

"COME TOGETHER": A FANVID INSIGHT ON *BUFFY THE VAMPIRE SLAYER* AND FANDOM

LUCIA TRALLI

ABSTRACT

Through the in-depth analysis of a single fanwork, Luminosity's concept-vid *Scooby Road* (2005), made with images appropriated from the acclaimed TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*, this paper will investigate the strong and complex relationship between fan communities and media. A *vid* is a form of remix that consists in appropriating clips from movies or TV shows, and setting them to music. The author of the remixed work, the vidder, uses editing strategies in order to comment upon the sources, criticize them or praise them. Building on the concept of fandom ecology, and providing an overview of the main characteristics of the vidding community, this paper will focus on how the shared knowledge of both the original work and of fannish interpretations of such work, combined

with fannish conventions and modes of media consumption, shape fandom creative productions. After examining the relevance of *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* for the vidding community and its history, we will then focus on *Scooby Road*'s peculiar context of creation and distribution, and proceed to analyze several of the fifteen vids that compose this peculiar, 42-minute concept-vid.

KEYWORDS

Vidding; fandom; ecology of vidding; vidders; vidwatchers; fan culture.

*Buffy is the beginning and end of it all.
You've reminded me of all the reasons I loved Buffy, for
which I thank you!*¹

In this paper we will discuss the strong and complex relationship between fan communities and the media texts they love and appropriate through their fanworks. We will focus on a specific community, the vidding community, and on a peculiar and unique fanwork: a fanvid called *Scooby Road*. Our analysis will begin with an overview of the specificities of the vidding fan community, its functioning, and some of the more frequent topics discussed by its members. We will then proceed to examine the relevance for the vidding community of the original media text *Scooby Road* appropriates, the acclaimed TV series *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* (1997-2003). Lastly, we will discuss this vid as an example of how the vidding community experiences serial media products through their fan activities as remixers and producers of derivative works. Building on the concept of *fandom ecology* (Turk and Johnston 2012), we will especially focus on how the creative productions of fan communities are informed by the shared knowledge of both the original work and of fannish interpretations of such work, combined with fannish conventions and modes of media consumption.

Scooby Road, a unique, 42 minutes long “concept-vid” premiered during the 2005 edition of the annual vidding convention *Vividcon*, in a special show (a *vidshow* in vidding terminology²). The author, vidder Luminosity, put together this very unusual vid using all the fifteen songs³ from the celebrated Beatles’ album *Abbey Road* (1969) and scenes from all the seven seasons of *Buffy*. The title of the work is a wordplay that combines the name of the album and the self-appointed nickname of Buffy’s group of friends, the *Scooby Gang* or the *Scoobies* – a reference to the well-known 1970s cartoon *Scooby-Doo*.

As we will see in paragraph 4, *Buffy* fandom has been one of the most discussed and analyzed fandom of all time.

1 The first statement is from vidder Luminosity aka sockkuppuppett, (2006b), the second from a user comment to sockkuppuppett (2006a).

2 Vidshows usually consist in the screening of a playlist composed by a dozen of fanvideos, made by different vidders. In this unique case, the entire screen time was dedicated exclusively to this vid.

3 *Abbey Road* contained ten tracks, six on the first side of the album (“Come Together”, “Something”, “Maxwell’s Silver Hammer”, “Oh! Darling”, “Octopus’ Garden”, “I want you (She’s so heavy)”) and four on the second side (“Here comes the sun”, “Because”, “Medley”, and “Her Majesty”), although “Medley” was indeed a 16-minute medley of eight short songs (“You Never Give Me Your Money”, “Sun King”, “Mean Mr. Mustard”, “She Came in Through the Bathroom Window”, “Golden Slumbers”, “Carry That Weight”, “The End”).

Building on vidders’ discourses and interrelations with one another through their blogs, and focusing on a single and specific fanwork, we will try to provide a new glimpse on the peculiar ways in which members of this community share their mutual passion for the show. *Scooby Road* differs from *typical* vids in many ways: its duration, composition, narrative and public are unique in the entire fanvid corpus. Its distinctiveness constitutes a precious tool to gauge the peculiarity of its reference community, its functioning, and its media consumption habits.

01 THE ECOLOGY OF VIDDING

The term vidding refers to the practice of appropriating clips from movies or TV shows, editing them in new combinations, and setting them to music, usually pop songs. The author of the remixed work, the *vidder*, uses editing strategies in order to comment upon the sources, criticize them or praise them. A *fanvid* (or, more briefly, a *vid*) is “a visual essay that stages an argument” where “music is used as an interpretive lens to help the viewer to see the source text differently” (Coppa 2008). Vidding is “a form of in-kind media criticism: a visual essay on a visual source” (Coppa 2011: 123).

Fanvids are frequently confused with other forms of audiovisual remixes, such as mashups: however, the latter usually entail an ironic or satirical purpose, which is not necessarily present in fanvids. Moreover, fanvids share a possibly confusing resemblance with music videos, yet the two types of texts functioning antithetical ways: whereas in music videos the images are used to illustrate the music, in fanvids the visual source is the core of the remix, and the music - especially the lyrics - “narrate and contextualize the reedited sequence, telling a new story or making an argument” (Coppa 2011: 124). Fanvids are a form of *affective aesthetics* (Busse 2010) because the way they are conceived, created and experienced is an expression of fans affection for and engagement with a media product, but also an instrument of connection and a community-building tool for fellow vidders.

Vidding has always been a female-dominated field in productive fandom (see, among others, Busse and Lothian 2011 and Coppa and Tushnet 2011), whereas other forms of audiovisual fan production, such as fan films, are often male-centered (see Brooker 2012: 173-198). Vidding communities are not a product of the so-called digital revolution: like many other fan communities, they have a very long “analog” history. The practice of vidding dates from the late Seventies, when people who attended fan conventions started to create their

first vids using polaroid slideshows projected on a wall syncing them with music. Later, during the 1980s and the 1990s, when the VCR prompted an irreversible evolution in domestic modes of consumption, female vidders who lived in the same area formed small collectives of women who watched and vided TV shows together, sharing equipment and videotapes, skills and techniques, and “teaching each other how to vid and, more importantly, how to see” (Coppa 2011: 124), in an unceasing process of mutual tutoring. After the mid-1990s vidders started to relocate their activities online, gradually taking advantage of the many opportunities provided by the ever-growing World Wide Web: mailing lists, websites, web hosting platforms, social networks, streaming services, etc⁴. In many ways we are experiencing a new phase for vidding and vidding practitioners, marked by their online “headquarters” of choice. Nonetheless, there is still a strong tradition carried on by those that “were there” before the Internet (see Bury et al. 2013). And, more importantly, most communities still share crucial traits such as mutual tutorship and mentorship; a strong sense of belonging and kinship; common vocabulary, interpretive logics, and narrative codes; and a shared knowledge of editing tools and practices.

As Tisha Turk and Joshua Johnson argue in their essay dedicated to the ‘ecology’ of vidding, the vidding community is an important part of the whole vidding process, because it works as a dynamic and resilient system that informs the practice both on the production and on the consumption side.

The ecology metaphor helps us to think of fandom as a system (or series of systems) within which all fans participate in various ways: as readers, writers, vidders, vid watchers, posters, commenters, lurkers, essayists, artists, icon makers, recommenders, coders, compilers of images and links, users and maintainers of archives and other fannish infrastructures, and so on. An ecological model thus offers an alternative to the theoretical models of fandom that, as Matt Hills has shown, define fans solely as producers and so “attempt to extend ‘production’ to all fans”. (Turk and Johnson 2012 quoting Hills 2002: 30)

Therefore, what we may call the vidding experience is the outcome of a mutual exchange between vidders and

vidwatchers who constantly share information, opinions, technical advice and interpretive readings of both the original texts and the remixed ones.

02 KNOW YOUR AUDIENCE AND KNOW YOUR SOURCE: A VIDDER TOOLBOX

The act of watching a fanvid requires an entire set of skills and types of knowledge: in order to appreciate and enjoy a fanvid, the vidwatcher has to engage with and have a certain amount of understanding of the visual, contextual, syntagmatic, narrative and thematic meanings that the vid tries to convey. It is not mandatory to have an all-embracing knowledge of the source, but different kinds of vid require different degrees of understanding of the contextual meaning of the images used by the vidder. As Truk and Johnson (2012) recall:

Recognition of context requires familiarity with the source, and familiarity requires repetition. That repetition may take the form of an individual fan rewatching entire episodes or specific scenes [...] but it can also be communal or collaborative: for many fans, it includes reading and/or posting episode recaps, fan fiction, or informal analyses. All of these interpretive acts help not merely to define fan readings of a text but to establish particular on-screen actions and conversations as evidence for those readings.

Vidders (and fans in general) are usually deeply invested in creating their own vocabulary, which they use to discuss the specificities of their activities.

As Nancy Baym argues (2010: 77):

Online communities share ways of speaking that capture the meanings that are important to them and the logics that underlie their common sensibilities. Groups share insider lingo including acronyms, vocabulary words, genres, styles, and forms of play.

Fans can usually be seen from the outside as “struck by a vocabulary complex” that compels them to find different terms to underline differences that appear negligible outside their specific community. This could be somehow confusing for a non-fan, as well as intimidating for the so-called newbies, but this shared common language is a very important

⁴ Regarding vidding historical development, see Bacon-Smith (1991) and Jenkins (1992: 223-249).

aspect of the community-building strategies adopted by many fandoms.

One of the most important issues for vidders is to find a mutual consensus over a common taxonomy for different kinds of vids. Vidding taxonomy, vidding audience, and the vidding process are deeply related⁵.

For instance, a vidwatcher will probably be able to enjoy and “understand” a *multifandom vid* even without recognizing every single remixed clip⁶. This type of vid, created with sources drawn from multiple texts, is usually built on thematic associations and resonances between the visual content of different frames. Viewers do not need to possess a contextual knowledge of the source to be able to grasp the vidder’s intention, “and additional interpretive guidance is usually provided by the lyrics against which the visuals are set, the tone of the music, and the mood or message of the song as a whole” (Turk and Johnson 2012). Conversely, vidwatchers need to be extremely familiar with the original source, but also with fandom interpretations and analyses of that source to be able to fully “get” a *meta vid* regarding a specific series or movie and providing a commentary on both the text and its fandom at the same time. This is the case of vidder counteragent’s *Destiny Calling* which Cupitt (2008) describes as “a snapshot of the fannish zeitgeist of that moment”, or of *Still Alive*, by the same author, discussed by Katharina Freund (2010).

During the creation of their vids, vidders should not only consider the contextual knowledge of their potential vidwatchers but also the conditions in which the vid will be seen by the public. In 1995, Sandy Herrold, one of the most influential figures in the 1980s and 1990s vidding community, wrote a brief essay titled ‘Structuring your vid’ in the *Virgule-L* mailing list⁷, in which she described the differences between three kinds of vids: the *promoter vid*, the *con vid*, and the *liv-*

ing-room vid. The first type refers to vids made for a public completely unaware of the source with the goal to promote a show or a film. A *con vid* is made for a potential convention public, therefore is made “with clear, obvious lyrics and clips that can be understood on the first viewing with people chatting in the row right behind you”. Lastly, *living room vids* are

the ones that can require close attention, take multiple views to ‘get’ all the different things the vidder was trying to say, that take really thinking about the context of each shot to realize why they used each one. The trick for the vidmaker is to give them enough on the first viewing so that they’ll be willing to watch it enough times to figure it out. (Herrold 1995).

Even if cons attendance importance has decreased in fandom life, and even if the use of *living room vid* has almost disappeared in ordinary fandom language, this distinction still marks an important moment for vidders awareness of the community structures and audience practices, and still resonates in the community discourses.

We will later see how a deep knowledge of this process informs Luminosity’s choices regarding *Scooby Road*.

On her part, the vidder has to evaluate her audience’s potential familiarity with the source text(s) and to build her narrative in a way that is both as clear and effective in conveying her point of view. This dual need is probably one of the most discussed topics within the vidding community. Discussions regarding narrative usually entail discussions about editing practice, vidding composition, the different phases of vidding process and of vidding taxonomy. As Turk (2008b) recalls

when we use narrative in the vidding genre we’re usually thinking about *plot*, whereas the narrative theory perspective lets us think about it in terms of *narration* [...] Vids don’t have to worry about story, because the story is already there in the source, to be borrowed or subverted or undone; vids are not meant to stand alone.

Many vidders agree upon the distinction between three kind of vidding structure, “the narrative, the lyric, and the argument. Each has its own major organizational principle: story (narrative), image (lyric), and what for lack of a better term I’ll call thesis statement (argument)” (here’s luck 2003). Vidders usually associate the “narrative structure” of vids to a

5 Some examples of debates regarding vid terminology can be found, among others, in here’s luck and cereta (2004) e here’s luck (2004).

6 Vidder Luminosity, e.g., describes a fan that watches a vid unaware of its source as a “non-contextual fan”. This term is quoted on a Jason Mittell’s blog post that generated a dense debate on the topic involving both scholars and vidders. See ‘Understanding vidding’ (2007). On the same issues, please see also Turk (2008a, 2010). Mittell argues in his post that he doesn’t usually “get” vidding due to its lack of knowledge regarding fan conventions and subculture, but he enjoyed *Scooby Road* because: “Much of why this vid works so well for me, besides it just being a spectacularly impressive work of editing, is that I come to it with strong emotional connections to both works – I’ve been a lifelong Beatles fan, and *Buffy* stands as one of the great works of television art”.

7 An all-female, slash mailing list, active between the ‘90s and the ‘00s, that frequently focused also on vidding. For more information, see ‘Virgule Mailing List’ (n.d.).

simpler way of telling a story. A *narrative vid* is a vid in which the vidder do not add her personal point of view or tries to make an original reading of the source but instead she simply retells a part of the story or some of its core elements.

[A]s viewers, we tend to *make* narrative in vids because we know context: we fill in story around what we actually see. That's not a bad thing: That's not a bad thing; many vids rely on exactly that kind of filling-in. But there are other ways of mentally. I think narrative is the most intuitive to create and watch; it's the default setting for most of us, not only only because it's a familiar pattern in general but because it's the mode of most (if not all) of our source texts for vids organizing the relationships among clips in a vid. (here's luck 2003)

An *argument vid*, on the contrary, is frequently a *meta vid*, or a vid that builds on a specific and elaborate idea.

Vids that exist on a meta level, working in more ways than one, often suggesting a basis beyond the individual fandoms of the source and more about a larger concept and/or fandom itself. Vids that go beyond the narrative of their source, commenting on the nature of that narrative, connecting with outside meanings, or placing the story in a larger culture context. (kiki miserychic 2009)

This reasoning, and the constant circulation of ideas, debates and “collaborative interpretation” (Turk 2010) is inherently part of the vidding community ecology. In the case of *Scooby Road*, we will later see how the dialectic between narrative and argumentative vidding choices plays its role in the creation of some of its most representative vids.

03 THE COMMUNITY, WHICH IS NOT ONE.

It would be misleading to present the vidding community as a monolithically cohesive and all-inclusive space where all fans interested in audiovisual editing are in connection with one another in the same space. If that is still a misrepresentation, even in the era of the boundless virtual space provided by the Internet, it was certainly far less representative of the vidding network back in the analog days. Like many communities built around a shared interest in a specific activity more than around

an interest in a single product, the vidding community is a *multifandom* community, that is a group of people that are interested in multiple fandoms. Nonetheless, people who are fans of - and use materials from - the same show or the same genre of shows or movies are more likely to be found together in the same groups. Moreover, the platforms where vidders gather are indeed pivotal in determining the composition of the sub-communities. For example, the communities that revolve around social blogging platforms such as Livejournal or Dreamwidth are inherently different from the vidding communities rooted in the microblogging platform Tumblr or from the ones based on the video-streaming platform YouTube. The preeminent use of these platforms also tends to shift over time and to reflect the predominance of different age groups: while Livejournal was one of the first social networks inhabited by vidders (since its launch in 2003), and provided a digital home for all the vidders active by then with its accessible text-driven design and functioning, Tumblr (launched at the beginning of 2007) has proved to be more suitable for younger users and vidders, more comfortable with its image-driven approach. While the community is still quite varied and mixed in terms of age, there are of course many differences regarding editing tools and techniques (software used, digital effects, editing strategies, etc.) and media taste and preferences that depend on the era in which one approaches vidding. Groups formed in the 1980s were usually fans of shows such as *Starsky and Hutch* (1975-1979) or *The Professionals* (1977-1983), while the ones from the 1990s preferred shows such as *Stargate SG-1* (1997-2007) and *The X-Files* (1993-2002) and those formed in the early 2000s usually liked to use shows such as *Supernatural* (2005-) and *Battlestar Galactica* (the Re-imagined series, 2004-2009). However, certain media texts prove particularly relevant for larger sections of the community and are somehow inter-generational. One of them is the “fandom-that-started-it-all”, the *Star Trek* franchise, and another one is *Buff*y, even nowadays, after more than a decade from its official ending. Lastly, attending or not attending fan conventions is another key element that shapes fan sub-communities, once again partially related to age of their core members (in the pre-digital era, conventions were one of the few ways of sharing one's passion with others and meeting fellow fans). Different kinds of conventions obviously bring together different kinds of people and fans interested in different things⁸. The part of

8 A major discussion regarding vidding multiple communities, and community issues regarding race, gender and general inclusivity during *cons* occurred after the 2009 Vidcon. Some aspects of this debate can be found in Laura Shapiro (2009a, 2009b), and bopradar (2009). bopradar's post summed up some of the main con-

the community more grounded in the tradition of the 1980s and 1990s is also responsible for the creation of the first convention entirely devoted to vidding, *Vividcon*, which started in 2002, and this part of the vidding community is the one we will look up to in our reasoning around *Scooby Road*.

04 **BUFFY'S FORTUNE IN THE VIDDING COMMUNITY**

Buffy is probably one of the most adored media products in the global fandom community, probably also because it started airing in 1997, at the dawn of the Internet boom, and thus its fandom was one of the first to be able to actively engage with the show online. The success of the series is well-known in academic circles as well, with the so-called *Buffy studies* and *Whedon studies*, validated by a "Whedon Studies Association" and numerous publications (among them Levine and Parks 2007, Wilcox and Lavery 2002; and dedicated to the online fandom Kirby-Diaz 2009, and Stuller 2013).

As regards the vidding community, the series was somehow crucial in its development during the switch between offline and online activities between the late nineties and the early two thousands. The first mailing list dedicated to vidding in a single fandom was *Nummy Treat*, a Yahoo Group mailing list founded in 2002⁹, which boasted hundreds of subscribers. There are still many websites and blogs dedicated to *Buffy* and *Buffyverse* vids, but one of the most important was the *BuffyVerse Music Video Database*¹⁰, which in 2012 (after almost a decade of activity) contained 2235 vids made by 391 different vidders.

During the first twelve years of *Vividcon* (2002-2013), 97 over the overall 2149 vids presented were about *Buffy* and 165 were about the so-called *Buffyverse* (which includes spinoff

cerns shared by vidders: 'we're not the only vidding tradition', 'we're not all in the US [...] But the hardest one for me personally is *Vividcon* and how central it is to this fandom's self-definition and to relationship building within the community'. 'For instance, we celebrate different vidders within the community, particularly those with certain status or in the 'in crowd', but we collectively look down on other vidders, like, for instance YouTube vidders (some of their vids are awesome! and they may not even be part of ANY community, they may be self taught)'.

9 For further information see 'Nummy Treat' (n.d.).

10 This Database was one of the first searchable databases: it contained links to vids produced inside a specific fandom (this means that in 2002, when the website was launched, there were already enough vid distributed online to make this kind of list useful. It can be still accessed through Wayback Machine at <https://web.archive.org/web/20100422214059/http://buffy.fanvids.co.uk/browse.php?type=titles>.

series *Angel the Series*, 1999-2004), making it the most represented fandom in the con.

Moreover, *Buffy* includes some themes and elements in which fandom communities, and the vidding community with its almost all-female members in particular, are deeply invested into. The series pertains to the supernatural genre, which is one of the most appreciated by fandom (as Williamson puts it, the vampire is "an enduring figure in the Anglo-American cultural imagination" since it "entered the English language over two hundred years ago", 2005: 1). It marked important development in television storytelling and gender representation, by portraying for the first time a lesbian couple in a teen TV series. And, lastly, *Buffy* is a well-rounded, compellingly written "strong female character", that overcomes the clichés linked to this trope proving to be one of the most complex female character in television¹¹.

05 **SCOOBY ROAD. 'THE GREAT FANNISH WORK OF ABSOLUTE LOVE AND TOTAL COMMITMENT'**¹²

See, Lum decided to vid the album 'Abbey Road' to *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* and along the way she makes brilliant observations about the nature of both the album format *and* serial storytelling. This *builds* upon itself and *everything* is related and needed and necessary and the entire 42 minutes is all a single vid - it is, as Lum has noted, of a piece. (sisabet 2006).

As previously stated, fanvids are an expression of love and passion for a visual source, which use music in order to convey their message and commentary on said source. In commenting on the vidding process, vidders usually are usually divided into those that start conceptualizing a vid from an idea and then find the music that goes along with it, and those who listen to a song and find it perfect for a show, a couple, or a storyline and then build their narrative around the lyrics and rhythm of that song. Of course, vidders tend to vid to music they like,

11 About gender related issues in vidding and *Buffy's* importance in the vidding community see also Coppa (2009), Busse (2009), Coppa and Tushnet (2011), Tralli (2014).

12 The statement is from recceer thefourthvine review of *Scooby Road* (2006). The term 'recceer' in fannish language indicates someone who is a critic and reviewer of fanworks and recommends the ones she prefers to other fans through short reviews.

but they are mainly fans of the images they use. Conversely, the author of *Scooby Road* started from a precise and beloved music source¹³ and part of the decisions she had to make in order to create the vid pertained to finding the part of the story that fit the lyrics and sounds of *Abbey Road*'s tracks. This is an unusual practice in vidding composition and entailed additional constraints that vidders rarely have to face. The material is vast and rich: seven seasons, one hundred and forty-four episodes, each of which lasts about 45 minutes. One of the main challenges for the vidder was to decide which parts of the story was suited for each song, which parts should be "vidded" and which parts had to be discarded, even if they were highly important for the *Buffy* mythology.

In a blog post (2009a), vidder Luminosity recounts that her project actually started in 2002, when she vided the first song, "Come Together", and then a first version of "Something" and "In the End" in 2003. After these first attempts, another vidder, suzecarol, suggested she should "vid the entire thing". Following an unsatisfying first draft, the project was put aside until 2004, when Luminosity started to vid all the remaining songs, from October 2004 to August 2005. Although the long gestation of the project is partially due to its anomalous size, its timing is not very unusual. Luminosity's recount of the large amount of discussions and debates held with many other vidders (sockkuppett 2009a) is very common in the first stages of vidding composition: every step is discussed with fellow vidders, ideas are tested and validated or discarded, narrative and clip choices are examined collectively, and the lyrics are nitpicked collaboratively. The people who help the vidder get through all the vidding stages are called "betas" in fandom lingo: the term, borrowed from the IT jargon, designates someone who helps the author in all the different stages of creation, from the initial concept to the final proofreading before the public distribution of a fanwork. Even if Luminosity only mentions one beta for her project, the one that helped her review every single vid, she also names almost a dozen other people who helped her during the entire project.

We will now examine some of the vids assembled in *Scooby Road*, in order to investigate the role of the above-mentioned concepts: potential type of audience, contextual knowledge of the source, fandom interpretations of a media product, and meta reasoning about fandom and TV series.

13 "This is the music of much of my life. I have personal connections to all of it, and I've been moved by it since I was a kid. I know this album better than any other, and the challenge was to convey the depth of my feelings about *the music* through the video." (sockkuppett, 2009c).

5.1 Come Together

I thought that it would make a great vid about how the spirit of the First Slayer infused Buffy. And I wanted to say a little something meta about the entire project, which was why I put in clips of the First Slayer's group of "watchers" with subtitles: "we know who you are" and "we know why you're here." Those clips were going to be directed at my audience. (sockkuppett 2009a)

The first vid created for the ensemble is *Come Together*: a vid mostly based on images from the closing episode of season four, "Restless" (4.22), a dream-state episode in which the First Slayer¹⁴ makes her first appearance, and "Intervention" (5.18), in which Buffy finally meets with her spirit guide in the desert. *Come Together* opens with an iris that shows a pendulum clock used to induce a state of hypnosis; a close-up of Buffy, smiling; another shot of the clock, and a second close-up of Buffy, her face covered in grey mud and gradually morphing into the First Slayer's face, also covered in black stripes of mud. The vidder sets up the POV (point-of-view) of the entire vid: the slayer, both in her first incarnation and in Buffy's eyes.

Also, I wanted the First Slayer to "speak" so I made it her POV. Then, okay, it's her POV, but it's her spirit that has imbued Buffy with such power, so the POV could shift "legally" from the First Slayer to Buffy. Because Buffy and the other Scoobies were sharing dreamtime, I could shift POV back and forth till it became irrelevant. And YAY! Okay, true, I counted on the viewer to know about Restless, and I wanted to utilize that (unconscious?) knowledge that the viewer had about the dreams shifting from person to person--that the viewer would flow with the shifting PO (sockkuppett 2009b)

From its opening shots, *Come Together*, thus explicates its function as a meditation over the "Origin Story" of the entire series, and of Buffy's character: the First Slayer.

Buffy is the Chosen One among many other so-called potentials; she becomes the only slayer of vampires and evil

14 The First Slayer was chosen during prehistoric times by three powerful shamans to become the first in the line of slayers. She was coercively gifted with supernatural powers that helped her fight the evil forces, at the expense of her humanity. She had also the ability to project herself into the dreams of her successors. This is how Buffy meets her both in "Restless" and in "Intervention".

creatures of her generation. Slayers are always young girls, and they are designated from an unknown authority to become powerful beings. Their “gift”, however, comes mostly as a curse, as they are destined to devote their entire lives to their mission and often to die young fulfilling their duty. When the First Slayer is introduced in the end of the fourth season, the audience learns that in the beginning there was a powerful group of shamans who forced the first young girl to become the protector of humanity against her will. Throughout the entire series, Buffy struggles to come to terms with her destiny, and these episodes are the ones in which she starts to understand where her powers come from, and how much they were coerced on her and on every slayer before her.

And Buffy had to know, had to come to intimately understand how her power came to be, and that her feelings of being “imprisoned” by her calling weren’t false. They were true, they were right, but now that she knows that, she has to move on and deal. (2009b)

One of the main themes of the series is friendship: as a way to cope with life’s struggles and trials; as a chosen family of like-minded people who provide true support and understanding; as a source of strength and power; and as a safe space in which one can truly express oneself without restrictions. In “Restless” the dream-state is induced not only in Buffy, but also on every member of the Scooby Gang: Buffy’s best friends Xander, Willow, Tara, Anja and her Watcher, Mr. Giles. Every character is involved in Buffy’s exploration of her origin, because in the end every one of her friends will be involved in her battle to save mankind. During the dream-induced hallucinations, we see all of Buffy’s friends attacked by the First Slayer (a powerful metaphor of how much Buffy’s presence in their lives put them in serious danger) and we see also every one of them involved in some surreal activity that is nonetheless linked to their personality. All of these scenes are well represented in the vid. *Come Together*, therefore, immediately summons every important figure of the show, of Buffy’s journey, and proves to be the perfect opening of the entire *Scooby Road*’s journey.

So, what is *Come Together* really about? [...] Well, it was about joining each other, becoming more powerful together than apart. (sockkpuppett 2009a).

Thus the vid also represents a powerful *meta* statement about fandom, about Buffy’s fandom and about the vidding fandom. As vidder sisabet states in her review of the vid (2006), this shift is made possible by viewers extensive knowledge of the show.

Any viewer of the show knows immediately that we are in a dream state - this is the hypnosis scene from “Restless” and we are immediately cued to relax our brains just a wee bit because this well-known song, combined with this well known piece of canon, signify some serious mental meta shit is about to go down.

The above-mentioned qualities of friendship are also the ones people usually look for in their fandom experience. Fandom is a place where people find like-minded fans with whom they share their passions; where they feel safe to truly express themselves; where they form friendships and alliances that have a huge impact on their non-fandom lives; where everything is done *collectively*. We can consider *Come together* a sort of a hymn to fandom: as Buffy was forced to call her friends to “come together/ over me”, to follow her lead and help her in what ultimately proved to be a common battle, so is Luminosity calling her fellow fans and vidders to follow her in this journey to explore their beloved show together once again.

5.2 *That (unconscious?) knowledge: the use of known and unknown source in Scooby Road*

In her commentary about *Come Together*, Luminosity affirms that she “wanted to utilize that (unconscious?) knowledge that the viewer had” about “Restless” to work with entangled issues regarding the series and its main characters. The same process – one that builds on the potential viewer’s in-depth knowledge of the most detailed elements of the source – is at the bottom of many choices regarding the vidder storyline choices for the majority of the tracks. *Buffy* is not only a beloved media product, but also one of the most “vidded” texts: every aspect of the story, of its characters, of its themes and iconography have been celebrated and scrutinized in endless fanvids. Therefore Luminosity is not compelled to make any *series vid* or *ensemble vid* (which summarize all the main elements of a series, usually to celebrate it). Being disengaged from this kind of task, she could explore subtler nuances of *Buffy*’s storylines and lesser-known characters and episodes, and make more elaborated arguments regarding the most explored topics and relationships (as we will see in the next paragraph in relation to *shipper vids*). As vidder Laura Shapiro

underlines, Luminosity can rely to “the viewer’s memory to fill in the gaps, [and] the viewer’s love for the show and its characters to add emotional resonance to the vidder’s own”; for the recer this “embody the glorious best of what fannish vidding can be” (2005).

This is particularly evident in the case of vids such as *Octopus’ Garden* and *Mean Mr. Mustard*.

The first is dedicated to one of the many stand-alone episodes of the series, “Superstar” (4.17), entirely devoted to suicidal outcast Jonathan Levinson. The second is about Warren Mears. Both Warren and Jonathan will later become part of the infamous “Trio” (together with Andrew Wells), a supposedly evil league of villains which was actually just a group of nerd and vaguely misogynistic boys and who plotted to kill Buffy during the sixth season, only to incur in tragic consequences.

My first thought was that this could be a Xander vid. Then I wanted to make an Initiative vid. Then I wanted to make a Xander’s POV hero-worship vid to Riley. None of that really applied to Buffy. When I considered Jonathan, at first I considered his entire arc, from Big Gulp-sipping to bleeding over the Hellmouth, but dammit! This is Ringo! (sockkuppett 2009b)

Before the Trio, Jonathan was a classmate of the Scoobies at Sunnydale High, who happened to get involved in the Gang’s charades, frequently as a victim of the monster of the week, or as the designated target for bullying activities. His self-esteem was so low that, during the third season, he tried to commit suicide in the school bell tower, saved *in extremis* by Buffy. “Superstar”, which is set during the first season of the “college years” of the series, shows a very different scenario: Jonathan has become Sunnydale’s true idol. A famous athlete, a true heartthrob, a best-selling author, an actor, a doctor, a musician and a singer, not to mention the inventor of the Internet, Jonathan is worshipped and admired by everyone. However, the entire storyline is then revealed to be the effect a spell, casted by Jonathan himself to avenge his “nerd and lonely” years in high school. “Superstar” opens *in medias res*: without giving the public any warning, the episode starts with different opening credits that show Jonathan performing heroic acts instead of Buffy (and also mimicking the iconic power shot of Angel that closes the spinoff series credits), and the audience has to wait several scenes before learning about the spell that is at the center of the episode.

Octopus’ Garden is the only *episode-centric* vid of *Scooby Road* – that is a vid dedicated to a single episode – and has to deal with the scarcity of footage typical of this kind of vid. It uses the scenes from the episode almost chronologically, from the opening credits to the final resolution that breaks Jonathan’s spell, associating the childish and playful lyrics of the song with Jonathan’s somehow childish dream of finally becoming a superhero, visible and loved by all the people around him. *Octopus’ Garden* was perceived as the “occasional whimsical turn” that “provide[d] breathing space between the explorations of deeper subjects, of personal trials, traumatic relationships, and violence” (Laura Shapiro 2005).

Conversely, *Mean Mr. Mustard* uses several scenes from almost every episode in which Warren appears during the Trio story arc, except from the “Seeing Red” (6.19) events that brought to Tara’s death (whose consequences are hugely represented in the vid that precedes it, *Sun King*). His character is the epitome of the apparently harmless misogynistic person, who suddenly becomes a murderer, first killing his ex-girlfriend who broke up with him, and then Tara, Willow’s girlfriend, whom he accidentally shoots during an attempt to assassinate Buffy. Warren is the only Big Bad of the entire series to be completely human, and happens to commit one of the most terrible crimes. His storyline of subtle gender violence is consistent with the series general interest in gender-related issues, and is a powerful remainder that the most dangerous and painful events in Buffy’s life are not caused by supernatural forces, but are the result of very human conditions.

The choices in these vids are dictated not only by the correspondences between the lyrics and the story-arc (in the end, the entire series was filled with “dirty old men” that could easily fit in Mr. Mustard shoes), but also by the vidder awareness that these are very uncommon topics that were still unexplored in the *Buffy* vidding fandom, topics that could nonetheless be easily understood by a deeply informed audience. “And how many Jonathan vids are there anyway? I’ve seen only one other” (sockpuppett 2009b).

5.3 Shipping differently

The so-called *shipper* vids are one of the most common types of vids: these are the vids that revolve around a couple, either one that was already formed in the canonical text or one for whom the fan roots. Many shipper vids are a collection of topical scenes from the couple story-arc, and these are usually the scenes fans love to re-watch constantly, sequences that rapidly

become key-scenes for the fandom. In *Scooby Road* there are four vids that can be identified as *shipper*: *Something, Oh! Darling, You Never Give Me Your Money* and *Because*. The last one is dedicated to the relationship between Tara and Willow, before their breakup in “Tabula Rasa” (6.8), and is the most “conventional” one.

Something traces vampires Spike and Drusilla’s relationship from its beginning to the moment when Spike began to develop feelings for Buffy (the last clip used in the vid comes from the episode “Crush” (5.12), in which Spike realizes he is in love with Buffy). This is another example of an uncommon topic explored by Luminosity through a vid: Spike will later become one of the main characters of the show, and Buffy’s last love interest in the series, and although his character arc is a favorite topic among fans, his relationship with Drusilla is often set aside.

I love Dru. She’s so perfectly insane and yet... so sane. And she’s funny in a terrifying way. I can see Spike’s attraction to her, his obsession with her, his dark goddess. His nutcase. One of my favorite clips ever in a vid I made is in this one—where Dru is waving her fingers over Spike’s head to George’s beautiful guitar solo, right after she seductively rubs a rose across her cheek. Hey y’all! It’s Dru. And Spike loves her. (sockkuppett 2009b)

Spike and Drusilla were not only the main evil villains of the second season, but also provided comic relief that was perfectly in tune with the series’ caustic humor. The song lyrics perfectly resonate with their tainted romance, and Drusilla’s dramatic gestures and movements are synced with the song rhythm, providing the vid with the surreal and gothic atmosphere their scenes usually had. The somehow sarcastic commentary provided by some matches between clips and music was generally appreciated by the public, as an indirect homage to the show. “Some of the match-ups of songs and characters were very, very witty and reminded one that humour was a key element of the show along with the darkness” (selenak 2005).

You Never Give Me Your Money and *Oh! Darling* are dedicated to the two most important love interest of the main character, vampires Angel and Spike.

The former explores the two phases of Angel and Buffy’s relationship in an unconventional way: from their first encounter and Angel’s attempts to stay away from her to protect her from his vampire nature, to the events that follow Angel’s transformation into his evil counterpart Angelus in

“Innocence” (2.14), in the aftermath of their first sexual encounter during “Surprise” (2.13).

“Money” is all about love and giving of oneself completely and having it backfire on you over and over again. Buffy wants intimacy, and Angel withholds. Not because he doesn’t want her but because he feels that he doesn’t deserve her. In the second verse, he *does* give her his situation, and look what happens. (sockkuppett 2009c).

Luminosity uses the word “money” in the lyrics as a metaphor for “intimacy” and “love”, and takes advantage of the sudden change in rhythm in the first bridge of the song to mark the swerve between Angel and Angelus. The second bridge, on the other hand, is used to build the escalation of events that will bring Buffy to kill him in “Becoming (Part 2)”.

Oh! Darling is dedicated to Spike and Buffy’s relationship, but more than a *shipper* vid, it could be considered an *angst vid*, a vid that deals with unsatisfying and unnerving elements of a storyline. After the vidder decided to dedicate this vid to “Spuffy” (the portmanteau term with which the fans usually refer to Spike and Buffy as a couple) she was hesitant about the focus and tone of the vid:

At first, I went back and forth, back and forth. Should it be funny, or should it be sad? Should I play it straight and make a sympathetic Spike vid? Well. *NO*. In a way, this is as much a meta response to fandom as it is a look at how Spike viewed his relationship with Buffy. A relationship of sexualized violence and degradation. That he relished. And loved. Spike was more of a vampire here in S6 than at any other time that we ever see him. (sockkuppett 2009b)

In fact, we should consider *Oh! Darling* both as an *angsty shipper* vid and as a meta vid, because it provides some insights into the fandom’s response to this relationship and tries to compel an argument for its inherent violence. When Spike started to develop feelings for Buffy, at first he tried to reject them. Then, when he succumbed to his sentiment, he started to behave in an obsessive, stalking manner towards her, true to his vampire nature. After the events at the beginning of the sixth season (Buffy’s resurrection after “The Gift”, 5.22, and her becoming detached from life and un-emotional), Spike seemed to be the only one who understood Buffy’s feelings and they started a sexual relationship which Buffy

experienced mostly as shameful and degrading (after all, he has been for a long time one of her enemies, and he is an unreformed vampire completely different from Angel). After the umpteenth episode of ill-concealed violence, in an attempt to put her life together, she put an end to her liaison. Spike's desperate reaction to her abandoning was extremely vicious: he tried to rape her in an infamous scene of "Seeing Red" (the scene that concludes *Oh! Darling*).

In this vid, Luminosity comments not only on these usually hidden nuances of Spuffy's relationship, but also on the fandom's response to it. Spike's actions, as excessive, controlling and overpowering of Buffy as they could be, are usually perceived as symptoms of his true, passionate love for her. And, even if extensively discussed, the attempted rape scene is usually omitted in the majority of the debates regarding his character redemption, as something he deeply regrets. The song's lyrics "Oh! Darling/ Please believe me/ I'll never do you no harm" are skillfully edited with ambiguous scenes in which Spike's double nature – the pining desperate lover and the brutal vampire – is clearly displayed. The numerous love scenes between the two that inevitably ended with a fist fight (from "Smashed", 6.9, and "Wrecked", 6.10, to "Dead Things", 6.13) are also used to convey the vidder's point of view on the troubled couple.

There's an underlying sense of, I don't know, *desperation* in the lyrics. A subtext of panic. When the panic finally manifests, the singer (Spike) does exactly the wrong thing. Every time. His intentions are good, but he's *EVIL*. It can't end well. (sockk-puppett 2009b).

5.4 Maxwell's Silver Hammer: Faith and the con vid

Maxwell's Silver Hammer is the ultimate *con-vid*. It's a catchy tune, with a perfect refrain for a sing-a-long (the vidder recalls hearing people singing the chorus during the Vividcon vidshow). In this vid Luminosity takes advantage of the context of the first - and most important – collective viewing of her vid, the *Vividcon* vidshow dedicated to *Scooby Road*. She knows that her vid will be shown in a room full of fellow fans, a room crowded with noisy and excited people and she creates a very funny and ironic vid with a real karaoke built-in text with a bouncing little hammer to sing the song's refrain. For this vid, she chooses a very well-known and beloved character's story arc, the third season story arc of Faith, the other slayer

appointed when Buffy supposedly dies for one minute in the first season's finale. It was indeed one of the most complex and obscure trajectory for a character in the first part of the series, since Faith is everything Buffy isn't: she is wild and reckless, she enjoys her slayer duties as a manner to put off steam, she is clearly attracted to the dark side of the slayer job and she likes to kill vampires so much that she ends up killing a human by mistake. Her association with the Maxwell character of the song brings justice to the opposite sides of Faith personality: on the one hand, her joyful and vivid approach to life - and the breath of fresh air that she is for Buffy when she comes to Sunnydale - and on the other hand, her inner psychopath that will ultimately bring Buffy to deadly wound her in an attempt to capture her. *Maxwell's Silver Hammer's* structure and editing function both as a *con vid* and as a *living room vid*, because the vid contains several layers of complexity that can be experienced differently based on the consumption context.

5.5 Coda: Carry That Weight and In the End

There is a central theme on BtVS and that is basically we-are-stronger-together-than-apart. Simple and effective and the show keeps coming back to it again and again. Buffy thinks it is all about Power and she is right and wrong. It is all about *sharing* the power. (sisabet 2006)

Scooby Road – and *Abbey Road* - closing vids are *Carry That Weight* and *In the End*, in which Luminosity returns to *meta* consideration about the series as a whole and about its main character's journey. The first is the ideal closure for *Come Together*, as the vidder recalls "it encompasses Buffy from A-Z, showing her predicament, her curse (weight) of being the Slayer and her victory and acceptance of it". While the first verse is a montage of Buffy's most painful moments, directly linked to the preceding *Golden Slumbers* (which is dedicated to the painful unwanted resurrection storyline that dominated the sixth season of the show): Buffy's struggle at the end of the first season with the prophecy of her death, Angelus rising and her obligation to kill her first love at the end of the second season, her watcher Mr. Giles leaving her alone to fight her battles in the sixth season, and finally her failing attempts to save the other potential slayers during final season. At the change of rhythm in the middle of the song Buffy is shown with Angel, taking from him the amulet that will save the world from the dark forces in the beginning of the show's finale "Chosen" (7.22). Following the vidder's intentions, this

was the moment when we see Buffy “picking up the weight and carrying it, from The Harvest to End of Days. She fights the good fight, she breaks the chains that the first watchers put on the First Slayer” (sockkuppett 2009c). This moment is followed by a powerful montage of Buffy’s power shots and victorious battles during all the seven seasons of the show, a powerful moment that ends with Luminosity’s “favorite clip in the entire project [...] where Buffy drops from the manhole, stakes the ubervamp with the scythe *and turns around*, fully integrated into Woman and Slayer” (sockkuppett 2009c). While this vid is ultimately dedicated to Buffy’s solitary journey to find a way to take her faith in her own hand, the following is a celebration of the powers of community and friendship. After the last shot of *Carry That Weight* the viewer is directly brought to the last vid of *Scooby Road*, which is a *series vid*, a vid that sums up all the significant moments of the entire show. Fast-paced and skillfully edited following the song beats, *In the End* is “a recap of the entire project and of the show itself” (sockkuppett 2009c) and contains all the moments and scenes that, as Turk and Johnson argue “encapsulate events and even whole story lines” (2012): from Buffy’s entrance in the library in the pilot (1.1), to her sister’s Dawn arrival in “Buffy vs. Dracula” (5.1), from her mother’s death in “The Body” (5.16) to her sacrifice jump in “The Gift” (5.22). The vid’s ending shot is the series’ ending shot: Buffy standing on the edge of the crater that has swallowed the entire Hellmouth and her town, Sunnydale, smiling at the thought of being able to finally live her life as she wants it.

In our analysis of *Scooby Road* we have tried to focus on all the pivotal issues concerning the complexity and intricacy of vidders and vidwatchers relationship with the narrative material: characters, stories, events and feelings that, mediated through the images, affected them deeply. We have also tried to provide an overview on the process through which these mutual and constant exchanges, between vidders and vidwatchers, but also between fans and media - which we have called the ecology of vidding - shape the way the community produces and consumes both original and derivative media objects.

Through fanvideos such as *Scooby Road*, vidders manage to express not only how much they love a media product, their thoughts about its characters and storylines, their excitement or discontent for appreciated or unwanted elements, but they also show the impact of these stories on their personal life (in the end, they spend weeks or even years working on these projects), the communities they build around them and their collective engagement with them. *Scooby Road* is not just a homage to a beloved TV show, and a beloved character, but is

also an insight on fandom in its entirety, an ode to friendship and belonging.

You love for Buffy and the show shines through for us all to see and... it’s one of those things that makes me love fandom. We make beautiful things and share them with each other (vidder par avion comment to sockkuppett 2005).

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