

***Slayage* at Ten: The Danger of Birthdays**



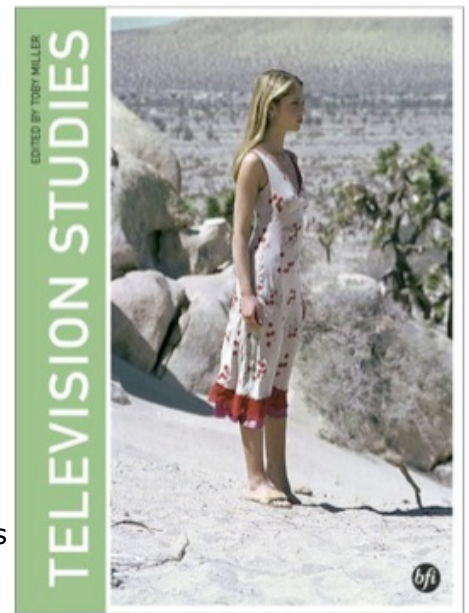
[1] Everyone who knows *Buffy the Vampire Slayer* knows that birthdays can be dangerous things—whether you're threatened with death or trapped in a place you can't get out of. Thankfully, neither of these things has happened to *Slayage: The Journal of the Whedon Studies Association*. The journal is alive and well, and it certainly has not been trapped in any kind of a box. Begun in 2001 as the brainchild of David Lavery (with a little help from me in the birthing process), the journal started life as *Slayage: The Online International Journal of Buffy Studies*. The title *Slayage* was supplied by writer/musician (and spouse of the coeditor) Richard Gess; the subtitle, the fully descriptive part, was David's. Over the years, we have gradually included work on Joss Whedon's other projects in addition to *Buffy: Angel, Firefly / Serenity, Dollhouse, Dr. Horrible's Sing-Along Blog*—and we are open to including more. In late 2009 the Whedon Studies Association became a legal entity—though it had existed in reality for many years, in large part through the biennial *Slayage* conferences (starting in 2004, hosted by David and Middle Tennessee State University). In 2010, the WSA became a 501 (c) (3), a legally recognized non-profit, a procedure pursued by the officers, with particular efforts from Secretary-Treasurer Tanya Cochran. Its primary goal is to further the study of the works of Joss Whedon and his associates, with the journal and the conferences as the primary means; and so *Slayage* will keep changing, as we incorporate study of future work and further creators (Espenson, anyone?).

[2] *Slayage* is a peer-reviewed quarterly. That means that it depends on having its submissions vetted by scholars with expertise in the subject matter. The journal would not exist if it were not for the thoughtful labors of scholars from many different countries. Our esteemed editorial board does most of the reviewing work, but others (for example, earlier article contributors) have also served. Everyone who reads *Slayage* owes them a debt of gratitude, and the editors owe them most of all. Associate Editor Deborah Overstreet regularly helps the preparation of each issue as well; and there are others, such as Cynthia O'Malley, who have volunteered technical assistance. The undergraduate arm of *Slayage*, *Watcher Junior*, formerly helmed by Lynne Edwards and Katy Stevens, is now run by Editor David Kociemba with assistance from site manager Kristen Romanelli. In other words, many hours by many volunteers go into this work. Above all, the contributors themselves have created *Slayage*. Everyone who reads *Slayage* is indebted to all of these people.

[3] And ten years and 161 articles later, people continue to read *Slayage*. In the world at large, many still believe that television series are ephemera. It has always been part of the project of the editors of *Slayage*, and all those associated with the journal, to demonstrate that Joss Whedon and his associates create work that will last—thus providing evidence that television in general can create work that will last. In other words, television can serve as a medium for canonical work. And our purpose in studying Whedon and his associates is no different than the purpose of those who study Shakespeare, Dickens, or Dickinson: we celebrate the work; we examine its social implications; we consider the significance of the audience's reactions; above all, we take aesthetic pleasure.

[4] This month, the online popular culture magazine *PopMatters* is running a "Spotlight" series of articles on Joss Whedon; other such spotlights have covered Akira Kurosawa and Woody Allen. This year, one can participate in the Great *Buffy* Rewatch: watch three episodes a week guided by author and editor Nikki Stafford, with weekly blog articles from a wide variety of writers, including bloggers, popular authors, and academics (such as the editors of this journal). The EBSCO publishing group has invited *Slayage* to participate, assuring that college students around the world will be directed to the journal's articles through their local library catalogs. Whedon Studies, in all their variety, are alive and well, because thoughtful people are still contemplating this living body of work. If you are reading this, you are probably one of them—one of us. You are what's keeping us alive. Give yourself a smile, and wish us a happy birthday—and many more to come.

[5] In 2002, when the journal Rhonda Wilcox describes above was just a toddler, BFI Publishing gave us Toby Miller's *Television Studies*. Needless to say, we were delighted to see Buffy herself on the cover (an image from "Restless"), but we were more than a little surprised to find inside (p. 69)—in the context of an examination of *BtVS* fandom—a gray box/side bar review of *Slayage* by Australian media scholar Alan McKee.



[6] We have now become accustomed to the sometimes shoddy scholarship of BFI publications (see my review of a book on *Seinfeld* [here](#)), but at the beginning of the century it was a bit of a shock to find McKee referring to Lisa Parks and Elana Levine's collection *Red Noise* as having been published when in fact it would not appear until 2007 and under a different name (*Undead TV*); in 2002; describing *Slayage* as a production of *Buffy's* "fan community" (Rhonda Wilcox and I are both English professors, and almost all of our board are academics); telling us that *Slayage* publishes "fan art of variable quality" when in fact we have never sought or published fan art. What shocked us most of all, however, was McKee's suggestion (in the equivocal form of a question) that *Slayage* pays selected contributors:

In particular, for television researchers interested in social equity, an interesting question might be: why do some fans get paid to employ their expertise and write articles about Buffy [sic] for *Slayage*, while other fans do not.

No contributor to *Slayage* then or now has been paid one penny. In an e-mail on 5/13/03, Prof. McKee offered a "clarification." The payments he referred to, it seems, are the salaries academic contributors receive from their respective colleges or universities. He meant to praise us, he noted, as a new kind of journal.

[7] We like to think we have been. We have (before the launch of *Watcher Junior*) published an excellent essay by a high school student (Gabrielle Moss's "[From the Valley to the Hellmouth: Buffy's Transition from Film to Television](#)") and another by a [Professor of Animal Ecology](#) at the Department of Zoology, Stockholm University, Sweden ("[Mad, Bad Scientists and Cute, Curious Magicians: The Quest for Knowledge in Buffy and the Whedonverse](#)"), but every single essay that has appeared in *Slayage* has been blind, peer-reviewed. We will continue to publish the best scholarly investigations of the Whedonverses--regardless of the pedigree of the individuals who author it.



[8] Allow me to join my co-founding editor in wishing *Slayage* a happy birthday. We are thinking of giving it a ring as a present.

**David Lavery**