

From the guest editors

Lightin' Out For the Library: A *Firefly/Serenity* Special Issue

Michael Goodrum and Philip Smith

[1] This special issue came into being as a result of a surplus of *Firefly* scholarship for our limited space. While the crew of *Serenity* may always be able to push a little further out into the black, publishers are less keen on such activities on the part of their editors. What was, at the time of this writing, more than two years ago, my talented, personable, and magnificently bearded co-editor and I put out a call for chapters for what would eventually become the book *Firefly Revisited* (Rowman & Littlefield, 2015). We wondered, initially, if such a proposal would get much traction so long after the series aired and even talked over contingency plans such as writing chapters ourselves and begging colleagues for copy.

[2] We posted the call on three listservs, one of which was the *Slayage* community. A few weeks and more than a hundred proposals later, we had learned two things: that, even ten years after it went off the air, *Firefly* continues to fascinate, and that the hardest part of our job as editors would be saying no to papers which, if only space allowed, we would green-light in a heartbeat.

[3] One way in which we assuaged ourselves of the considerable guilt that comes with having to turn away fascinating proposals was by planning a second project. We were delighted when *Slayage* acceded to our request for a special issue; now that we have the papers and set them before you, we are even happier. We hope

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Philip Smith completed his Ph.D. with Loughborough University. He teaches English Literature, Philosophy, and Theatre Arts at Tunas Muda International School, Jakarta. His work has been published in *The Journal of Southeast Asian Studies*, *The International Journal of Comics Art*, *The Journal of Graphic Novels and Comics*, *Literature Compass*, *The Journal of European Studies*, *Asian Theater Journal*, and *The Journal of Popular Culture*. He contributed a chapter to *The American Comic Book*. He is co-editor for *Firefly Revisited: Essays on Joss Whedon's Classic Series*.

you find it as stimulating as we have, and that you return to the series, and its continuation in comics, with newfound appreciation.

[4] The running order for this issue is as follows:

[5] In their essay “I Mean for Us to Live. The Alliance Won’t Have That’: New Frontierism and Biopower in *Firefly/Serenity*,” Jocelyn Sakal Froese and Laura Buzzard seek to advance what has been a recurring theme in *Firefly* scholarship—that of genre and the frontier. They argue that the frontier in *Firefly* and *Serenity* is a nebulous concept that evades encapsulation within a singular theoretical framework and propose that Mal alternates between two selves with regard to two different frontiers. Initially, Mal operates as an unorthodox incarnation of the frontier hero conceived by Frederick Jackson Turner; subsequently, subject to biopower, he occupies a position of exclusion.

[6] In “‘Letting that Belief Be Real Enough’: Shepherd Book as the Embodiment of Religious Non-Realism in the Whedonverse,” Dean A. Kowalski seeks to position the character of Book as portrayed in “Jaynestown” and *The Shepherd’s Tale* within the context of existing Whedon scholarship on religion. He proposes that Book represents what is, for Whedon, an unusually sympathetic portrayal of a religious figure and understands this portrayal within the context of religious non-realism.

[7] Samira Nadkarni’s “‘I Believe in Something Greater than Myself’: What Authority, Terrorism, and Resistance Have Come to Mean in the Whedonverses” uses *Firefly* and *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.* (2013-) as a means to understand the evolution of Whedon’s approach to the militarized state. She proposes that while *Firefly* represents a problematic but nonetheless compelling anti-authoritarian aesthetic, *Agents of S.H.I.E.L.D.*—in fact, the Marvel cinematic universe as a whole—appears to align itself, without apparent irony, with contemporary hawkish rhetoric.

[8] In “To Live and Die in the ‘Verse: A Re-evaluation of Inara,” S. Evan Kreider seeks to understand the portrayal of Inara in light of the revelation, provided by executive producer Tim Minear, that Inara has terminal cancer. In order to do so, Kreider makes use of Jean-Paul Sartre and Immanuel Kant’s philosophies of ethics in order to understand how, and if, Inara’s behaviour might be considered moral.

[9] Erin Giannini's "It Doesn't Mean What You Think': River Tam as Embodied Culture Jam" takes an original approach to the much-discussed character of River Tam. Giannini proposes that River serves as a medium through which Whedon presents a commentary upon the television industry and corporate branding. She thus represents a "culture jam"—a means to occupy and subvert brand identity.

[10] This special issue is certainly not the final word on *Firefly*; as with crime and politics, the situation in scholarship is always fluid. We hope that this issue, alongside our book, will stimulate new debate and encourage others to get involved. The series and film, as we have seen, reward further analysis, and its continuation in comic books provides new vistas from which to survey the 'verse. We look forward to the debates that will emerge from the work with which we have been honoured to be involved.

[11] Before we depart, we would like to take this opportunity to publicly thank all of our colleagues who acted as peer reviewers and, most importantly, our contributors. We are glad to report that only words, and no bullets, were exchanged in the creation of this issue.