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Fantastic Obsessions: The Queer Fascination of Televised Female Empowerment

In this paper I address how the strong female characters in such fantasy television series and miniseries as *Buffy*, *Angel* and *The Mists of Avalon* operate as vehicles for the negotiation of the continued pleasures of unequal love denied by the discourses of formal equality, for the haunted depths of the ethical subject (doubles, shadows, submerged alter-egos), and for the conundrums of choice in the conception of ethical action (e.g. the paradoxical role of “destiny” in empowering female characters). These are depths and contradictions that are disavowed or rendered inarticulate in the surfaces of postmodernity and in the demands for transparent subjectivity in rights discourse. This line of inquiry offers a new reason for the cultural importance of these fantasy series; namely, that they create a venue for what cannot be otherwise (e.g. “realistically”) visualized without figuring simply as undesired affect: un-feminist predispositions, politically incorrect desires, or irresolvable ambivalence.