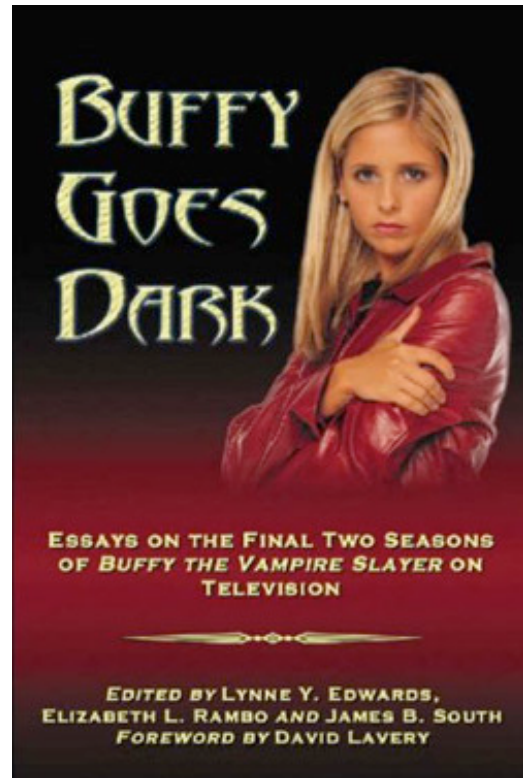


Foreword: *Buffy Goes Dark*

In the summer of 2003, only two months after *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* had aired its final episode in the United States, Rhonda Wilcox and I traveled to Australia to speak on *BtVS* in Adelaide and Melbourne. At “Staking a Claim: Exploring the Global Reach of *Buffy*” at the University of South Australia, we experienced first hand to what extent Joss Whedon’s creation had become a world-wide, multi-hemispheric phenomenon (and this was back in the day before books in Italian on *Buffy* and a conference—“*Buffy* Hereafter: From the Whedonverse to the Whedonesque”—in Istanbul!).

As we gave our talks, we needed to be extra-cautious with spoilers as we gave our talks, for “Empty Place,” “Touched,” “End of Days,” “Chosen” had not yet aired down under, and this was an audience that did not want to be spoiled. (A “spoiler whore” myself, I had found PDFs of the scripts of the last five episodes in my in-box prior to their airing in US.) We announced spoiler warnings emphatically during our talks, and the result on more than one occasion was a mass exodus of our audience, hands clamped over ears, running from the auditorium.

On the last days of “Staking” the individual who had programmed *Buffy* for Australian television (where it ran late in the evening and garnered a substantially larger market share than in the US) generously offered to send for the final episodes so that everyone might experience what Rhonda Wilcox and I already had: the end of *Buffy*. That evening we sat in an auditorium and watched over four hours of *Buffy* in a way television is almost never experienced: on a big screen with a crowd. As the scythe was secured, Angel came to the rescue, Caleb split, Dawn was slow on the up-take concerning pierced tongues, a young girl faced a pitcher with true fearlessness, Anya and Spike died, Sunnydale cratered, and Buffy saved the world—again, we found ourselves sometimes watching the watchers as much as the screen. We knew



what would come next; we didn't know how they would react. And then, at last, it was over, and more than a few tears were shed at the sight of that slight smile breaking out on Buffy Summers' face, crying inspired not just by an ending worthy of a great television series but by the shocking realization that *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* had come to end.

We did not know then that, in 2007, there would be a Season Eight, at least in comic book form, to partially placate us. But we had already begun to grasp yet another way in which *Buffy* would continue to exist: the unprecedented wave of scholarly and critical writing about the show, aka *Buffy Studies*, a phenomenon recently assessed by Rhonda Wilcox,¹ that would keep the series vibrantly in our minds and imaginations for a long time to come.

With over twenty books and hundreds of essays on *Buffy* now in print, it remains nevertheless clear that there is still much to be done, and the wonderfully diverse and insightful essays in this book allow us to check off several items from the *Buffy Studies* "To Do" list:

To do:	Contributions in <i>At Sixes and Sevens</i>:	
careful examinations of the sometimes underestimated contributors of Joss Whedon's collaborators	Perry's essay on Marti Noxon and Kociemba's on Jane Espenson	✓
more studies of major and minor <i>BtVS</i> characters	Ryan on Tara, the Shulls on Andrew	✓
investigations into the narratology of the Buffyverse	the wide-ranging essays of Adams, Erickson and Lemberg, and Wilcox	✓
examinations of single seasons of <i>Buffy</i> , considered in their entirety	the ambitious essays of Curry, Rambo, Hawkins, and South	✓

In a sense, of course, the entire book you are about to read is "seasonal" criticism, constituting as it does a multi-faceted look at two of *Buffy's* most controversial years. The last words of *BtVS* were a question (Dawn's "What are you gonna do now?"), and 6 and 7 provoked many more: Did *Buffy* change in the UPN years? Did *Buffy* decline as Whedon's involvement in the series diminished? Did *Buffy* end at the

¹ "In 'The Demon Section of the Card Catalogue': Buffy Studies and Television Studies." *Critical Studies in Television* Vol. 1, No. 1 (2006): 37-48.

right time? Was the Troika as “nemeseses” a mistake? Was the killing of Tara an act of bad faith? These are some of the many questions this book pursues.

These essays are by newcomers to *Buffy* Studies and “seasoned” veterans, by Mr. Pointy Award winners, the annual award for the best *Buffy* scholarship (Adams, Wilcox, Kociemba) and the authors and editors of several books (Adams, South, Wilcox, Edwards), by philosophy, religion, and English professors, graduate students, and independent scholars (the field has always inspired a complex, interdisciplinary demographic). Glen Creeber made the case recently for the edited collection as the natural critical venue for consideration of complex, many-voiced television series—quintessential examples of Bakhtin’s dialogism in action.² The many voices of *At Sixes and Sevens* wonderfully confirms his argument offering us multiple takes on what may be the most polysemic television text of them all.

To read these pages, of course, is to recollect in tranquility the powerful emotions we felt when we were at sixes and sevens in real time, experiencing a kind of critical pathos in which *Buffy* ends all over again. But then, thanks to DVDs, thanks to books like this (and more yet come), *Buffy* will never die (even if Buffy did die twice).

² “The Joy of Text? Television and Textual Analysis.” *Critical Studies in Television* 1.1 (Spring 2006): 81-88.