, but also about her future feelings for Spike, uses all these events in order to make Spike love her long before his feelings for her are actually meant to surface. Thus, like the fan fiction author, Buffy aims to create a romantic relationship that is not meant to be according to the canonical source text. She tries to manipulate future incidents like breadcrumbs, and to use them to her advantage. However, her attempts are not very successful. Instead of bringing them closer together, the heroine’s meddling with the canonical events causes the intended lovers to drift apart even further. The male protagonist, who does

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<sup>147</sup> For more detailed information see episode 4.3 “The Harsh Light of Day”, episode 4.7 “The Initiative”, and episode 4.9 “Something Blue”.

not share the heroine's enhanced knowledge, does not know what to make of the sudden change of her behaviour towards him. The fact that she does no longer want to fight him, and instead showers him with affections, disconcerts him. Thus, when instead of trying to kill him for his abuse of the powerful Gem of Amara, she wants him to share a coffee with her in the park to enjoy the sun; he cannot help but be overwhelmed: "The chit was cracked. Gone barmy in the head or had amnesia and didn't know who the hell she was dealing with. Still, he didn't fight her off when she took his hand in her free one and tugged him by way of downtown, and the ever-popular Espresso Pump." (Peta, Chapter 2) However, the heroine's manipulation of the events does not have the desired effect. Instead of endearing herself to him, his confusion over her behaviour, as well as over the conflicting emotions he suddenly feels for her, leads him to dread her:

The bloody bint had managed to curtail his normal activities and thoughts with the bizarre change of attitude towards him. It had him so completely out of sorts that all he was left with was the useless swirling in his head. One minute he was all set to tear out there and rip her head off her shoulders, but then the next he remembered her voice; quiet and sweet and caring. And her mouth, those lush lips that made offers that he should never have received. (Peta, Chapter 6)

It becomes apparent that his inability to deal with the situation is due to the fact that Buffy tries to force him to experience feelings that he is meant to have much later in the series. Thus, he is not ready for Buffy yet. The heroine's inability to accept this circumstance makes their situation even worse. When she deliberately lets him get implanted with the chip, in order to make him weak enough to need her, his resentment towards her increases. Buffy knows that she "needed him to get the chip so he could be part of her life". (Peta, Chapter 7) The hero's toughness and his corresponding unwillingness to consider the heroine as anything else than a worthy opponent, make a romantic relationship between the two impossible. Thus, said toughness has to be weakened. Although, the female protagonist knows that, she starts to doubt whether she has the right to use her enhanced knowledge in that way:

"M-maybe I made a mistake?" she said as she looked and found the sympathetic glances of her friends and watcher. "Maybe I shouldn't have let him get chipped. I was being selfish. I had no right, and now he may never forgive me and I've ruined everything the Power's showed me. What good is having visions if I just muck them all up?" (Peta, Chapter 8)

Spike's renewed hatred towards her only serves to reinforce her doubts. However, that does not prevent her from using her knowledge to trick him into marriage. The episode "Something Blue" is a very popular breadcrumb occurrence in *Spuffy* fan fiction. Innumerable fan stories present rewrites of this episode, where Buffy and Spike get engaged due to Willow's spell. It is so important in *Spuffy* fandom, because it marks the first time Buffy and Spike are together as a couple. Moreover, the genuine affection the characters display in "Something Blue" is far from their abusive affair in season six, and instead concurs with the happy relationship most fans desire for the couple.

"Careless Memories" takes the engagement scenario of "Something Blue" one step further and lets them actually get married under the influence of the spell. Again, Buffy deliberately uses this event for her purposes. Moreover, she does not simply let it happen, but actively takes measures to ensure that everything turns out according to her wishes. Thus, she has not only organised a "matching gold band set" and a "Justice of the Peace" (Peta, Chapter 12), but also all the necessary papers to legalise their marriage. She does so, assuming that a marriage will somehow force him to develop the feelings for her he is meant to have: "[D]espite knowing she was bad and wrong and she didn't deserve this happiness that swelled inside her, she couldn't help but smile at her achievement. He couldn't reject her now. Could he?" (Peta, Chapter 13) Once again, her plan goes wrong. Spike does not only reject her, but now plans to kill her in earnest. However, Buffy's friends help the vampire to come to a realisation that puts a halt to his plans to murder the slayer:

"Spike, I am so sorry—" "Can it, Red. Had all the sorrays I can take for one day. I just want you to do a forgetting spell so I never have to think about this repulsive day for as long as I stay undusty. No way am I wanting to remember being in love with the Slayer. An' what the bugger possessed you to will something so bleeding stupid in the first place?" Another long swallow slid down his throat before Spike became aware of all the eyes staring at him in horrified fascination. "Did you say love? 'Cause from where I was being cursed, the mighty powerful Wills only wished you guys to get married." Xander gulped at the furious blaze of amber that stared him down[.] (Peta, Chapter 14)

The argument employed here is similar to that used in the *BtVS* fiction "More Than Candy". Spike has to realise that Willow's spell did not generate artificial feelings for the slayer, but that it simply made him reveal what he has kept hidden. However,

this interpretation of the events does not agree with the canonical source text. There, Buffy also admits that she has truly been in love with Spike during the spell, but her feelings are interpreted as being due to the spell. In the story, on the other hand, the spell forces Spike to acknowledge his innate romantic feelings for Buffy. Although, the heroine's use of breadcrumbs appears to be not very constructive at first, it eventually has the desired effect. The members of the O.T.P. are united in a happy relationship.

The way in which the canonical breadcrumbs are used in this fan fiction, differs drastically from the methods applied in the *VM* story. While, the author of "The Sweet Life" tries to keep her interventions as imperceptible as possible, aiming to put down deviations of her text to the changed preconditions; the changes in "Careless Memories" are not only quite blatant, but the main topic of the story. However, the reason for using this device is the same in both stories: by manipulating canonical events, the authors interpret the characters' actions in a way that makes it possible to romantically unite two characters that were actually not meant to be together.

## **5. Conclusion**

It was the aim of this study to examine how members of media fandom work with their favourite characters in heterosexual romantic fan fiction. Two contemporary episodic television series whose canon is closed – *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003) and *Veronica Mars* (2004-2007) –, and the related media fandoms, served as the basis for this investigation.

These particular shows are obvious targets for a joint examination, because they are essentially very similar. Even though, they feature different topics, have different creators, and are also temporally removed, the two programmes have much in common. The way they are created and presented by their home networks, as well as the way they are treated and interpreted by their fan communities, clearly marks them as cult television programmes. Thus, the fandom related to both series can be termed cult fandom, meaning that its members are particularly faithful to their favourite shows, and are committed to them even after they are no longer aired. But this is not the only aspect the two shows have in common. Both feature exceptionally tough heroines – either physically (Buffy) or mentally (Veronica) –, whose toughness puts them in the position of an action heroine. On the other hand, they also feature male breakout characters that were initially meant to serve as antagonistic figures, but eventually ended up as the leading male characters. In both cases, the promotion of the male characters is partly due to the exceptional chemistry they are perceived to share with the heroine, which Martha Nochimson calls screen couple chemistry.<sup>148</sup> Furthermore, both shows pick out outsiderdom and Otherness as central themes. The special situation of both the female and the male protagonists forces them to live at the margins of society and, therefore, puts them into the position of the Other. And finally, although the onscreen couples in both series are perceived to have an exceptional onscreen chemistry, they ultimately do not end up together. Thus, the wishes for a happy ending of the majority of *BtVS* and *VM* fans were not fulfilled in the end.

In the second part of this study, close analysis of various *Spuffy* and *LoVe* fan fictions served to illustrate how fan writers try to remedy this perceived flaw by writing

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<sup>148</sup> Compare Nochimson, 3-9.



romantic fan fiction. Six distinct character formation strategies were identified; as well as the resulting outcomes. It is important to note that the changes made, and the resulting outcomes, are not as intense as one might assume. Careful enquiry of romantic *BtVS* and *VM* fan fiction proves that fan writers generally do not aim to create totally new versions of the characters. On the contrary, they do only reshape them enough to make a romantic relationship between them possible. Because of that, it is the main goal of all character formation strategies to weaken the characters' Otherness in general, and the heroines' toughness in particular; but only enough to facilitate a romantic relationship.

Thus, character formation in *Spuffy* and *LoVe* fiction is not about the creation of totally different characters. The fan communities' reluctance to accept such new versions,<sup>149</sup> and the fan writers' own fascination with the source text,<sup>150</sup> does not allow for such an endeavour. Fan fiction writers do only alter the characters enough to alleviate their frustration with the source text. Still, their equal fascination with the source text causes them to keep their versions of the characters as close to it as possible.

But what does all this mean for the initially presented assumption of Michel de Certeau, that writing and reading are two distinct processes and that television fans have no chance but to passively accept what they are shown?<sup>151</sup> This study has shown that the assumed division between writing and reading – production and consumption – gets blurred by fan fiction. The predominantly female fans are far from passively accepting what the creators and producers of their favourite television shows present them with. On the contrary, their fascination with the source text does not prevent them to openly acknowledge their frustration with it. What is more, they do not only voice their complaints, but take active measures to remedy perceived flaws by writing fan fiction.

Thus, these “Vestals” do no longer submissively accept an “untouchable sacred text” (de Certeau, 169), but have no qualms to express their own wishes and to reshape the source text accordingly.

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<sup>149</sup> Cf. Pugh, 70-71.

<sup>150</sup> Cf. Jenkins, *Poachers*, 162.

<sup>151</sup> Cf. de Certeau, 169.

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- Whedon, Joss 3, 4, 5, 11, 12, 19, 20,  
21, 57, 60, 136, 144, 145
- Whedonesque* 5, 12, 136, 144
- Williamson, Milly 6, 9, 10, 11, 20,  
25, 26, 136, 137



## **8. Appendix**

**Figure 1: “Pink Veronica”**



<<http://vm-caps.com/caps/displayimage.php?album=33&pos=587>>

**Figure 2: “Veronica 2.0”**

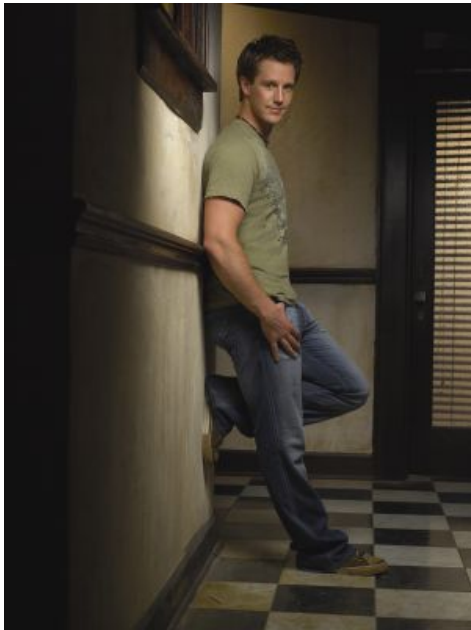


<<http://vm-caps.com/caps/displayimage.php?album=30&pos=488>>

**Figure 3: “Punk Spike”**



<<http://buffy.fan-sites.org/gallery/displayimage.php?album=76&pos=9>>

**Figure 4: “Surfer Logan”**

<<http://something-happens.com/gallery/displayimage.php?album=325&pos=0>>

**Figure 5: *The Spuffy Realm* typical preface**

[Careless Memories](#) by [Peta](#) 🍷 [Reviews - 161](#)

Response to BSV challenge #1, during the the Episode "Harsh Light of Day" Buffy falls asleep one night and becomes comatose for three days. During that time she is asleep, she has a detailed slayer dream of the rest of the series and the full 5 seasons of Angel. At first she thinks it is bull, but after her finale fight of the episode with Spike she realizes the truth.

[Spuffy General/Canon](#) > [General Fics](#)


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*Characters:* - *Genres:* Romance - *Rating:* NC-17 - *Warnings:* none - *Chapters:* 15  
*Published:* 04/12/2005 - *Updated:* 01/22/2006 - *Completed:*  - *Words:* 32326

<<http://www.spikelover.com/SpuffyRealm/viewuser.php?uid=294>>

**Figure 6: LiveJournal typical preface**

utsusemia:  
veronicamarsfic



Veronica Mars Fiction

Monday, June 5th, 2006 08:00 pm

Fic: A Feather's Weight (Veronica/Logan) NC-17

Title: A Feather's Weight  
Author: Utsusemia (Lois Fogg)  
Pairing/Character: Logan/Veronica, a little Wallace  
Word Count: ~8,600  
Rating: NC-17


Summary: Post 2.16 AU. How do you cope when you've done the unthinkable?  
Spoilers: If you've seen through "The Rapes of Graff" you're golden.  
Warnings: Sex and language

Most author's notes at the bottom, but I just wanted to thank everyone who responded to Basket Case. I really loved reading all your reactions. Hope you like this one, too.

( [Revenge is always more interesting than food.](#) )

Tags: [logan](#), [nc-17](#), [utsusemia](#), [veronica](#)

Current Mood: accomplished  
Current Music: Joe Jackson

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<<http://community.livejournal.com/veronicamarsfic/tag/utsusemia>>

**Figure 7: "Victorian gentleman William"**

<<http://www.leavemethewhite.com/vampyr/displayimage.php?album=24&pos=137>>

**Figure 8: “Victorian girl Elizabeth”**



<<http://www.leavemethewhite.com/vampyr/displayimage.php?album=10&pos=117>>

**Figure 9: “Dead Lilly Kane”**



<<http://vm-caps.com/caps/displayimage.php?album=32&pos=366>>

## 9. Abstract

Die vorgelegte Arbeit beschäftigt sich mit einem literarischen Genre, das im Bereich von Fan Aktivitäten anzusiedeln ist, und im Internetzeitalter stetig an Bedeutung gewinnt. Die Produktion der so genannten Fan Fiction spiegelt einerseits die Faszination der Fans von ihrem bevorzugten Produkt wider, andererseits drückt sie auch die Frustration aus, die sie empfinden, wenn ebendieses Produkt ihre Erwartungen enttäuscht. Demnach ist die Produktion von Fan Fiction nicht nur Ausdruck der Begeisterung der Fans, sondern stellt gleichzeitig deren Versuch dar, das Objekt ihrer Verehrung entsprechend ihrer Vorstellungen zu gestalten.

Das Medium Internet ermöglicht es, Gleichgesinnten aus aller Welt in Kontakt zu treten und sich auszutauschen. Dieser Umstand vergrößert den Wirkungsbereich dieser literarischen Form wesentlich. Durch das Internet erreicht Fan Fiction umfangreiche Fan Gemeinschaften und beeinflusst deren Wahrnehmung und Einstellung zum Objekt ihrer Faszination. Dabei ist es wichtig zu erkennen, dass es sich bei dieser literarischen Form nicht um eine simple Kopie eines bereits vorhandenen Produktes handelt. Da Fan Fiction nicht nur ein Ausdruck von Faszination, sondern zu einem großen Teil von Frustration ist, zielt sie nicht darauf ab das Objekt der Verehrung zu kopieren, sondern es entsprechend der Wünsche seiner Anhänger zu verändern. Deshalb sind Fan Fiction Texte nicht als Abklatsch einer bereits vorhanden Vorlage zu betrachten, sondern als eigenständige literarische Texte die lediglich auf einer Vorlage basieren.

Diese Arbeit untersucht, wie Fan Fiction Autoren mit bereits vorhandenen Vorlagen arbeiten und in ihre eigenen Werke integrieren. Anhand zweier zeitgenössischer amerikanischer TV Serien – *Buffy – Im Bann der Dämonen (BtVS)* und *Veronica Mars (VM)* – soll gezeigt werden, wie Autoren von Fan Fiction die Figuren ihrer Lieblingsformate manipulieren, um sie den Vorstellungen heterosexueller romantischer Ideale anzupassen. Der erste Teil beschäftigt sich daher mit der Produktion von Fan Fiction im Allgemeinen und mit den online Fan Gemeinschaften, die dieses Genre produzieren; speziell mit denen, die sich den oben genannten Serien verschrieben haben. Ausgehend von der Annahme, dass das Interesse und die Faszination der Fans nicht den Serien selbst gelten, sondern sich

auf deren Figuren gründen, widmet sich der erste Teil dieser Studie außerdem der Untersuchung jener Figuren. Der zweite Teil wendet sich dann der genaueren Analyse ausgewählter Fan Fiction Texte zu. Die Untersuchung von *BtVS* und *VM* Fan Fiction mit romantischem Inhalt soll Aufschluss darüber geben, wie Fan Fiction Autoren in ihren Werken mit Figuren arbeiten, die bereits auf einer Vorlage basieren. Es ist das Ziel dieser Arbeit, eine Typologie der Figurenformationsprozesse in romantischer Fan Fiction basierend auf episodischen Fernsehserien zu erstellen.

Obwohl bis jetzt noch kein Klassifikationsmodell dieser Art existiert, überschneidet sich das vorliegende Schema notwendigerweise mit anderen literaturwissenschaftlichen und kulturwissenschaftlichen Ansätzen. Letztendlich handelt es sich hierbei jedoch um den Versuch, ein eigenständiges theoretisches Klassifikationsmodell zur Analyse der Figurenformation in romantischer Fan Fiction zu erarbeiten.

**10. Curriculum Vitae**

Name: Manuela Scherf

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Geburtsort: Mödling, NÖ

Schul-/Ausbildung: 1990 - 1994 Volksschule Münchendorf  
1994 - 2002 BG Bachgasse, Mödling  
Reifeprüfung am 31.05.2002

2001 Higher Intermediate Course in English,  
Monkstown Park Language & Activity Centre, Dublin.

Ab WS 2002 Diplomstudium der Anglistik und  
Amerikanistik an der Universität Wien.

SS 2003 Common Final Test in English, nach IELTS.

Ab WS 2003 zusätzlich Diplomstudium der  
Germanistik an der Universität Wien.

Ab SS 2005 weiterführender Sprachkurs in Spanisch  
am Sprachenzentrum der Universität Wien.

Sommer 2004 Praktikum im Selene-Verlag in Wien.

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