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Introduction to the *Joss in June* Issue



The idea first erupted as Ensley Guffey and I were driving home from the Popular/American Culture Association in the South 2012 conference in Nashville, TN.¹ We had been excitedly discussing the conference – dissecting the particular sessions we had attended, the ideas we had heard, and speculating on the content of the ones we had missed due to scheduling conflicts. We have long agreed that, done properly, conferences serve as academic wells from which we drink deeply and arise refreshed. Four out of four Whedon scholars agree – attending and presenting at conferences are ways that we all sharpen our scholarly saws and emerge as better scholars by passing through the forge of airing our work for criticism by an engaged audience as well as hearing novel ideas being presented and developed. You have a good deal of time to think while driving from Nashville, TN, to Shelby, NC, and we began to daydream. What if we convened a Whedon conference in our own backyard? Could we work out the logistics of hosting such a shindig? Could we attract solid scholarship to our small town? Basically, if we built it, would they come?

After a period of gestation, those questions were answered when we convened the first *Joss in June* conference, which was held on the campus of Cleveland Community College on June 29, 2013.² After all was said and done, about 30 presenters and an additional 30 attendees made the trek to the foothills of the North Carolina mountains from a wide variety of starting points. This was a truly multidisciplinary conference, ensuring that everyone, regardless of their particular background, had the opportunity to be exposed to new viewpoints and structures regarding Whedon’s work. As co-conveners, we were thrilled with the level of scholarship we witnessed and, surrounded by bright, enthusiastic people, we believed that months of hard work had come together successfully. On June 30, we were expecting to put our still-aching feet up and toast the memory of *Joss in June*.

It’s good to have plans.

We were approached soon thereafter by the editors of *Slayage* about our willingness to guest-edit an issue that would be devoted exclusively to original work that had been presented at *Joss in June*. We eagerly jumped at the chance – we were proud of “our”

conference and knew that solid work had been presented there. Those efforts deserved a wider audience and this issue of *Slayage* is the end result.

Obviously, not all the presentations are included here – some had already been promised to other publications, for instance – but as guest editors, we believe that the peer-reviewed articles contained in this issue are strong additions to the ever-expanding collection of Whedon scholarship. You will find articles here covering a wide spectrum of topics and it is our hope that you will discover some new lenses through which to view Whedon’s growing body of work.

Thank you to all the scholars who contributed work to the *Joss in June* conference. It was truly a memorable time. Thank you to all the authors who then contributed essays based on their *Joss in June* work for this collection – some of which you will see in this issue and some we hope you will see in future issues of *Slayage*. And lastly, thank you – the loyal readers of *Slayage* – for you are the ones who drive forward the scholarship surrounding Joss Whedon’s works.

Notes

1. This particular idea was more Buffy than Athena and I’m reluctant to cast either of us as Zeus in this scenario, but the overall image fits.
2. It is worth pointing out that Cleveland Community College is located in Cleveland County, North Carolina. This is not in any way to be confused with that *other* Cleveland that is alleged to be the home of a Hellmouth. Cleveland County is (currently) 100% Hellmouth-free, so come on over for a visit!